

The Ashwood Academy

Ashwood Way, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG23 8AA

Inspection dates

27–28 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the school opened, senior leaders and trustees have led with purpose, orchestrating rapid improvement. As a result, the school's reputation has rightly grown within the local area. The work of the school is respected by others, including the local authority.
- The headteacher, members of the trust and other leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Improvement planning is comprehensive and there is a strong desire to continue to rapidly improve. Leaders do not, however, always make full strategic use of the information they gather.
- The quality of teaching is typically good. Teachers are adept at planning well for pupils, including those with low social and academic starting points. Pupils engage in learning and make strong progress.
- Pupils from low starting points make good and sometimes rapid progress in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, pupils are not encouraged to present their work in other subjects with the same degree of care.
- Leaders use additional funding effectively and ensure that pupils reap the benefits. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are supported effectively and make good progress including in mathematics and English.
- The school's curriculum fosters pupils' enjoyment of learning and facilitates success. Pupils respond well to developing a range of skills including in areas like art, business and religious education. However, some aspects of the school's curriculum require further adaptation in order to ensure that pupils achieve their full potential and attain a wider range of accreditations.
- The governing body is effective and contributes well to supporting school leaders and trustees. However, governors have not ensured that the school's website contains all the required information.
- Pupils feel safe as they develop trusting relationships with each other and the adults who care for them. Those pupils who are vulnerable or in need of additional help are well supported because leaders make good use of local services to ensure that they receive the assistance they require.
- Pupils' attendance is excellent. Pupils enjoy school life and some speak highly of the strides they make in managing their own behaviour allowing them to learn increasingly well. Behaviour between pupils is positive as adults' expectations are high and fully understood.
- Many pupils make a successful return to a mainstream setting which is testament to the skill and expertise of staff at Ashwood.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management further, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that the school’s website complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish
 - making greater use of school performance information when evaluating school effectiveness
 - developing the school’s curriculum, including in science, so that pupils have the best chance of gaining a wider range of worthwhile accreditations.
- Improve further the quality of teaching by raising expectations of pupils’ presentation in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, in a relatively short space of time, have established a culture of high expectations for all. The headteacher and other senior staff have coordinated significant improvement since the school opened. Their unswerving focus on school improvement has ensured that both the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils have developed at speed. Leaders, including trustees, who are ably steered by the executive principal, ascribe to a compelling vision for the future, which all staff are energetically working towards. Consequently, the school is now on a much firmer footing within the locality and its reputation continues to strengthen.
- Staffing arrangements have stabilised this year. The school's staffing profile includes a full quota of core subject teachers and specialist teachers. Leaders have seized upon the chance to strongly influence the development of staff skills and expertise, including facilitating professional qualifications. Morale is high and staff are united in their ambition to give of their best for the pupils in their care. Outcomes for pupils have improved and all move on to appropriate next steps because the school equips them with the skills needed for success.
- The headteacher, ably supported by other leaders, monitors school performance closely. Consequently, there is a clear and consistent understanding of what the school does well and where further improvement is required. The school's improvement plan is well considered, with appropriate actions to raise standards further. Helpfully, leaders retain a long-term view, setting a clear trajectory for additional improvement.
- Leaders, from the moment pupils join, gather a range of performance information including that relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and well-being. However, the strategic use of this information in order to evaluate school performance judiciously requires further development. This is because many leaders are inexperienced or new to their roles.
- The assistant headteacher is instrumental in ensuring that pupils' individual needs, including those who may have special educational needs, are identified as soon as they join the school. Initial pupil assessments are comprehensive. Consequently, the school has a high success rate of ensuring that pupils whose special educational needs had not been pinpointed in previous schools benefit from specialist placements, including some to special schools. This ensures that each pupil moves on to an appropriate next step and his or her needs are met well.
- Newly appointed curriculum leaders have already instigated well-judged changes, particularly in English and mathematics. For example, the English leader is beginning to adapt the key stage 3 programme of study appropriately so more pupils gain accreditations. This work is at an early stage. Curriculum leaders' professional growth is highly prized by senior leaders. The senior team attach importance to the skills and enthusiasm that subject leaders bring to their roles. However, some curricular aspects remain less well developed. Leaders acknowledge that the range of external accreditations on offer at key stage 4 is too narrow for some pupils.
- Despite this, leaders have ensured that the school's current curriculum is well-considered and appropriately personalised to meet pupils' individual and complex

needs. In addition, pupils follow a programme of learning which enables them to develop new skills in leadership, communication and resilience. Moreover, extra-curricular activities such as tennis, philosophy and cookery develop pupils' social skills rapidly, fostering team spirit and cooperation. The curriculum gives pupils a thirst for learning. Leaders acknowledge that more detailed information about the content of the curriculum should be included on the school's website to enable parents to hold a clear overview of what is studied and when.

- Teachers are set challenging targets linked to improving outcomes for pupils. Regular monitoring by a range of senior leaders is helpful and teachers receive valuable advice on how to improve their skills, including those who are new to the profession. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the school opened. Leaders ensure that staff performance targets link directly to pupils' achievement and targets within the school's development plan.
- Morale is high and all are proud of how much the school has improved in recent times. One member of staff encapsulated the views of others, saying, 'I feel valued, supported and encouraged in my role. I truly feel I make a difference.'
- Leaders ensure that pupils develop an understanding of democracy, respect and other modern British values. Pupils regularly vote on different themes to express an opinion. For example, during the recent presidential election in the United States pupils considered the quandary of 'Should celebrities become politicians?' Such debate enables pupils to express their views respectfully and have their voices heard.
- As most pupils attend on a temporary basis and are dual registered, the school does not receive additional funding directly, including Year 7 catch-up funding or funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, leaders go to great lengths to ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit from the pupil premium, invoicing feeder schools retrospectively. This fastidious approach means that disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional support when needed most. As a result, stumbling blocks to achieving well are overcome and disadvantaged pupils quickly make good progress socially, emotionally and academically, often outperforming their peers.

Governance of the school

- Trustees, steered knowledgeably by the executive principal, ensure that all parties know and understand their responsibilities. Governors play an important part by making regular visits and gathering first-hand information to inform their discussions. Many are highly experienced and knowledgeable and recognise the tremendous improvement to the school since it opened.
- Governors meet regularly and review many aspects of the school's performance. However, they are less secure in how well pupils are learning as their understanding of performance information is underdeveloped.
- Work to assure governors that pupils are kept safe is of high quality. The safeguarding governor is knowledgeable and meets regularly with the school's designated safeguarding lead. This enables governors to review in depth the school's processes against current safeguarding requirements. This work is particularly helpful to leaders.

- Trustees and governors ensure that there is helpful information on the school's website, particularly about the school's admission process. However, some aspects, including curriculum information and pupil premium spending, do not fully comply. During the inspection, the executive principal was already beginning to address these shortcomings.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements. Staff understand and discharge their responsibilities very effectively. For example, staff know and understand how to refer a pupil if they have concerns.
- Working closely with external professionals, leaders promptly activate appropriate support from a wide range of agencies to fully meet pupils' needs. For example, the school has forged strong partnerships with professionals such as those specialising in health care to address some pupils' substance misuse difficulties. Many pupils benefit from such intervention and consequently address some troubling issues that have plagued them in the past. Such support contributes well to ensuring pupils' readiness for transition to the next stage in their lives.
- Safer recruitment processes are followed rigorously. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on adults' suitability to work with children. References and other required information is gathered and filed systematically in staff personnel folders. The school's single central record is maintained meticulously.
- Parents who responded to the school's own survey are rightly confident that the school is a safe place for their children. Pupils' behaviour is managed well so that they do not become a risk to themselves or others.
- The school's thorough approach is enhanced further by prioritising pupils' well-being through a variety of curriculum activities. Following training, subject leaders have wisely adapted the curriculum to generate meaningful links to supporting pupils' personal safety awareness. Leaders carefully orchestrate the expertise of others so that pupils are mindful of the dangers of radicalisation, knife crime and gang culture, for example. Consequently, many pupils strengthen their ability to resist peer pressure and outside influences, getting back on track successfully.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. As a result, pupils, who often join the school following interruption to their education, make good and sometimes rapid progress from low starting points. Teachers are highly adept at forging trusting relationships, promoting pupils' self-assurance effectively and sparking their interest in a variety of subjects. Staff expertise enables many pupils to re-engage positively with education and experience success.
- Staff take hold of opportunities to develop pupils' social skills, emphasising the importance of personal qualities such as integrity and honesty. For example, during a social communication session, a member of staff skilfully facilitated a discussion to

consider the dilemma of when borrowing becomes stealing. Pupils were able to consider different scenarios and rehearse sensible decisions about the appropriate course of action to take. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves and they develop a stronger sense of moral responsibility.

- Teachers' planning is appropriately adapted to align closely to pupils' starting points. Using the information gathered at the point of admission, teachers waste no time in setting appropriately challenging tasks. Teachers also build very effectively on prior learning, encouraging pupils to think about previous tasks when they become stuck or uncertain. For example, when considering fractions a pupil who was struggling looked back over previous learning and declared, 'I remember this now.' Consequently, pupils' engagement and momentum in learning well becomes sustained over time.
- The teaching of mathematics is highly effective. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are proficient at modelling a variety of calculation strategies so pupils grasp what is expected. Teachers also encourage pupils to reason and explain their thinking, often with marked success. For example, pupils in key stage 3 discussed their ideas when solving complex word problems, enabling them to identify probabilities accurately.
- Pupils respond well to a variety of opportunities to hone their writing skills in a variety of subjects. For example, in Year 10, pupils studying for an arts award used computers to research and present information about an inspirational person of their choice. They were able to source and present evidence accurately. This was because the teacher interjected regularly with well-judged reminders about grammatical accuracy, including the use of punctuation.
- Leaders advocate that keeping pupils' needs at the heart of their work is pivotal to ensuring that all staff are well equipped to deal with the demands of their roles. Opportunities to discuss pupils' requirements are threaded through the school week, enabling adults to talk about individual pupils in depth. This means that pupils' social, moral and academic needs are kept at the forefront of adults' work, enabling pupils to progress in all areas of their development.
- Staff hold high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. Teachers model very effectively what is expected and set clear parameters for pupils to experience success. Adults' comments, including, 'You can do this without me' and, 'You know what you are doing', are influential in developing pupils' self-confidence. Furthermore, opportunities abound for pupils to apply their English and mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 8 could confidently calculate the biomass of different substances. However, pupils do not always achieve the same neat level of presentation as they do so routinely in English.
- Support staff are deployed thoughtfully and are skilful at managing pupils' behaviour. Relationships are positive. Pupils quickly build trusting and respectful relationships with adults which enable them to access learning, following a period of absence from education for many. Staff are able to de-escalate situations quickly as well as re-engage pupils in learning well over time. All staff work closely together and strong partnerships are evident across the school.

- Teachers implement the school's approach to providing feedback to pupils highly consistently. As a result, pupils' misconceptions are 'nipped in the bud' and they are clear on how to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident that staff deal very effectively with bullying. Staff act as advocates, working alongside pupils in tutor groups. Advocates get to know and understand pupils well. This enables them to have a marked impact on developing pupils' emotional health. The school's highly developed culture of support benefits all aspects of pupils' learning, including those who, for example, become stressed during examinations.
- The majority of pupils express a high level of confidence in staff, noting that there is always an adult they can talk to. Despite, previously poor experiences of schooling, pupils quickly develop positive, trusting relationships with adults. Pupils feel safe.
- Pupils are especially well supported to move onto the next stage of education or training. Pupils participate in face-to-face or group sessions that equip them with skills and understanding regarding decision making, employability and apprenticeships. Pupils participate in a range of work placements such as plumbing or hairdressing. As a result, pupils make informed choices and many go on to appropriate vocational pathways.
- Pupils discuss challenging subjects maturely. For example, during a sex and relationships lesson pupils listened well to one another, demonstrating respect for one another's views. The school's personal, health and social education programme is tailored to tackle issues that directly affect the lives of pupils. For example, after concerns about pupils' respect for fire safety, a course was followed and all pupils achieved a fire safety qualification. Consequently, the curriculum meets pupils' needs extremely well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour is managed extremely well. Many pupils, including those who attend alternative providers, significantly improve their behaviour over time and are able to transition successfully on to the next stage, including reintegrating back into mainstream education. Typically, pupils show respect and regard for their peers, staff and visitors.
- Despite the very high level of need within the school population, learning is rarely interrupted by incidents of problematic behaviour because staff and pupils deal with potential unrest effectively. The school's advocates play a key role, calming pupils and dealing with any rebellious outbursts. Consequently, pupils get back on track with minimal disruption to others.

- Attendance improves for many pupils, particularly when compared to their previous mainstream schooling pattern of attendance. Pupils settle in well and develop confidence in the adults who care for them. As a result, pupils' attendance in all year groups is high.
- Leaders track pupils' behaviour carefully and log incidents, noting sufficient detail. This enables leaders to track patterns of behaviour over time for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Records show that the vast majority improve considerably and, for example, an individual's likelihood of exclusion significantly reduces.
- Pupils are supported well and staff's expectations are stated clearly. Routines and transitions, including from classrooms to breaktimes, are orderly and methodical.
- Pupils told inspectors that behaviour at social times is usually good, adding, 'There are always a lot of teachers to help if needed.' Teachers are quick to respond to any negativity when required, for example by confronting any derogatory language appropriately. In the main, pupils are courteous and the atmosphere is relaxed. They return to lessons promptly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils arrive with low levels of attainment because of gaps in their education, often due to a range of complex behavioural and medical needs or as a result of being permanently excluded from previous schools. The majority of pupils make good, and sometimes rapid, progress and this represents good achievement overall.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and English, closing the gap between themselves and their peers. Some pupils, despite disruptions to their schooling, achieve well and attain the standard expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress socially, emotionally and academically during their time at the school and are able to return with levels of achievement which are closer to those expected nationally. Many pupils in key stage 3 successfully return to mainstream schools. All Year 11 pupils move on to an appropriate next step.
- Many pupils make good progress in a variety of subjects. In art, pupils achieve particularly well and their GCSE coursework, studying artists such as Matisse, is of high quality. Pupils also appreciate their own academic development, discovering aptitude for subjects they have previously not accessed in depth. One pupil reflected upon her artistic growth, noting, 'I've tried new techniques. My confidence grew when I started to achieve reasonable results.' The curriculum is adapted appropriately to pupils' starting points and contributes well to enabling pupils to foster a positive self-image.
- Overall, many of those who continue to attend through key stage 4 make good progress. All gain mathematics and English GCSEs or other accreditations, such as in business and enterprise, by the end of Year 11. A high proportion achieve arts awards. This year, the majority of Year 11 pupils will move on to further education or vocational apprenticeships. In the past, some pupils have also gained places at universities.
- Leaders have successfully ensured that all pupils have an equal chance of success. Disadvantaged pupils make excellent progress and outperform their non-disadvantaged peers in English, mathematics and science.

- All pupils who attend the school have identified behavioural needs. Staff assess accurately that some may also have additional learning needs. When this is the case, staff ensure that appropriate interventions such as additional reading support are instigated at the earliest opportunity. Staff also make well-judged decisions that will support pupils accessing examination situations, such as applying for additional time. This means that pupils who have special educational needs are well supported and make good progress, even though they may only be at the school for a short space of time.
- This year, pupils have not attained as well in science as leaders had predicted. This was in part due to unsettled staffing arrangements. Furthermore, some pupils with behavioural needs have found it too challenging to access some of the practical aspects of the course safely. Leaders are wisely beginning to make changes to the school's study programme so that more pupils experience success in this subject.

School details

Unique reference number	141123
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10032829

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

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Bruce Newlands
Executive Principal	Graham Payne
Headteacher	Dave Moran
Telephone number	01256 474005
Website	www.catch-22.org.uk/services/the-ashwood-academy
Email address	adminoffice@theashwoodacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school, a pupil referral unit, opened in September 2014 as part of the Catch 22 Multi Academies Trust. The predecessor school that occupied the site, The Ashwood Centre was judged inadequate in March 2013.
- The school caters for pupils who are permanently excluded, at risk of exclusion from local mainstream schools or who are emotionally vulnerable or who have medical needs. All places are commissioned by Hampshire's Inclusion Service. Pupils attend for a varying length of time depending on their level of need. The average length of stay is approximately two terms.
- All pupils attend full time as either single or dual-registered pupils at the school. Currently, there are 19 pupils who are single-registered on roll. Additionally, 52 pupils

attend on a short-term basis with the aim of reintegrating back into mainstream schools or moving on to the next stage successfully.

- The school aims 'to ensure that all learners fulfil every aspect of their potential and become equipped for reintegration to school, further education or employment'.
- The executive principal moved from his previous role of headteacher to take up the responsibility of executive principal in January 2016. At the same time, the deputy headteacher became acting headteacher and in September 2016 took up the substantive post.
- Pupils follow courses with other educational providers including Basingstoke College of Technology and Inclusion Hampshire.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum, equalities objectives and how the school spends pupil premium funding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the executive principal, the headteacher and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. They also met with a representative of the local authority, who commissions places for pupils on behalf of Hampshire local authority.
- Inspectors met with staff, including those who hold significant responsibilities including the school's English, mathematics and science leaders.
- An inspector spoke to a representative from Inclusion Hampshire, an alternative provider used by the school. A telephone call was also made to one of the school's feeder schools.
- Inspectors observed learning in 12 lessons, seven jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and met with a group of pupils who belong to the school council.
- Inspectors analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school's improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. Inspectors considered leaders' own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.
- Inspectors considered the eight responses to the pupil survey and a letter received from Children's Services in Hampshire. There were no responses from parents to Ofsted's Parent View online survey. Inspectors also considered 16 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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