

Inspection of a school judged Outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Ashgate Specialist Support Primary School

Crossacres Road, Wythenshawe, Manchester, Lancashire M22 5DR

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 November 2024

Outcome

Ashgate Specialist Support Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Ashgate is a school where positivity, tolerance and friendship shine through. Staff ensure that pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are at the core of everything they do. Pupils thrive in many aspects of the school's provision. The school has remarkably high aspirations for pupils' achievement. Staff work resolutely to ensure that they meet pupils' needs from the time they join the school. Pupils fulfil their potential. Developing pupils' independence and communication skills is a key part of the school's curriculum. Pupils are expertly prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct is exemplary. Staff create a safe and secure environment for pupils to learn. Warm, trusting relationships between staff and pupils are part of this success. In lessons, pupils engage well with their learning. They sustain concentration on their tasks, producing tailored high-quality work. Staff listen to pupils, giving them support to communicate their wishes and feelings. They manage pupils' behaviour with superb expertise.

Pupils relish the opportunity to take on positions of responsibility. They are proud to be members of the school council or support their teachers with jobs in the classroom and around school. For example, they take their litter picking job seriously.

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

Pupils follow an appropriately tailored and ambitious curriculum. Different pathways are designed to meet the needs of pupils. Staff identify exceptionally well any emerging additional needs for pupils.

The targets from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan are pivotal to their curriculum. Staff break targets down into smaller steps for pupils. These targets weave seamlessly with the rest of the school's curriculum design. The school considers pupils' next steps alongside the knowledge it has set out for pupils to learn. Staff skilfully deliver the curriculum to pupils. They use their specialist knowledge of pupils to ensure that they choose the most suitable way to deliver the curriculum. In the school's continual drive for improvement, it is currently developing aspects of the curriculum further. In doing so, the school is part way through embedding some of this work throughout the school.

A relentless focus on developing pupils' communication and reading skills runs through each of the school's curriculum pathways. Staff use a variety of effective approaches to support pupils' early communication skills. When the time is right for them, pupils begin to follow a structured phonics approach. Staff tailor this exceptionally well for pupils. They give pupils lots of opportunities to rehearse and practise the sounds that different letters make. This supports pupils to develop their initial reading skills from their personal starting points. The school clearly promotes the selection of appropriate books for pupils. Pupils enjoy a range of stories, songs and rhymes. They show positive attitudes to reading.

The school goes above and beyond to provide for pupils' wider development. The school ensures that its personal development programme instils lifelong values in pupils, for example respect and equality. Pupils are tremendously respectful of each other's needs. They learn essential life skills, such as learning to swim or going to the local supermarket to buy groceries. Pupils access opportunities to develop their interests such as learning to play different musical instruments. Careful consideration is given to pupils' mental well-being through activities such as yoga or meditation. The school ensures that pupils enjoy as many experiences as they can. For example, pupils take part in sporting competitions with other local special schools.

The school takes sensitive action to ensure that pupils attend school as often as they can. It works with pupils' families and relevant external agencies to provide pupils with the support needed so they can attend every day.

Staff are proud to work at Ashgate. The school creates a climate where staff feel respected and valued. The school thoughtfully considers staff workload. In doing so, it provides staff with the correct professional development which supports them to carry out their roles effectively.

Governors and the school continue to take decisive action to sustain and improve the school's provision for pupils. They have identified minor areas of further curriculum improvement to ensure the provision remains exceptional for pupils. Governors have the necessary skills to both support and challenge the school in equal measure. They keep a close eye on how the school is performing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- An aspect of the school's curriculum improvement is new. This means a few staff are still gaining an understanding about how best to implement it. The school should ensure that it provides suitable professional development for staff so that they can implement any changes quickly and effectively.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in 2 and 3 April 2019.

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	127802
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10348217
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie Denham
Headteacher	Diane Wolstenholme
Website	www.ashgateprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or autism.
- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 visited lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with school leaders to discuss pupils' rates of attendance.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and as pupils moved around the school building. They scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at the school. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Simpson

Ofsted Inspector

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