

Ash Hill Academy

Ash Hill, Hatfield, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN7 6JH

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching across year groups and subjects is too variable. As a result, teaching is not consistently good.
- Lessons are often not challenging enough. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and achieve are not high enough, particularly in Year 7 and 8. Most-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently.
- Although pupil outcomes are improving, the progress that pupils make from their different starting points is below the national average across subjects.
- Pupils' persistent absence remains high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Although behaviour has improved, there are still too many pupils excluded from school, particularly the disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills across the curriculum are underdeveloped, especially for writing at greater length. As a result, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- There have been staffing difficulties in the provision for special educational needs. Although staffing is now stable, plans to support pupils who have SEN are not adequately focused on supporting their learning and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal is highly ambitious for the future of the school. Effective action plans are leading to improving pupil outcomes and behaviour.
- Staff morale is high. They fully support the principal's vision and desire to ensure that all pupils make at least good progress.
- Middle leaders are clear about the vital role that they play in school improvement. The quality assurance of subjects is increasingly strong.
- Governors are fully committed to the school. They have high expectations and hold leaders fully to account.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form, especially on vocational courses.
- Professional development is tailored to the needs of teachers. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is improving at a faster pace across subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good by ensuring that:
 - all pupils make good progress from their different starting points
 - there is greater challenge in lessons for all pupils
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to write at greater length across the curriculum
 - teachers set high-quality homework which extends pupils' learning
 - all staff have higher expectations of what pupils should and must achieve
 - there are consistently high standards of presentation across all subjects and year groups
 - there is closer communication between teaching assistants and teachers to ensure that the needs of pupils who have SEN are fully met.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour by:
 - ensuring that pupils take more responsibility for their own learning and progress by developing resilience and independence in their learning
 - improving pupils' attendance further and reducing persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
 - continuing to reduce the number of exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN, so that they are in line with or below national averages.
- Develop the systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the sixth-form personal development programme to further maximise its benefits for students.
- Increase opportunities to broaden and develop pupils' cultural experiences, both in and outside the classroom.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal is unrelenting in his focus on improving standards across all aspects of the school. The principal is highly ambitious for the future of the school. The principal has a clear vision for improvement. Staff are fully behind this vision for improvement.
- Staff morale is high. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the effect the principal has made since his appointment. They are committed to ensuring that the school improves further.
- Staff talk positively about being part of Delta Academies Trust. In particular, they appreciate the intensive and regular support from the trust's subject directors. Subject directors model and share effective practice. Consequently, teaching is improving at a faster rate than in the past.
- Staff are supportive of the professional development programme they are able to access. One member of staff said that the weekly professional development sessions 'have challenged us as staff to raise our game and be more consistent'. As a result, the professional development programme is helping to strengthen teaching and learning across subjects and to ensure that pupils have a more consistent experience in their lessons.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective. They regularly review the progress of pupils within their subjects. They are quick to identify pupils who are at risk of underachievement. Intervention is swift and evaluated effectively for impact. Quality assurance is increasingly strong. As a result, middle leaders know the strengths and weakness in their department well. Consequently, improvement plans focus on the right priorities.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum. They have a clear rationale for the new curriculum model. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to study a broad range of creative, artistic and academic subjects. Pupils have access to a number of extra-curricular opportunities after school. Uptake of these activities has increased markedly since the previous inspection.
- Leaders ascribe a high value and importance to the development of pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development programme is audited frequently and mapped across the curriculum. Leaders know the community well. As a result, they update the spiritual, social, moral and cultural programme in response to pressures and risks facing pupils locally. However, leaders recognise that the programme would benefit from an increase in pupils' exposure to a wider range of cultural activities and experiences.

Governance of the school

- Governors are ambitious for the future of the school. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are clear about what is required to improve the school further.

- Governors are proactive. They visit the school regularly. They talk to staff and pupils. One governor, when discussing the impact of behaviour strategies, said, 'I have never seen such improvement in such a short period of time.'
- Governors understand how the funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used. As a result, gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing, particularly at key stage 4.
- Governors ask challenging questions of leaders. They hold leaders to account. They visit the school regularly, meeting with staff and pupils, to check what leaders are telling them. However, the minutes of meetings do not reflect this level of challenge fully.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors, leaders and the trust take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. The safeguarding link governor regularly visits the school. She talks to pupils and staff and checks recruitment procedures.
- Staff understand the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. Staff are alert to any local safeguarding issues. As a result, they can respond accordingly to any concerns.
- Staff training is comprehensive and updated on a regular basis. They receive regular training and updates on, for example, neglect, child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse.
- Referrals to outside agencies are made in a timely manner. This ensures that pupils receive the support they need.
- The school has effective procedures in place to take action if they suspect a pupil to be missing from education. Leaders work closely with the local police. The attendance team make home visits when required to ensure that pupils attend school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching and learning has improved, it is still too variable across subjects and year groups, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- Staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in Years 10 and 11 lessons compared to Years 7 and 8. Leaders acknowledge that improvements in teaching and learning have been more marked in Years 10 and 11. Leaders have plans to address this. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these plans.
- Pupils are mostly compliant in lessons. They follow the teacher's directions and complete tasks set. However, pupils are not challenged enough to think for themselves, particularly the most able. When they are, they rise to the challenge.
- Teachers do not plan effectively enough for the needs of individual pupils, particularly those who have SEN. The school policy, of teachers and teaching assistants working together to support pupils with additional needs, is not fully established. Recently

created pen portraits, providing teachers with information about individual pupils' needs, do not provide specific strategies to support pupils' learning.

- The school policy to provide regular opportunities for pupils to refine and improve their work is inconsistently applied across subjects. However, work in pupils' English books shows that pupils are given more regular opportunities to edit and improve their work. This is enabling pupils to learn from their mistakes.
- Homework is not always of a high quality. Pupils told inspectors that it is not regularly set, except in mathematics.
- Some parents and carers, as well as pupils, expressed concern about the number of temporary teachers. Staffing is now stable, with specialist teachers in all subjects.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum are not sufficiently developed in key stage 3. However, there are increasing opportunities for writing at greater length across a wider range of subjects in key stage 4.
- The recently introduced PROUD policy, to encourage pupils to present their work well, is having some impact on improving presentation. However, not all pupils take pride in their work. As a result, presentation is variable across subjects, particularly in key stage 3.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive. Pupils are beginning to become more actively involved in lessons. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to discuss their work with others and share their ideas. This is increasing pupils' confidence in lessons.
- Leaders' plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning are beginning to show impact. As a result, there is evidence of increasingly strong teaching, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Pupils told inspectors that teaching has improved. They also told inspectors that because behaviour has improved they are able to focus on their learning to a greater extent.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not show resilience and independent attitudes towards learning. Pupils are not self-directing and rely on their teachers too much for direction.
- Many pupils told inspectors that incidents of bullying have reduced since the appointment of the new principal and that staff deal with any issues. However, although recorded incidents of bullying are low, some pupils are not confident that bullying is resolved effectively. Some pupils told inspectors that sometimes bullying persists after staff intervention. Some parents reflected this view in their response to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire.

- Although pupils learn about different cultures and faiths, younger pupils have a less well-developed understanding of different cultures. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 talked more explicitly about fundamental British values and cultural diversity.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe online. They told inspectors that they feel confident to go to their learning manager, who provides pastoral support, if they have any issues or concerns. Weekly life lessons enable pupils to learn about relationship, drugs, road safety and looking after their own mental health and well-being.
- Pupils are well supported to make informed choices about the next stage of their education. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 talk positively about the advice they receive from the school's careers advisor, including the opportunities to talk to employers and further education institutions at careers fairs. Consequently, there is a low number of pupils who are not in employment, education or training when they leave school. Leaders and governors place high importance on good-quality careers guidance. As a result, leaders are currently working towards the implementation of the Gatsby benchmarks, the government careers standards for schools.
- Pupils accessing an alternative education provision are making better progress over time. They mostly attend well. Leaders monitor the quality of provision and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although incidents of low-level disruption have reduced, exclusions remain high and above the national average. Exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN, although reducing, are particularly high.
- Leaders place high importance on good attendance. As a result, pupils' overall attendance has improved, particularly for pupils who have SEN. Pupils talk very positively about the range of attendance rewards and praise assemblies to encourage good attendance. Rates of persistent absence have also reduced. However, persistent absence remains above the national average, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- Behaviour at breaks and lunchtimes is mostly calm and orderly. Staff are highly visible during breaks, lunchtimes and at the start and end of the school day. As a result, pupils leave school in an orderly fashion. However, some younger pupils told inspectors that corridor behaviour can be boisterous at times. Although inspectors did not hear any inappropriate language during the inspection, some pupils told inspectors that they sometimes hear such language.
- If pupils are late to lessons this is dealt with swiftly. Consequently, punctuality to lessons, and to school, has improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, pupils made poor progress from their different starting points. As a result, the progress that pupils made was well below the national average. Provisional outcomes

for 2017 indicate that pupils made better progress. However, rates of progress are still below the national average.

- Pupils' attainment improved in the vast majority of subjects in 2017, based on provisional outcomes. This was most marked in English literature, sociology, history, geography and resistant materials. The school's own internal data, on current pupils' achievement, shows that this trend of improvement is likely to continue this year.
- The number of pupils achieving a pass in both GCSE English and mathematics improved in 2017. Despite this, the proportion of pupils achieving a grade 4, or above, in both English and mathematics is still below the national average. Current data shows that an increasing number of pupils are on track to achieve a grade 4 or above.
- Evidence from pupils' current work shows that rates of progress across a range of subjects are improving. However, progress for some groups of pupils, such as the disadvantaged and the most able pupils, has not been rapid enough.
- The progress made by most able pupils was well below the national average in 2016. Although most-able pupils made better progress in 2017, rates of progress were still below similar pupils nationally. Current most able pupils are making better progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Provisional outcomes for 2017 indicate that disadvantaged pupils made better progress across their GCSE subjects in 2017. However, the progress of these pupils is still below that of other pupils nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is showing improvement. The work that inspectors saw in pupils' books reflects this. However, leaders are aware that barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils need to be more explicitly identified in their action plans.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Good teaching in the sixth form enables pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- The progress that students make on vocational courses is above the national average. The vast majority of students study vocational courses. The small number of students who study academic courses make progress in line with similar pupils nationally.
- Requirements for the 16 to 19 study programme are met. The collaborative arrangement, with four other sixth forms in the area, means that although the sixth form is very small, students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum including vocational, academic and GCSE qualifications.
- Provisional outcomes for 2017 indicate that students made good progress in English and mathematics GCSE resit examinations. Dedicated teaching time for English and mathematics GCSE courses ensures that students are well supported. Pupils make good progress on the level 1 and 2 courses offered as part of the 16 to 19 programmes of study.
- The number of students going on to higher education has increased over the last three years. An increasing number of pupils are taking up apprenticeships.

- Work experience in Year 12, together with opportunities for volunteering, helps students prepare for the world of work. The school's careers advisor provides impartial careers advice and guidance to inform students' next steps.
- The sixth-form learning manager knows the students exceptionally well. She provides strong pastoral support, including referrals to other agencies when required.
- Guest speakers are invited regularly into school to enhance life lessons and tutor time. Topics cover, for example, personal development, well-being, mental health and drugs education. Leaders recognise that this programme would benefit from further monitoring to maximise its benefits further.

School details

Unique reference number	137066
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10036568

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	722
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	40
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Carol Cartwright
Principal	John Higgins
Telephone number	01302 840961
Website	www.ashhillacademy.org.uk
Email address	info@ashhillacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school is an 11 to 19 smaller-than-average secondary school.
- Since the last inspection a new principal, and a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body have been appointed.
- The school is part of Delta Academies Trust. The board of directors is the legal governing body within the trust. The school operates a local educational advisory board.

- The school operates a collaborative sixth form with four other schools in the Delta Academies Trust: De Warenne Academy, Don Valley Academy, Rossington All Saints Academy and Serlby Park Academy.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British families. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well below the national average.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which are the minimum performance expectations for secondary schools. Provisional outcomes for 2017 indicate that the school is likely to meet the government floor standards.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results.
- Some pupils attend off-site alternative provision at St Wilfred's Academy, which is a part of Delta Academies Trust. A small number of pupils attend The Levett School, a pupil referral unit run by Doncaster local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during this inspection, including through lesson observations, many of which were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also looked at a wide range of pupils' work in every year group and across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including middle leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, members of the local educational advisory board and staff new to the school.
- An inspector visited one of the schools in the collaborative sixth form during the inspection.
- Inspectors talked both formally in meetings and informally with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 68 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, email correspondence from parents and 37 responses to the staff online questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to the school's work, including the self-evaluation document, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Michele Costello, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Rogers	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Garrett	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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