

Inspection of a school judged Good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Ash Hill Academy

Ash Hill, Hatfield, Ash Hill Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN7 6JH

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 May 2025

Outcome

Ash Hill Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Mathew Hicks. The executive principal of the school is Richard Brooke. This school is part of the Delta Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul Terence Tarn, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Peter Hodsman.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is ambitious that all pupils will succeed. Staff are highly motivated and well skilled. Positive relationships between staff and pupils, based on mutual respect, permeate the school. Pupils know that staff want the best for them. Pupils benefit from a variety of enriching opportunities. These include visits to the theatre, universities, local businesses and an outdoor pursuits centre. Leaders continually raise pupils' aspirations.

The school has high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves. Pupils move around the school building calmly, respect their environment and wear their uniform with pride. Pastoral care is of a high quality. Staff understand individual pupil's needs and support them well in the classroom. Over time, academic achievement at the school has improved significantly. Disadvantaged pupils now achieve well in many subjects.

The importance of good behaviour and attendance are regularly celebrated. Many pupils work hard to achieve these rewards. The school provides deliberate opportunities for pupils to develop their character and spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. This includes the 'pledge' system that encourages pupils' wider participation in the life of the school and local community. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about these opportunities. Parents recognise the positive changes that have taken place at the school over time.

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

The school has developed a curriculum that is highly ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know which topics pupils might struggle to understand. They plan opportunities to revisit important knowledge and skills regularly so that pupils master them. The way that pupils learn new vocabulary is also well considered. Pupils use technical vocabulary with increasing confidence.

Staff choose the activities pupils will undertake in each lesson carefully. Explanations of how to achieve each stage of learning are clearly given. Staff are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects. This positively impacts pupils' classroom experience. Older pupils are resilient and have high expectations for their own success. Pupils say that staff will always help them when they need it.

The questions that staff ask pupils to identify what they do, and do not, understand are effective. Staff address any misconceptions that pupils hold about previous learning. The school checks what pupils know and can do effectively. Staff workload is considered thoughtfully when planning changes at the school. Staff talk positively about how the school supports their well-being in various ways. They are proud to work at the school.

Pupils with SEND are valued members of the school community. Staff and pupils understand and support pupils who might need extra help. Pupils' specific needs are accurately identified and addressed. In lessons, suitable adjustments are made to resources and tasks to help pupils with SEND learn the curriculum effectively. Many pupils with SEND produce high-quality work and achieve well.

The school quickly identifies those who might need extra help learning to read fluently. The support that is put in place is precise and highly effective. This helps pupils who begin the school significantly behind their peers to quickly catch up. Pupils are regularly encouraged to read for pleasure. Reading is a high priority at the school.

The vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and at social times. However, the school's strategic approach to improving behaviour and rates of attendance is not as effective as it might be for a minority of pupils. Rates of persistent absence and suspension among some groups of pupils remain too high. The school recognises this is the case and has taken determined action to address it.

Careers education, advice and guidance at the school is very effective. Older pupils are ambitious about future study and employment opportunities. Talks from visiting professionals and higher education providers inspire pupils for their futures. Pupils leave school with the qualifications they need to access higher education.

Leadership at all levels is highly effective. Governors support and challenge the school to continually improve. Professional development for staff is carefully tailored to their needs and career goals. Regular opportunities for staff to take on additional responsibilities empower them to be the best they can be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small, but significant, number of pupils are suspended from school too regularly or are persistently absent. This is particularly the case for some vulnerable pupil groups. This impacts negatively on their educational experience and academic outcomes. The school should further refine its approach to reducing incidents of suspension and rates of persistent absence, especially for those pupils in receipt of the pupil premium or with SEND.

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 good 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 good for overall effectiveness in March 2020.

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	137066
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10379374
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	815
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Hodsman
CEO of the trust	Paul Tarn
Principal	Mathew Hicks
Website	www.ashhillacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the principal and several other senior leaders have taken up their roles.
- The school uses three providers of alternative education. Two are registered with the Department for Education. One is not registered with the Department for Education.
- 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

- 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have

taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the trust and local governing body, and a representative of the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for reading and literacy across the school.
- 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about what it is like to attend the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Crane

Ofsted Inspector

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