

Inspection of Ashbourne College

17 Old Court Place, Kensington, London W8 4PL

Inspection dates: 19 and 25 to 27 November 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils display exemplary behaviours and attitudes to their work and to others. The school, thus, has an extraordinarily happy, calm and purposeful environment. Pupils come from a wide range of countries and cultures. Pupils welcome the opportunities to make new friends and socialise with peers who have different experiences to them. This enriches their knowledge and understanding of people from across the globe. There are very strong working and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Staff provide pupils with high-quality pastoral and academic support, enabling them to excel in their education.

The school strives to, and succeeds in, ensuring that pupils achieve high academic results. Pupils can choose to study courses from a vast range of subjects, each taught by experts. Any barriers to success are identified and removed. For instance, the school organises and adapts its timetables so that every pupil can study all the subjects of their choice. Pupils leave the school extremely well prepared for the next stages of their education.

The school encourages pupils to take on responsibilities. For example, pupils can join the model United Nations club. They debate, alongside other schools, as 'representatives' of different countries. Others take initiatives and set up activities at lunchtime, like the entrepreneur club. These opportunities develop pupils' independence, confidence and sense of citizenship.

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

The school has designed a broad, rich and highly ambitious curriculum. The school keeps every subject under regular review to make sure that it meets the needs of different cohorts. The strong arrangements for subject leadership enable the school to adjust the order in which new knowledge is taught so that it is best suited to the needs of each intake.

Across the subjects, the school gives pupils work that is demanding and thought provoking. This, which includes reading and relevant news articles, broadens and deepens pupils' understanding. Staff provide pupils with effective recall activities that help pupils to remember key knowledge and concepts in the long term.

The school has effective systems for identifying and assessing the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It makes staff aware of how to support these pupils so that they can succeed well in their studies. The school also caters well for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). For example, it includes a bespoke course to support entry to British universities for EAL pupils. The support available also ensures that all pupils read English with confidence and fluency. Staff check on pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. Pupils get personalised support to flourish academically across subjects. These approaches enable pupils, including those with SEND, to address their knowledge gaps and keep up with the expectations of the demanding curriculum.

Teachers encourage pupils to do their utmost to improve their understanding of subject content. For example, they are readily available to give students extra support and in addition, many subjects run a weekly clinic that pupils can attend and ask for extra help. Pupils also value opportunities to record their self-reflections on their learning in each subject, and subsequently set targets and plan for improvement. These approaches, combined with high-quality teaching, ensure that pupils progress very well through the curriculum. As a result, pupils' achievements are consistently high.

Published national qualification results in all subjects are consistently above national averages. Destinations information shows that students go on to study a very wide range of academic subjects.

Pupils are highly motivated and set to work quickly. They work diligently and with determination to succeed. They like being able to use the school facilities for independent study when they have a free lesson. These very positive attitudes play a major role in their academic success.

The school's work on careers guidance and information is exceptional. It is well tailored to individual pupils' interests, ambitions and aspirations. It includes, for instance, an annual careers day, with visiting professionals talking about their roles. The school also offers pupils support with finding work experience and volunteering opportunities. The school offers impartial advice about university courses as well as apprenticeships. Those applying to overseas universities are equally well assisted. This attention to detail, combined with extra bespoke support as required for entry into specific universities and courses, enables pupils to have the very best chance of moving onto their desired placements.

Pupils have multiple enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom. These are arranged both by the school and by pupils for their peers. Many of these enhance pupils' formal learning. For example, they visit museums, art galleries, the theatre, observatories and attend lectures at universities. Pupils have opportunities to participate in trips to places in the UK, Europe and further afield and to engage in meaningful volunteering work. Pupils are also involved in arranging social events such as go-karting and sushi making. The 'Revue' is an annual event that gives pupils opportunities to showcase their work, talents and interests. The programme for this annual event includes modelling of clothes created by pupils in textiles classes and a range of musical performances.

The proprietor has a very high presence at school and provides strong oversight of all areas of its work. The school makes it a priority to support staff professional development and their personal well-being, including a range of approaches to promote a suitable work-life balance. This is a key factor in staff wanting to continue working at the school. Staff can, and do, focus clearly on their core roles of teaching and support.

The school communicates with parents and carers regularly. This includes through half-termly webinars to make it accessible for the many parents who live abroad.

The proprietor pays much attention to ensuring that the school's premises are maintained to a high standard. This makes the school a pleasant place to work and learn.

The school meets the independent school standards. The accessibility plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	100537
DfE registration number	207/6348
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	10341981
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 21
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	224
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Michael Kirby
Headteacher	Michael Kirby
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,500 to £37,500
Telephone number	020 7937 3858
Website	www.ashbournecollege.co.uk
Email address	admin@ashbournecollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 to 9 December 2021

Information about this school

- Ashbourne College is an independent school providing education for 13- to 21-year-olds studying GCSEs and A levels.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has two premises. One is at 17 Old Court Place, Kensington, London W8 4PL. The second is at 59-61 Kensington High Street, London W8 5ED.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- The inspection started on 19 November. It was paused in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy. Inspectors returned on 25 November to complete the inspection.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, economics, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered other subjects as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, director of studies and other senior staff. They also had formal meetings with groups of staff and spoke with pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- To check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors carried out a range of activities including meeting with leaders, a site walk across both sites to check the premises, looking at the content on the school's website and scrutinising the school's records and documentation.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents, staff and pupils

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Madeleine Gerard

His Majesty's Inspector

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