

Inspection of Ashlyns School

Chesham Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 3AH

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They appreciate the teamwork between staff and pupils that helps them reach for the highest levels of success. Pupils benefit from the 'can-do' attitude found across the school.

Pupils live up to the school's high expectations of what they can learn. They usually approach challenge with determination. In the sixth form, students reach extraordinary levels of learning and achievement that enable them to take very impressive next steps in education or employment. Sixth-form students show a passion for scholarship and debate issues with great maturity.

Pupils behave well in lessons and take responsibility for their learning. They act on teachers' feedback to improve their learning. Pupils value the positive and purposeful atmosphere in which they learn. Sixth-form students approach their studies with an unwavering focus on high-quality learning and achievement, whether in lessons, study periods or at home.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know that staff are willing and able to help should concerns arise. Pupils understand how to stay safe at school, at home, online and in the community. Bullying is rare. If it does happen the school deals with it effectively so that it stops and does not continue.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. The number of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate was lower than the national average in 2022. However, the school has started to increase the number of pupils studying modern foreign languages.

Leaders have planned the curriculum well to ensure that staff teach the knowledge pupils need to know in a logical order. Teachers use these plans consistently well so that pupils learn what they should. Teachers provide pupils with lots of opportunities to review what they have studied previously. This helps pupils to remember knowledge over time. Teachers regularly check what pupils remember and understand. They provide timely support when necessary.

In the sixth form, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum expertly so that students learn the curriculum exceptionally well. Teachers in the sixth form provide precise feedback to help students address areas they need to improve so that they master the curriculum.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND effectively. Teachers have the guidance and training they need to support most of these pupils well. However, occasionally, some teachers do not consistently provide help that addresses the exact challenges that some pupils with SEND face. The school has in place the

necessary training to help staff adapt their teaching more effectively. Students with SEND and disadvantaged students in the sixth form do well because teachers provide the support these students need to overcome the specific challenges they face.

The school has a range of successful approaches that help pupils who are at an early stage of reading to improve. Reluctant readers read with confidence and enjoyment. As a result, these pupils access the curriculum effectively.

Staff and pupils follow the school's behaviour policy. Pupils learn free from disruptions caused by unacceptable behaviour. While some pupils are occasionally inattentive and not routinely redirected by teachers, this is not commonplace in the school.

The school's personal, social, health and economic education programme helps pupils learn about themselves, their communities and the wider world. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the personal characteristics protected by law and the importance of respecting others' differences. They also take part in a wide range of clubs and trips that enhance their learning.

Staff in the sixth form teach students the specific skills needed to be successful during and after life in the sixth form. Students receive expert advice to help them shape their career goals. Sixth-form students readily take up the many opportunities at school to take responsibility for themselves and others. For example, all students serve as assistants in subject departments at school. Students in the sixth form engage with contemporary issues at a high level of sophistication. They debate fiercely, but with sensitivity, controversial topics in society.

Governors and leaders put pupils' interests first when making decisions. Parents, staff and pupils have confidence in the school. Nearly all parents who replied to Ofsted's online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, recorded that they would recommend the school to others. Staff appreciate how leaders care for their well-being and ensure a reasonable work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, some teachers do not consistently provide some pupils with SEND with the support they need to help them overcome the specific challenges they face. As a result, these pupils do not always learn as well as they could. The school needs to ensure that teachers receive, and act on, the necessary training and guidance to support the specific needs of pupils with SEND.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117578
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10269252
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,552
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie Laws
Headteacher	James Shapland
Website	www.ashlyns.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school provision for pupils at the school.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chair of the governing body, governors, the headteacher, members of the senior team, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, design technology, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work and curriculum documents in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors held discussions and considered documents about the personal development, behaviour and attitudes of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by the 297 parents, 96 staff and 249 pupils in Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Joe Richardson	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Lambert	His Majesty's Inspector
Clare Gammons	Ofsted Inspector
Rowena Simmons	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023