

Ashlawn School

Ashlawn Road, Hillmorton, Rugby, CV22 5ET

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
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.

- Students' achievement has been impressive over a number of years. Attainment is consistently high and rates of progress above average.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs progress particularly well. The school has successfully closed the gap in attainment that used to exist between students eligible for pupil premium and those not eligible.
- Throughout the school, students experience a very high proportion of teaching that is outstanding or good.
- Students' attitudes to learning and behaviour are absolutely first-class. Students feel safe and are justifiably immensely proud of their school.
- The school has succeeded in achieving its ambition of effectively combining innovation with tradition. The headteacher has ensured that all staff are totally committed to this vision.
- The school has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adjust what it provides to suit the needs of all students, so it continues to improve.
- The governing body knows the school exceptionally well. Governors have raised standards by ensuring the highly effective use of performance management.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students of all abilities progress very well across a good range of study programmes, and develop the confidence needed to be successful in the future.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 49 lessons and, in addition, made a number of short visits to lessons. They held meetings with students and spoke to students in lessons, at break-times and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school’s improvement plan, governing body minutes and a wide range of policies, including those designed to ensure that students are safe. They also examined the work in students’ books and a range of information about their progress.
- The inspectors met with teachers, senior leaders and three members of the governing body. They also considered an external report about the quality of teaching.
- The views of parents were considered through the 92 responses contained on the Parent View website and through a consideration of the school’s surveys. The lead inspector spoke to a parent who contacted the inspection team. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

Kevin Sheldrick, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Keith Thomas	Additional Inspector
Alan Brewerton	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Griffiths	Additional Inspector
Susan Fennell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashlawn School converted to become an academy on 1 April 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Ashlawn School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- 12% of the students admitted to the school have passed the Warwickshire 11 plus examination.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs at school action (students who need extra support with their learning) is above average. The proportion at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium is about half the national average. This funding supports those students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A few Year 11 students access a construction course at The Opportunities Centre in Nuneaton.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In the small minority of lessons where progress is not yet good or outstanding, ensure students work at a faster pace.
- Make the most of students' desire to take responsibility by further increasing the influence they have over decision-making.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students of all abilities consistently make good or better progress in all year groups and in virtually all subjects. As a result, they make exceptional progress overall. Students enter the school with attainment that is just about average, and by the time they leave it is high. For instance, the proportion of students gaining five A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics is well above average. The improving trend in results is superior to the national picture.
- In English lessons, students were observed to be making outstanding progress because most teachers of this subject ensure students work at a consistently rapid pace. This performance means that a well-above-average proportion of students exceed the national average rates of progress. Attainment in English is consistently high.
- The progress students make in mathematics is good and improving strongly. Attainment in mathematics is also consistently high.
- In many other subjects, over time, students are making outstanding progress. A key explanation for these impressive rates of progress lies in the arrangements the school makes that ensure students of different abilities focus on work that is matched to their different needs.
- Three years ago the gap in attainment between students eligible for free school meals and other students at the end of Year 11 was in line with the national picture. This situation has improved dramatically, largely because of the additional support these students receive from skilful teaching assistants. In 2012, the gap in attainment halved so students eligible for free school meals were a term behind other students. This improvement is evident in both English and mathematics. These students are currently making even better progress than other groups, so the school is on track to completely eliminate the previous gap in attainment.
- The school promotes equality exceptionally well so all groups of students make at least good progress.
- Only a few students take examinations early. A few very able students take mathematics in November during Year 11. These students are expected to attain A* grades and are then able to focus on the more challenging further mathematics course. A few very able students undertake additional GCSEs, in subjects like astronomy and health and physiology in Year 9. These students spoke positively about the opportunities this gave them to pursue their interests.
- The students who enter the school having passed the Warwickshire 11 plus examination progress at a rate that is similar to other students. They benefit from being able to undertake additional subjects in Key Stage 3.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make especially good progress. Nearly all teachers carefully adjust lessons to meet the needs of these students well and they benefit greatly from the support provided by the highly expert teaching assistants.
- Six Year 11 students attend the Opportunities Centre in Nuneaton to learn about construction. The centre is chosen because the courses offered are at a higher level than the local providers. This opportunity has served to fully re-engage them in their learning.

- Students read widely and weak readers progress well because of a wide range of help and guidance provided during their first few years in the school. This is financed in part through Year 7 catch-up funding.
- In a small minority of lessons, particularly in science, the progress students make slows because teachers do not ensure students work quickly enough. In the very large majority of sixth form lessons, students progress very well because they are encouraged to take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Students of all abilities make rapid progress in lessons because they almost always have the opportunity to concentrate on work that is well matched to their abilities.
- The teaching of English is very effective because teachers use a wide range of resources very well to inspire students. Teachers also ensure students work at a rapid pace in this subject.
- Teaching in mathematics is effective because the whole department consistently encourages students to make choices so they can concentrate on work that is challenging. In a mathematics lesson on algebra, a newly qualified teacher provided questions at a range of levels, and encouraged students to move as quickly as they could onto those that were really challenging. Students learnt quickly because they competed with each other to complete the very demanding 'tricky' questions.
- Teachers adopt strategies to increase the pace of learning. Across the school, the pace of learning is further enhanced through the use of very stimulating resources.
- Teachers avoid overly long introductions so students can concentrate on work appropriate to their abilities. Many teachers question students very well to increase learning. In an outstandingly well taught sixth form music lesson, the teacher ensured students arrived having already undertaken the background work. As a result, students were able to respond very well to the teacher's probing questions and those posed by other students. This preparation led to students being able to work at a very high level on their musical compositions.
- Lessons meet the needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs well, but the school also provide further support for them during lunch and form times. Teaching assistants are highly valued by the school because they take a great deal of responsibility, particularly for students eligible for free school meals and for those with special educational needs. As well as working with individuals, under the guidance of teachers, they teach effective lessons.
- Assessment is used consistently well in lessons. Teachers adjust lessons quickly in response to their assessments, and students are involved in evaluating the progress being made and deciding the appropriate next steps. Most marking identifies improvement and there is evidence that students are responding to this. Year 11 students spoke in glowing terms about how teachers keep them informed of progress. One student captured the views of many in stating that, 'I really like it when the progress bar pops-up on the projector so we can see how well we are learning as the lesson progresses.'
- Lessons reinforce students' literacy skills well because this aspect is often prioritised. An outstandingly well taught science lesson on the functioning of the eye contributed significantly to students' communication skills. Students were required to label a diagram of the eye by

explaining this very carefully to a partner who could not see the diagram. The partner had to record this accurately, including the correct spellings.

- The school encourages students to read widely. For instance, in many subjects students have homework that requires them to research topics in advance of them featuring in lessons. Weaker readers experience support that noticeably increases their reading ages.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Students have a fine sense of right and wrong; for instance, they are very critical of a few who occasionally do not behave very well in lessons. Assemblies promote the spiritual dimension well. There was great enthusiasm for a recent lunch supporting a fund-raising appeal for the Philippines. Inspectors observed students experience awe and wonder; for instance, students were amazed and delighted when they realised how vaccines work. Inspectors observed many lessons in which students worked well together in small and quite large groups. Students have the opportunity to learn about the very wide range of backgrounds represented in the school. A few students have the opportunity to go to Tanzania.
- In the sixth form, the very large majority of lessons require students to take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning and critical thinking is emphasised.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' attitudes to learning are a key contributing factor to their outstanding achievement. Students are enthusiastic about learning; for instance many voluntarily undertake additional extra work beyond lessons. Students show great resilience when solving problems and many are able to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Students appreciate the opportunities they have to share their views about the school. Students have an admirable desire to be able to further influence decision-making and help improve their school, but do not always get enough chance to do so.
- Despite the very narrow corridors, students are very considerate of others when moving around the school. Students say that behaviour is very good and only very rarely is learning affected by inappropriate behaviour. Many students could not remember the last time their learning had been affected by less than perfect behaviour in lessons. Students' excellent awareness of right and wrong contributes to their outstanding behaviour.
- Virtually all staff and the very large majority of parents think that the school manages behaviour well. Similarly positive views are held about keeping students safe. Most staff say they have never had to apply the school's behaviour management policy because behaviour is so good.
- Attendance has improved and is high, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Punctuality is first-class.
- Older students are very positive about the courses they are able to choose and talked enthusiastically about the wide range of extra-curricular activities that are available. They receive high-quality independent advice and guidance on the next stage in education and later life.
- Students and their parents indicate that incidents of bullying are very rare. They report that when they occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students are very clear about types of bullying, including all forms that are prejudice-based. Students were able to describe examples where they had actively challenged bullying; for instance challenging some younger

students who make homophobic comments.

- The school has improved how it manages the behaviour of the few students who have difficulties in this area. As a result exclusions have substantially reduced and are now well below the national average.
- The personal development of students in the sixth form is excellent. This major strength is largely because of their substantial involvement in supporting younger students and the high expectations staff have about the responsibility students must take for their own learning.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school that is shared by the staff. The school is succeeding in ensuring that all students are receiving an education that meets their individual needs extremely well.
- Senior leaders have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and have clearly identified the areas that can be improved to make it even better. Senior staff are highly competent; for instance, assessment information is used very well to evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the school, including the sixth form. The resulting improvement plan shows clearly how it is to improve, both in short and long term. Suitable indicators have been identified that can be used by governors to check progress.
- Although the school is totally independent, it has developed partnerships so staff gain insights into practice elsewhere. The school is supporting other nearby schools, particularly the leadership in primary schools. It very wisely commissioned an external review to be absolutely certain about the quality of teaching and to provide further advice on precisely what was needed to ensure it continued to improve.
- The leadership of teaching is superb. Leaders have ensured impressive rates of improvement in teaching in recent years by ensuring the very best practice is adopted by all staff. Teachers and teaching assistants benefit greatly from a well-designed training programme that makes excellent use of the outstanding practice that exists in the school.
- Heads of department and heads of year are very effective. They are involved in closely monitoring the work of the school and ensure very good teamwork. The leaders of English and mathematics have made noteworthy improvements to their departments. Leaders have successfully challenged underperformance, and performance management has been effectively used to raise standards.
- The very large majority of parents and virtually all staff are strongly supportive of the school's leadership.
- The school is taking highly appropriate steps to ensure that it uses its pupil premium funding very effectively. This is very carefully monitored and staff are held to account for the progress made by eligible students.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors undertake their role very effectively. They have ensured that the school has maintained high standards and has continued to improve strongly. They know about the attainment of students and the progress that different groups of students make. Governors have an excellent grasp of the data used to compare the school's performance against

national averages. Governors undertake training specific to the school to ensure that they have a detailed knowledge of the information related to its performance. The governing body has ensured that the school has made highly effective arrangements for the use of pupil premium funding, and are very well informed about effectiveness of the funding. It is holding leaders to account for ensuring that these students make better progress. Governors have a good awareness of how teachers' performance is managed to improve their practice. They ensure pay awards and promotions are only made where these are deserved. They support senior leaders very well in tackling the very small amount of remaining underperformance in teaching.

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	136587
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	429811

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1695
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	377
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Moore
Headteacher	Lois Reed
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01788 573425
Fax number	N/A
Email address	info@ashlawn.org.uk

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