

Ash Manor School

Manor Road, Ash, Aldershot, GU12 6QH

Inspection dates

12–14 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. Results in GCSE have improved rapidly. Last year the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was above the national average.
- The rapid improvement in students' achievement is a result of the transformation in teaching, which is now at least good and in some cases better.
- Students recognise the positive changes in the school and say that this has helped to improve their behaviour and achievement. Behaviour is good and students feel safe in school.
- The headteacher's passion and drive for improvement permeates the whole school. Senior leaders and the governing body know the school very well and their self-evaluation is accurate. Planning is tightly focused on raising the aspiration of students through improved teaching.
- Students enjoy school and are proud of it. They respond well to the encouragement of staff and understand the relevance of the school's motto, 'Aspire and Achieve'.
- The curriculum includes a good range of courses which help students to enjoy learning and achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to raise achievement further.
- Although attendance has improved, there are still a few students whose attendance is too low.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 37 lessons, five of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of students and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, attended an assembly and scrutinised students’ work, progress data, development and evaluation documents, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, the impact of professional development on the school’s performance and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of 63 parents’ and carers’ responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by 53 staff.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Hugh Betterton	Additional inspector
Heather Leatt	Additional inspector
Babrul Matin	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ash Manor School is an average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British, with about 15% from a range of other heritages, including students from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller backgrounds. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- An average proportion of students are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government), and this has increased since the last inspection.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action is high.
- A very few students attend alternative provision on courses at local colleges of further education.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school holds specialist technology status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that more students make even faster progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan lesson activities which consistently challenge all students
 - use questioning consistently well across the school to extend students' learning
 - plan more opportunities for students to work independently and take charge of their own learning.
- Improve the attendance of the few students who are finding it difficult to attend regularly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good.

- The strong rise in students' attainment is the result of a relentless whole-school focus on improving teaching and students' learning. The impact is most evident in the sharp increase last year in the proportion achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, which is now above the national average. Across all their subjects, students' attainment is at least in line with national averages.
- Students' attainment in English and mathematics when they join the school in Year 7 is below that found nationally. The school monitors the progress of individuals very closely, so that students who have gaps in their learning are spotted early and their difficulties addressed effectively. Consequently, students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training because almost all leave Year 11 with a range of qualifications. Last year, 99% of students gained five or more A* to G GCSE grades, which is above the national figure.
- Students are keen to do well and speak warmly about the additional help staff offer, such as catch-up and revision sessions at the end of the school day.
- A few students take their English and mathematics GCSE examinations early. The school uses this option to motivate them because they develop a sense of achievement, but care is taken to ensure that students do not drop subjects until they achieve the grades expected of them.
- Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs well so that they make good progress and achieve well. Additional sessions, for example to promote reading skills, are impacting positively on students' achievement. Support is personalised and adjusted quickly if it is not bringing about the planned improvement.
- The school has made effective use of the additional funding received through the student premium to support the progress of groups of students, including those who are eligible for free school meals. This has ensured that the average points score for this group is improving quickly, so that, although their overall scores remain below that of their peers, the gap is narrower than found nationally.
- The off-site provision for a few students who find academic learning excessively challenging is carefully chosen. It has been effective in ensuring that they gain the additional qualifications that enable them to continue into education, training or employment after leaving the school.
- The school uses its close analysis of performance data very effectively and acts quickly to address areas of relative weakness in students' performance. For example, a few single-gender classes have been introduced in English, and literature which interests and engages boys has been used in these classes to promote their achievement. Additional staff have been appointed to increase the engagement of Traveller students in activities which improve their enjoyment of education and build links with the community. These groups have accelerated their progress and their performance is closer to that of their peers.
- The school's specialist status is reflected in after-school activities and special events which give students opportunities to achieve success beyond the classroom. For example, classroom technology and science learning is brought to life in projects such as making environmentally friendly vehicles.
- Good attention is given to improving students' literacy skills and a growing range of approaches is developing students' vocabulary and writing skills across the curriculum so that they have the necessary skills to tackle independent work confidently.

The quality of teaching is good.

- The vast majority of teaching is at least good. Older students speak maturely about how lessons have improved and about how they learn most effectively, and students elected as 'student leaders' have shared their reflections with teachers as part of the school's strategy to improve teaching further.

- The good relationships between teachers and students have a positive impact on the school's strong climate for learning.
- Teachers use their good understanding of students' earlier achievements to plan work which is matched well to their needs. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Students are confident in their learning and work hard, but sometimes work is not as challenging as possible for students of all abilities. For example, students are not routinely expected to write at length, which limits the number of students achieving the higher GCSE grades.
- Assessment has developed well and is now a strength. Teachers routinely ensure that students understand the level of their work and how it can be improved. The opportunities for self- and peer-assessment help students to analyse how to push themselves further. This was seen in an art lesson where students assessed their own portfolios against set criteria. The teacher effectively drew out from students what could be improved, and the follow-up work was highly focused and effective.
- Teachers' questioning is often challenging, with teachers asking questions around the class so that all students are engaged and actively participate. On occasion, it is less effective when teachers accept simple responses or do not require students to justify their thinking.
- Students say that they learn best when they are set active, practical tasks. These are a regular feature of many lessons, but in a few, students were more passive. While teachers explain new concepts carefully, often exemplifying points with well-chosen video clips or illustrations, sometimes they expect students to listen for a long time. In these lessons, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to consolidate and deepen their learning by discussing points amongst themselves.
- Lessons and extra-curricular activities promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, in a highly successful history lesson, when students considered 'Was Stalin good for Russia?', the teacher presented the issues to the group in a thought-provoking way. As a result, students developed their understanding of political influence on society and developed their ability to think critically.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good.

- Students show their pride in the school through their appearance and a positive 'can do' approach. Student leaders play an important role in contributing to school improvement, including sharing their views when the new behaviour policy was developed. They attribute improvements in behaviour and the typically good behaviour in lessons to an increased emphasis on rewards for positive behaviour. However, in a few lessons, behaviour procedures are not implemented quickly enough, so that time is lost while students chat amongst themselves.
- Students say that the wide range of extra-curricular activities helps them to interact with students across the age range, and that the school has developed together as 'one family'. The school is a cohesive society where incidents of inappropriate behaviour such as racist or homophobic comments are rare. Students say that the school is a safe place because, 'We look out for each other.' They have a good understanding of potential hazards, including drug and alcohol abuse, and the risks of internet use and cyber-bullying.
- The school's behaviour logs show that incidents of inconsiderate behaviour and exclusions have reduced over the last three years. Very few parents expressed concerns about students' behaviour in the Parent View responses.
- Students do not consider that bullying is a problem. Systems such as cyber mentors, who provide confidential online support, help students to report incidents. They report that issues are taken seriously and dealt with well.
- Exclusion rates have fallen significantly and attendance has improved over the last year. However, in spite of the robust approach taken by the school over the last year, the attendance of a few students is low and has a negative impact on their achievement.

The leadership and management are good.

- The key to the school's success lies in the headteacher's relentless focus on making sure that the school serves the needs of its students as well as it possibly can. He has established a strong staff team, and morale is high. Because the school's self-evaluation is accurate and used rigorously to plan for development, staff have a shared sense of direction and are clear about how to make further improvements. While leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching to good, there are still only a few lessons where teaching is outstanding. Actions taken by senior leaders to improve attendance have not yet effectively reduced the number of students who are persistently absent.
 - Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination lie at the heart of the school's approach. Leaders are ambitious for all students, demanding improving standards in their learning and behaviour. This is resulting in higher achievement for students and a narrowing of the gap between the performances of different groups of students.
 - The school uses the additional pupil premium funding very well. For example, additional staff have been appointed to identify the specific needs of these students and to ensure that they participate fully in enrichment activities. This has had an impact on improving attendance and closing the gap in results between those in receipt of pupil premium and their peers, as reflected in their comparative average points scores for GCSEs.
 - Middle leaders are good leaders of teaching and learning in their areas. They feel strongly accountable to senior staff for the progress that pupils make and benefit from regular meetings that share good practice, offer support and check their performance.
 - Performance management is rigorous and senior leaders are not afraid to tackle underperformance. Leaders monitor teaching closely, judging its quality accurately and giving good support to individuals in developing their classroom skills. Professional development is tailored to the needs of individuals, and always linked to improvement in students' learning.
 - The curriculum is matched well to students' growing aspirations. Academic courses, as well as work-related opportunities such as travel and tourism and child development, provide balance. Students are offered a choice to study courses of interest to them. Alternative provision, mainly through courses at local colleges, also supports more vulnerable students well.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has improved its skills of governance well since the last inspection. Governors make very good use of individual skills to support the school and are well informed about its day-to-day work. They use data to assess how well the school is doing, including in comparison with other schools, and have challenging expectations for future performance. Governors oversee performance management processes closely, ensuring that pay progression for staff is linked effectively to the successful achievement of performance targets. Governors know about the quality of teaching in departments and how it has improved. Oversight of school's finances is rigorous and expert. For example, it ensures that pupil premium funding is making a very positive difference to the achievement of these pupils. Governors are diligent in ensuring that all safeguarding and child protection policies and practice meet requirements and that staff and students work within a safe environment.
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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

Unique reference number	01252 353900
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402322

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,013
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Axam
Headteacher	David Garrido
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 January 2010
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