

# Ashfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134658
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	328943
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Hilary Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	117
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Hay
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Ashley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 May 2006
<b>School address</b>	Minehead Road Aigburth Liverpool L17 6AX
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and saw the work of 11 of the teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils and staff and with the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also talked informally to parents and carers during a summer fair. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including safeguarding policies and procedures, the school improvement plan, the school's data on external awards achieved and pupils' individual education plans and assessments of progress. The inspectors analysed 8 parental questionnaires and others from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- assessment of pupils' learning
- how well the school is developing its curriculum to meet the differing needs of pupils
- the school's success in managing behaviour
- the contribution of leaders, managers and governors to sustaining school improvement.

## Information about the school

The school traditionally admitted pupils with health and stress-related emotional difficulties, but in recent years there have been changes to the pupil population. Many present with more complex special educational needs, including more severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum conditions, medical conditions, sensory impairment and speech and language difficulties. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils presenting with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties.

In September 2009, Ashfield School amalgamated with another similar school and was relocated to the present site in the south of the city. The school suffered from instability caused by a succession of acting headteachers, prior to the permanent appointment of the current headteacher in September 2009 at the time of the relocation. As a result of these changes, the school feels it needs a new identity and will be changing its name to Aigburth High School in September 2010.

Most pupils are admitted in Year 7, many transferring from mainstream primary schools, although some are admitted in later years. The nature of pupils' difficulties and disabilities means that they are unlikely to meet national expectations in their attainment. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Boys outnumber girls by about two to one, which is common in schools such as this. Most pupils are White British. A very small minority of pupils are looked after children. Over half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Since its reorganisation Ashfield has settled down as a satisfactory school. It provides particularly good care and pastoral support for its pupils. The school has good relationships with parents and carers, who are confident that the school is meeting their child's needs. New initiatives are being implemented, although as yet these are not embedded enough to demonstrate their impact on raising the standard of education. The amalgamation of the two schools was not without difficulties, but the new headteacher has provided stability, pulling the two schools into a cohesive whole and improving morale amongst staff. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and effective; strengths and areas for improvement are clearly agreed and incorporated into school planning. Staff, parents and carers and pupils contribute to decisions about school improvement and, as a result, the school has good capacity to improve.

At present, pupils make satisfactory progress through satisfactory teaching and assessment. However, lessons do not always sustain pupils' interest. The school is developing its assessment procedures but teachers do not always set precise enough objectives for individual pupils in lessons to be able to measure their progress effectively. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to gain external awards when they leave. However, as yet the curriculum is not fully adapted to meet pupils' increasingly complex needs. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of numeracy and literacy, as well as the development of skills for independent living.

Pupils respond well to the caring ethos of the school. They enjoy good relationships with adults and feel that adults keep them safe in school. They make good progress in their personal development, although the behaviour of a small minority of the pupils sometimes causes other pupils concern. Pupils make good progress through the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum. Attendance is low, but is improving rapidly through the interventions the school has put in place.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - planning clearer learning outcomes for the differing abilities of pupils
  - using assessment more effectively in the planning of lessons
  - ensuring that the breadth of the curriculum meets the increasingly diverse and complex needs of pupils.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

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## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and a recent questionnaire of Year 10 pupils indicated that they understood they need to behave better to improve their work. However, when tasks are mundane, lack variety or do not require individual pupils to make an effort, pupils do not take part in the learning. Sometimes praise is given for very little effort and then pupils do not value the reward system. Nevertheless, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points and some pupils make good or even outstanding progress in some areas of their learning. For instance, the school is anticipating some good art GCSE results. The more able learn to read and write independently and to develop basic number skills for use in later life. Pupils achieve a range of external awards including ASDAN modules and entry level certificates, peaking at GCSE passes for a small minority of pupils. The school has had notable success in engaging the interest of some previously disaffected pupils and this has enabled them to make progress in their learning.

Pupils make good gains in their social and life skills and become increasingly independent. They learn to consider the needs of others and to celebrate their successes; for example, other pupils listened respectfully while one pupil successfully overcame his difficulties in expressing his ideas about a book he had read. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe. Relationships are good between adults and pupils, enabling pupils who sometimes present challenging behaviour to learn to manage their own behaviour. They learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy in and out of school and have produced visual materials to show to other pupils and other schools about the dangers of smoking, bullying, drink and drugs and the importance of sexual health.

Pupils make a good contribution to their school community and willingly accept opportunities to take responsibility, for example, through representation on the school council, as 'buddies', organising the summer fair and fundraising activities. They express their views on how to make the school a better place to be and voted on the new name for the school. They join with other schools, for example, in a singing project, and participate in Liverpool Schools' Parliament.

Several pupils are persistent absentees, but the systems the school has put in place are contributing to rapid improvement in attendance. Pupils have an opportunity to gain experience of work through a range of placements in the community and these have translated into offers of work for a small number of leavers.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	4
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

## How effective is the provision?

All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and some was good or outstanding. Working relationships between adults and pupils are frequently very positive and encourage pupils to try hard. Occasionally, teaching fails to motivate pupils to want to participate fully in lessons. Support staff usually make strong contributions to pupils' learning and behaviour, sometimes planning and delivering work for groups or individuals. In a few lessons, they are not given a sufficiently clear role and are less effective. In the better lessons, teachers use their knowledge of the pupils to plan a variety of activities to match their varying abilities, in particular, to provide challenge for some of the more able pupils. This is not consistent across the school. The school has recently introduced new forms of assessment to inform the setting of targets for individual pupils, but the information they currently provide is not yet consistently used in lesson planning to determine specific objectives for the diverse abilities of pupils.

The curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of subjects with a focus on the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills, in the use of computers and on the development of pupils' personal and social skills. However, the curriculum is not sufficiently customised to meet the increasingly diverse and complex needs of its pupils, for example, those with autism spectrum conditions. There are limited vocational options,

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although there is a well established health and beauty course. New courses with colleges and training providers are being introduced or explored but are not yet fully in place, for example, child care, horticulture and landscaping. A good start has been made in developing a work experience programme.

Provision for care, guidance and support is good. In particular, the work of the learning mentors ensures that the most vulnerable pupils are well looked after. Mentors provide support to families, ensure attendance at appointments and access to services and run support groups in school, for example, an anger management course. The school usually takes the lead in promoting multi-agency involvement where necessary and has good relationships with a range of statutory and voluntary services.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders and managers, including the governors, have been successful in bringing the two schools together so that there is now a common sense of purpose and drive to improve. Several members of staff said, 'Things were not easy to start with but we have come through it and are looking forward to the future.' Middle managers are new to their posts. They have audited their areas of responsibility and developed clear priorities and action plans for the future.

Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning to ensure individuals and groups of pupils have their needs met. They support the professional development of staff but there is further work to do to raise standards for pupils with more complex needs, who are being admitted to the school.

Governance is good. The governing body is very committed to the school and has supported senior leaders about changes needed, including the need to manage the budget more authoritatively and to improve accommodation. Governors are involved in discussions about priorities for development and provide the necessary challenge to ensure they are resulting in improvements.

Parents and carers know how well their children are doing in school. The school helps families to support their child's learning in a variety of ways, for instance, in improving attendance and through support to attend appointments, such as annual reviews.

Arrangements made to safeguard pupils are good. School leaders and governors invested to make significant improvements in the security and safety of the site following the relocation. Secure child protection procedures are in place.

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Equality of opportunity is good and improving with the new assessment arrangements which will ensure the monitoring of different groups of pupils.

The school's work to promote community cohesion is satisfactory overall. The school encourages pupils to be involved in activities in the school and in the wider community, but is not yet fully evaluating the impact on pupils' development.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

A low number of parent and carers returned the questionnaires. These were overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. A very small number expressed concern about the accommodation and about the behaviour of a small minority of pupils which impacts on others' sense of security. Overall, inspectors found behaviour to be satisfactorily managed. There were several comments about the good work parents and carers feel staff do to care for their children and that they 'go the extra mile' for them. Inspectors agree that care of the pupils is good.

Inspectors agree with the parents' and carers' view that progress has been made since the amalgamation of the two schools and that the school is well placed to improve further.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashfield School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 8 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 117 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	25	6	75	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	75	1	13	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	75	1	13	1	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	50	2	25	1	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



16 July 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Ashfield School, Liverpool, L17 6AX**

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We are sorry that we spoiled your arrangements to carry out your fundraising walks but we are glad that you were able to go ahead with your summer fair while we were there. I want to tell you a few of the things that we found out while we were in your school.

- You are well cared for and keep safe and healthy.
- Behaviour and relationships are good.
- Your headteacher and other managers know what needs to be done to improve the quality of your education.

To help your school become even better, I have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- ensure that tasks in your lessons match your different abilities
- further develop the curriculum to make sure that it is consistently interesting and motivates you to learn.

I hope everything goes well for you in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Hilary Ward

Lead inspector

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