

# Ashgate Croft School

Ashgate Road, ,Chesterfield, S40 4BN

**Inspection dates** 13–14 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- All aspects of the school's work, including leadership and management, are outstanding. This is because the leaders, including governing body, are clear about where improvements have been needed and appropriate action has been taken to ensure that this has happened.
- Pupils in all key stages make outstanding progress relative to their starting points during their time in the school. The progress made by pupils is impressive when compared to national figures.
- Teaching in the school is outstanding. Teachers know their pupils very well and plan lessons so that all pupils have work which challenges and meets their individual needs to a high level.
- Although many pupils can exhibit challenging behaviour, procedures in the school ensure that there are outstanding improvements in the way they manage their own behaviour. They display exemplary attitudes to learning because the consistent application of behaviour management procedures means that they are clear about the expectations that all members of the staff have for standards of behaviour.
- The sixth form is outstanding as students receive a curriculum and standard of teaching which prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their lives.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, inspectors observed 18 lessons, including some which were jointly observed with a member of the school’s leadership team. Pupils were also observed around the school and at the start and end of the school day.
- Lessons were observed which covered the whole age range and scope of disabilities and special educational needs in the school. The provision accommodated in a local secondary school was also visited by the inspection team.
- Meetings were held with a range of staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with the two members of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the online questionnaire (Parent View), although no returns had been posted at the time of the inspection, and the school’s survey of parents and carers, staff and pupils, which are undertaken on an annual basis. Inspectors also responded to requests from parents and carers to speak on a one-to-one basis.
- Various documents, including improvement plans, self-evaluation documents and minutes of governing body meetings, were scrutinised during the inspection.

## Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ashgate Croft School is a large special school which caters for pupils with a wide range of disabilities and special educational needs including: moderate learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties; profound and multiple learning difficulties; sensory impairments; autistic spectrum disorders; speech, language and communication disorders; and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and nearly all are from the local authority where the school is located. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals and entitled to receive the pupil premium is nearly twice the national average. There are twice as many boys as girls in the school.
- The school has an informal agreement with a local secondary school where some pupils are accommodated and educated on a full-time basis on its site.
- The school has recently opened two new on-site facilities; The Croft, which is a bungalow to help promote life skills, and a swimming pool.
- The school has gained several awards for its work including: Healthy Schools Award; Food for Life (Silver); Eco-schools Award (Silver); Derbyshire Anti-bullying Commitment; and the International Schools Award.

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

- Continue to develop the leadership skills and accountability of middle leaders in the school so that they are more independent from senior leaders.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- A large majority of pupils in the school make, or exceed, expected progress compared to national expectations. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics. Progress is consistently high for all groups of pupils across all key stages, including the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the students in the sixth form. There are no differences in achievement between learners with different special educational needs. The progress made by pupils in lessons also supports the judgment that achievement is outstanding.
- There is a strong focus on the promotion of literacy and numeracy in all lessons and activities. Many examples were seen during the inspection of pupils reading independently or sharing books with appropriate support, which helps to develop their skills in all subjects.
- Where a very small minority of pupils have made less than expected progress, there is clear evidence that this has been due to external factors beyond the school's control, such as medical conditions. Staff know the pupils extremely well and have consistently high expectations of the progress that they can all make. As a result of the high expectations, outstanding teaching and a curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils extremely well, there is no underachievement in the school related to pupils' starting points.
- The school's curriculum and strong focus on literacy, numeracy and communication ensures that all pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their lives. Pupils take appropriate external qualifications and move on to one of a variety of placements in college, with training providers, in social care establishments or to other provision tailored to meet their needs. All pupils gain externally accredited qualifications before they leave Ashgate Croft School.
- Pupils who are receiving support through the pupil premium also achieve in line with other pupils in the school.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching meets the needs of all pupils extremely well and enables them to make outstanding progress. Staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of pupils. Lessons are planned effectively to meet the needs of all pupils through a wide range of activities and learning tasks which excite and engage them.
- Over time, teaching is at least good and much is outstanding, which reflects the quality of teaching seen during the inspection. Where it is not yet outstanding, leaders use performance management, based on the Teachers' Standards, extremely well to improve it. Clear evidence shows that this has been a significant factor in strongly improving the overall quality of teaching throughout the school.
- In lessons, there is a relentless focus on ensuring that all pupils are learning and developing positive attitudes to the highest of expectations. Teachers and other adults in the class continually assess pupils' learning and adapt teaching accordingly so that it remains at a high level. In lessons, high quality questioning by staff of all pupils allows them to be aware at all times how much pupils are learning. Staff provide immediate feedback to pupils and this enables pupils to be aware of next steps and how to improve their learning.
- Teachers' knowledge of pupils' disabilities and special educational needs means that they are able to teach in ways which interest pupils but also move their learning on impressively. One

example of this is the use of particular methodologies for pupils with autism. They are taught in a way which provides a secure learning environment and sets familiar routines but still challenges them to a high level.

- A wide range of resources and varied methods of teaching also enhance learning because pupils are fully occupied throughout lessons. Other adults in the class support learning and improvements in behaviour and personal development to a high level.
- The school focuses on pupils developing personal skills which they can apply in real-life situations. An example of this is the recent building of the high quality facility, The Croft, which is used for pupils to develop vocational and life skills which help to promote their independence.
- During lessons there are many opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is partly achieved through consistent application of policies, so that pupils develop an understanding of appropriate behaviours. The school also provides many opportunities for pupils to be exposed to other cultures, through visits out of school, visitors in to school and links with school in countries as diverse as China and Sierra Leone.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes to learning. This is due to the way staff manage behaviour and encourage pupils to become increasingly adept at managing their own behaviour.
- Pupils show respect to visitors to the school, staff and each other. This is, in large part, due to the positive modelling of behaviour by all members of the school community.
- Pupils overwhelmingly enjoy coming to school and this view is supported by the parents' and carers' responses to school questionnaires. The individual behaviour plans in place for those who need them support pupils in developing high standards of behaviour in ways that meet their needs outstandingly well.
- Nearly all parents and carers agree that the school expects high standards of behaviour. This is reflected in the lack of exclusions in recent years and the pattern of incidents which demonstrate that, as pupils are supported, they are able to improve their behaviour significantly.
- Pupils who have the most challenging behaviour have particularly benefited from the positive ethos which has developed in all areas of the school. This aspect of the school's work has had a significant impact on the spiritual, social and moral development of all pupils as they become increasingly aware of expectations in both the school and the wider community.
- The school has established many partnerships with other agencies and professionals to provide support and to enhance provision for all pupils. Strong systems are in place to ensure that full risk assessments are carried out with regard to any activities or visits which take place. Pupils feel safe during their time at the school and their parents and carers agree.
- The annual anti-bullying week is used to reinforce the school's ethos which ensures that pupils feel safe from bullying. The school council's work supports the view that bullying is not a concern for pupils and an anti-bullying theme is a highly visible feature of the environment of the school.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- High expectations and a strong ethos based on the achievement of each individual pupil has now pervaded all areas of the school's work.
- The school has very strong systems in place to gather and analyse evidence in all areas and to use this to plan for further improvements. This is particularly evident in the systems for monitoring achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Teachers are monitored closely through robust performance management procedures and the use of the Teachers' Standards. Objectives for improving the performance of all staff are linked to school improvement priorities. Any signs of deterioration in the quality of performance are immediately met with a bespoke and effective package of support and challenge.
- Performance is monitored at senior and middle leader level, although the latter tier of leadership is now well enough established to be allowed more autonomy to monitor the performance within their departments.
- The outstanding curriculum meets the needs of all pupils so that they are ready for the next stages of their lives. The curriculum clearly recognises the individual needs of pupils and meets them very effectively. Children who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage department are taught according to those requirements but are situated alongside pupils in Key Stage 1. Other departments also meets requirements. The curriculum provides a strong focus on the development of literacy, numeracy and communication across all lessons.
- Strong systems are in place for onward transition at the end of school. Well-planned transition also takes place between the departments within the school and there is a clear sense of progression and increasing maturity between the departments.
- Leaders are aware of the limitations of meeting people from other cultures within the school and have planned extremely well to provide enhanced opportunities to allow this to happen. The links with schools and celebrations of other cultures' festivals through visits in to the school have also contributed to this. The Paralympics was also used as a focus to celebrate cultural differences and disability. The school's logs show that there have been no incidents of discrimination in recent years and that the school is a harmonious community.
- The school has very strong links with parents and carers and regularly surveys their views and solicits their opinions on aspects of its work. Responses to questionnaires show that parents and carers overwhelmingly support the work of the school and its leaders, with very few exceptions.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - has a very clear awareness of the strengths and areas for development within the school, provided by reports from the headteacher and others, as well as through visits to the school to gather first hand evidence of its work. It ensures that the school meets all current requirements for safeguarding pupils
  - holds the headteacher to account for his performance through the use of well-targeted performance management objectives.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113032
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401334

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	129
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	25
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Green
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike Meaton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01246 275111
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