



# Ash Field School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 120349  
**Local Authority** Leicester City  
**Inspection number** 291701  
**Inspection date** 12 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Charles Hackett

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Broad Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community		Leicester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19		LE5 4PY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2737151
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	110	<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2739962
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	31		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Haydn Gopsill
		<b>Headteacher</b>	David Bateson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 November 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
4–19	12 October 2006	291701

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ash Field is a day and boarding school for pupils of all abilities whose main difficulties are physical. Pupils also have a mix of medical, sensory, communication, intellectual, emotional and social needs. There is a growing shift in the school's population towards increased complexity and, therefore, pupils' attainment levels on entry are usually below average. The school does not have pre-school (Foundation Stage) pupils and there are no plans to take any in the future. About 20% of the population have progressive conditions. Pupils spend an extra year (Year 12) completing courses started in Years 10 and 11 and then have the option to move into the school's post-17 unit. The school also has a micro-technology and assessment centre, which supports over 500 pupils in mainstream schools in the city and county. The school is a Leading Edge school and has Specialist Special School status. The school is managed by a principal and a headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Ash Field is an outstanding school. As one senior pupil put it, 'They don't just look at the cover, they look inside.' Excellent leadership and management are real strengths of the school. Under the inspirational leadership of the principal, headteacher and chair of governors, staff are united in their efforts to provide the best they can for pupils. Despite receiving over recent years many national and local awards, staff are determined to develop the school even further. Their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is very accurate, but in their eagerness to make the school even more effective, the school tries to focus on too many things at once, rather than concentrate on the few most important targets for bringing about improvement. In comparison with mainstream schools the standards pupils reach are usually below average but, importantly in a school such as this, their achievements are excellent in both their educational and personal development. 'His progress has been wonderful', is an example of the many positive comments parents make about their children. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are given confidence in their abilities and therefore enjoy being in school. Good attendance is a testament to their enthusiasm, but the sheer pleasure they get from the many clubs and activities is the best indicator. Being in a wheelchair or finding it difficult to stand unaided does not diminish their enthusiasm for football at break time or rocking to the music at dance club. Pupils feel valued. They know staff listen to them and they make valuable contributions to the organisation of the school through the work of the school council. In their own words removing some of the 'dodgy options' at lunchtime in favour of healthier options is one aspect they are especially proud of. Pupils know that staff care, guide and support them extremely well. Individual education plans are carefully constructed and regularly checked to ensure that they provide a good basis for the work with each pupil. Much thought has been given to establishing an excellent curriculum and this has resulted in a vibrant learning environment, where the quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan carefully with the needs of each pupil in mind and use a good range of strategies that make learning interesting and keep pupils focused. The micro-technology unit provides excellent and much appreciated support to pupils in mainstream schools. This is a very special school, perhaps best understood by the comments of a parent when she said, 'My child always asks me each night "what am I doing tomorrow?", and when I say "going to Ash Field", she gets excited all over again.'

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

Post-16 provision provides very high quality support that is focused closely on pupils' different individual needs. For some, this means enabling them to move on to take A levels and then attend university. As the parent of a former pupil now studying at university emphasised, the school gave his son 'time to reach his potential with dignity and confidence'. For others, the emphasis is placed on developing their independence, which may involve learning how to ask others to support their physical needs. Pupils

in the post-17 unit say they enjoy being in a more adult environment and are confident they are being prepared well for their future lives.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The boarding provision is outstanding and makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' personal development, especially their moral and social skills. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' independence and their social skills are extended through their participation in a wide range of activities. A recent inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) of the boarding facilities confirmed the very high quality of the provision. A key strength is the very close link between boarding and work in lessons. This ensures that there is a smooth transition between the two. For example, the targets for pupils' improvements are shared amongst staff, which means that the efforts of the school day are followed up well during the evening.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Sharpen the evaluation and improvement process by ensuring the school improvement plan focuses on the key aspects to be developed.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The standards reached by learners vary considerably and are satisfactory overall. However, the achievement of pupils throughout the school at both primary and secondary stages of their education is outstanding. This outstanding progress is demonstrated in a number of ways. Pupils with more complex needs successfully move through small steps in their learning to become more independent. This often means that they become better at communicating their needs and show improved skills in activities such as writing, reading, number and scientific enquiry. More able pupils in years 10 and beyond move on to take GCSEs and, in previous years, have passed as many as 10. Pupils' excellent progress is also shown in the rate of achievement of all pupils in their individual education plan (IEP) targets. An analysis shows that over 80% of these are regularly achieved. The achievement of pupils with progressive conditions is also considered very carefully and, if appropriate, they are given the opportunity to take external examinations earlier than is normal.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils clearly care and respect each other. 'They look out for each other', commented a Connexions officer. Cultural awareness is very strong. Racial harmony and appreciation of each other's differences are prominent features of the school. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They respond very well to all expectations and show good selfcontrol. Attendance is good, although as expected in a school of this type, a number have to miss school for medical reasons. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being in school, they show exemplary attitudes to lessons and fully appreciate the many extra-curricular activities. Pupils say how aware they are that the school is a very safe environment. They do their bit by ensuring that they are very careful with their wheelchairs in getting around the place. Pupils' increasing independence and willingness to take on responsibilities give them highly valuable skills for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teachers have a detailed knowledge of pupils' abilities and use this well in planning lessons. This very high quality planning is a key factor in ensuring that teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers frequently challenge pupils through the use of probing questioning and setting tasks that interest pupils. For example, in a Year 9 citizenship session, pupils enjoyed working in small groups discussing a range of different scenarios that could have occurred if they were marooned on a desert island. In a physical education lesson all pupils rose to the physical challenge of playing a warm up game with a beanbag. Lessons typically make good use of information and communication technology (ICT), which is well supported by a large range of different software. Teachers also make good use of their strong subject knowledge and use this well to ensure that in each lesson pupils are very clear about what is being taught. Teaching assistants are very supportive, although there are a few occasions when they are not as effective as they could be because they are unsure of what is expected of them.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school's own evaluation of its curriculum best sums up why it is so effective: 'The curriculum carefully balances the entitlement of access to the whole curriculum with the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, medical, communication and sensory needs of the children'. This is done in such a way that no pupil is denied learning opportunities. The curriculum makes learning exciting for pupils. They very much enjoy their work in lessons and all the many extra school clubs, such as dance club, where their laughter and singing echoes throughout the building. Links with specialist staff are very effective and ensure that pupils do not miss out on their lessons because of health concerns.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Considerable attention is given to each individual pupil's needs. The very positive relationships throughout the school, with home and with many other support agencies, add greatly to this. The high quality of the boarding provision plays its part, especially in the support given to enable pupils to be as independent as possible. Parents fully appreciate the high quality of care and support, which they say means all pupils are safe and develop a good understanding of how to be healthy. Very good academic support enables all pupils to achieve as well as they can. The targets within individual education plans are precise and based on the next steps pupils need to take. Progress is regularly assessed and monitored throughout the year. Pupils are involved in the setting of targets and know how well they are doing because they receive excellent feedback. The micro-technology unit provides invaluable support to pupils in mainstream schools through providing adaptations to resources and software for computers. As a special educational needs co-ordinator in a primary school explained, 'The knock-on effect benefits other pupils with special educational needs.'

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The high quality of leadership and management provided by the principal and headteacher is the key driving force behind this highly effective school. They ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, as well as making a valuable contribution to the wider educational community. There is a very clear emphasis on boosting pupils' achievements and on ensuring that the quality of education is of a very high standard. Despite the growing number of awards the school has gained in recognition of this the school is not complacent in its efforts to improve. This

demonstrates it has the capacity to improve even further. However, the documentation as part of this is over complicated. For example, the school improvement plan features 109 separate targets and this amount of detail makes it difficult to see what the key areas for development are and how it is envisaged they will develop the provision even further. The chair of governors gives the school exceptional support and he is very well supported by fellow governors. Regular visits and frequent meetings mean that governors play an important part in the school's success.



## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	NA
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

It was a real pleasure to visit your school recently. You told us how outstanding you think your school is and we totally agree. Your staff are fully committed to helping you, and you do your bit by responding so positively. Excellent teaching and a very interesting curriculum are leading to you all making outstanding progress. Meeting with some of you in the school council was an inspirational experience for me. You spoke so clearly and enthusiastically about how the school has helped you and showed me that you enjoy being in school. I can see that you play an important role in how the school is organised and that staff listen to your views. Senior staff and your governors are constantly seeking to ensure that everyone does the best they can for you. Perhaps the only criticism of this is that in doing this there are too many targets for improvement and this makes it a little difficult for everyone to appreciate what further developments are planned. We hope all your aspirations are fulfilled and you continue to do your bit to make the school the very special place it is.