

# Ashbourne Independent School

17 Old Court Place, Kensington, London W8 4PL

## Inspection dates

31 January–2 February 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and director of studies are dedicated to providing a positive and successful experience of education for all their pupils.
- Leaders review policy and practice in response to their own evaluations, as well as to feedback from pupils. They are strongly committed to maintaining high standards and demonstrate a continuous drive for further improvements.
- Pupils are motivated by their teachers' strong subject knowledge and the high-quality teaching they receive. They have a diligent and ambitious attitude towards their studies and achieve very well.
- Pupils benefit from an individualised programme of academic and pastoral support. Staff are readily available to help pupils with any difficulties.
- Pupils study and socialise well together. They gain in confidence and self-esteem and become increasingly independent in their living and learning. They are well prepared for the next steps in fulfilling their aspirations.
- Sixth-form students' personalised careers guidance and high levels of achievement mean that they take up successfully the higher education courses of their choice.
- There are a few inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' questioning and use of assessment so that most-able pupils are not sufficiently stretched.
- Leaders' work to improve the attendance of some pupils has been effective. However, levels of pupils' absence are too high.
- New and refined systems, such as those to improve attendance and the role of middle leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching, are in the early stages of having an impact.
- The school offers a range of subjects that enable pupils to be well qualified to pursue the courses and careers of their choice. However, pupils' uptake of extra-curricular activities is low.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that good practice is shared and is evident consistently across the school by:
  - continuing to develop the strengths in middle leadership so that regular monitoring informs whole-school training and support for individual teachers
  - teachers improving their practice where needed in response to leaders' expectations and feedback
  - the quality of questioning and assessment being of a consistently high standard across all subjects so that more pupils attain the highest grades
  - teachers checking that their explanations are sufficiently clear, especially for those pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Embed the new policies and procedures for monitoring attendance so that levels of absence fall swiftly.
- Develop the extra-curricular and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programmes so that all pupils maximise their opportunities to pursue interests and activities beyond their academic studies.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The principal and the director of studies ensure that pupils receive teaching, care and support of a high standard. They place the utmost priority on creating a welcoming and friendly environment in which pupils flourish. Pupils develop resilience and increasing independence, and are successful in their studies.
- As the school has increased in size in recent years, more teachers are employed on a full-time basis. More members of staff have leadership roles. Middle leaders take increasing responsibility for the quality of teaching in their subject areas. They visit lessons regularly and evaluate accurately the areas in which teachers need to improve, providing clear guidance to enable them to do so. Middle leaders demonstrate productive enthusiasm and sound plans and ideas for developing specific aspects of teaching, such as questioning and improving the quality of pupils' writing in different subjects. Weekly training meetings provide valuable opportunities for teachers to engage in discussions about their teaching and share good practice and ideas. There are early indications that their work is helping to improve teaching further. Middle leaders are developing the experience and confidence to hold teachers to account when their teaching needs to improve.
- Pupils study a sufficiently broad range of subjects to enable them to be well qualified to pursue the courses and careers of their choice. High-quality teaching from subject specialists and intensive personal support ensure that pupils learn well. They are successful in their studies, with increasing proportions achieving the highest grades.
- Leaders demonstrate an unremitting determination to continually develop the school. They recognise accurately its strengths and those areas in which they need to improve. Leaders are highly responsive to feedback. Consultations with the student council have led to a diversity of new initiatives, including more environmentally friendly choices of resources and the formation of a lesbian, gay and bisexual forum.
- The school's provision of personalised programmes of academic and pastoral support makes sure that there are equal opportunities for all pupils to succeed. Pupils value highly their teachers' and tutors' availability and approachability outside lessons to help them with any areas of difficulty.
- Alongside their academic studies, pupils cover a range of topics with their personal tutors that build on their prior experiences of PSHE. Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across different subjects, as well as through extra-curricular activities. The camaraderie and mutual respect between pupils and staff from diverse backgrounds are intrinsic to this cohesive school community.
- Since the last inspection, the premises have been expanded and refurbished, providing comfortable classrooms and common areas. Pupils use these areas well, both in and out of lessons. The premises are suitable to accommodate the increased roll of 300 requested by school leaders. However, pupils would appreciate more quiet study areas. While they are willing and able to have hot meals in adjacent facilities away from the school site, they would like there to be places in which to eat meals in the school.
- Leaders respond promptly when their policies and practice need to be refined. For example, they rightly have reviewed their attendance and behaviour policies in order to

tighten procedures, leading to improvements.

- While the curriculum offer enables pupils to be well prepared for the next steps of their education, opportunities, facilities and encouragement for pupils to pursue wider interests such as sporting activities are limited. The take-up of extra-curricular clubs is low.

## **Governance**

- The proprietor and the director of studies collaborate well together to ensure effective governance of the school. They routinely draw on, and respond to, external advice, reflecting their ambitious drive for their pupils to achieve excellence. They recognise realistically what they need to do better and have clear strategic plans for future developments. They work hard to ensure that all the independent school standards are met.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are thorough and efficient. Teachers are alert to local risks and put in place appropriate measures to keep pupils safe, for example using CCTV and supervising younger pupils between sites.
- All staff are mindful of their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. The comprehensive system for referrals, using specific software systems, facilitates timely referrals of any concerns, which leaders follow up rapidly. The school has links with outside agencies so that pupils receive specialist help appropriately. Leaders demonstrate dedication and determination to make sure that this happens.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Pupils are highly respectful and are motivated by their teachers' strong subject knowledge. As a result, they are attentive to their studies and are diligent and ambitious.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and recognise their potential. Teachers are generally alert and responsive to pupils when they need support. Pupils are very appreciative of their teachers giving them additional time to help them with their studies whenever they need it. Teachers organise further tuition, mentoring and drop-in clinics as needed.
- Pupils have very positive relationships with their teachers and each other. They collaborate well to support each other's learning and are willing to share ideas and resolve any misunderstanding or confusion.
- Teachers helpfully make reference to pupils' prior learning to enable them to apply their existing knowledge and understanding to new concepts. Teachers routinely promote pupils' use of technical terms and more complex vocabulary.
- Teachers make regular reference to ways in which examination questions are assessed. This helps pupils to boost their examination technique and to be well prepared to plan their revision and complete formal assessments.
- Pupils generally are able to make improvements to their work because of the comprehensive feedback they regularly receive from their teachers. There is some

inconsistency in the quality of assessment between different subjects.

- Where teachers' subject specialism is applied most successfully to their teaching, they use skilful questioning to rapidly promote pupils' understanding and knowledge. However, when the quality of questioning is not as strong, opportunities are missed to deepen pupils' thinking and to enable them to make the progress they are capable of. On occasion, pupils are not able to embark swiftly on a task because teachers' explanations lack clarity and are too complex. This is especially the case for those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils thrive in the nurturing yet challenging learning environment that Ashbourne provides. Those who have previously, for a range of reasons, had a less positive experience of education find a setting that suits them, with increased independence and opportunities for taking responsibility for themselves. This transition and preparation for life beyond the school, often to higher education, are carefully guided by staff. They know each pupil's particular strengths and needs so that they support pupils well, especially at more challenging times. Parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, agree that this level of care is a strength of the school.
- The work of the personal tutors is especially notable. They were singled out by pupils for their ready approachability to help them resolve concerns as they arise. This is the case both with academic matters and those related to pupils' well-being.
- Personal tutors ensure that pupils are well informed to make decisions about their future careers. Pupils receive very helpful individualised advice and guidance so that they make successful applications and take up places on courses that are right for them.
- Most pupils benefit from a programme of PSHE. It covers a wide range of themes, including those relating to their health, well-being and safety. Pupils are aware of ways in which to keep themselves safe and to avoid risks, such as being drawn into extremism.
- Pupils are motivated to enrich their studies by joining various curriculum-themed clubs, for example Latin club and the film club which shows films in a range of languages. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as trips to the theatre and museums, ice skating, go-karting and playing badminton. However, the take-up on these activities is quite low.
- The annual revue, when pupils organise and present a showcase of their work and hobbies, is a popular event, demonstrating an impressive celebration of pupils' talents and achievements.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Routinely, pupils' attitudes to their learning are diligent and focused. Pupils interact with each other positively and feel, as some pupils describe it, like a family with their peers.

Instances of disruption due to poor behaviour in lessons and around the sites are very rare.

- There have been a few pupil suspensions due to serious behavioural incidents that have breached the clear behaviour policy. Repetition of breaches to the behaviour policy are rare due to the effective actions taken by leaders and the support given to pupils.
- Leaders recognise that overall attendance and punctuality in all year groups need to be better. Individual pupils respond well to specific strategies put in place for them so that their attendance improves.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Pupils enter the school in Year 10 with above-average attainment. They make good progress so that standards achieved at GCSE are also above average. Pupils perform well in English and mathematics, although a smaller proportion attain the highest grades in mathematics.
- Different groups of pupils, such as those who speak English as an additional language and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, perform equally well. There are no gaps in attainment between different groups.
- GCSE pupils and A-level students make strong progress in all subjects, although there is some variation in attainment at the higher grades from year to year. The school's own achievement information, pupils' work and visits to classrooms indicate that some most-able pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of. More have the potential to attain the highest grades.
- Students and pupils clearly value the importance of reading for their studies. They use well the wide range of books on offer around the school. They appreciate the refurbished library, restocked with up-to-date textbooks at the request of the student council.
- The large majority of students progress from the school to the university courses of their choice, attaining the high grades needed.

### **Sixth form provision**

**Outstanding**

- Sixth-form students at Ashbourne are characterised by their high expectations for successful academic careers and fulfilment of their ambitions. Their confidence and motivation are strengthened when they join the school so that they approach their studies diligently. As a result of very good teaching and exceptional pastoral care, they make above-average progress and achieve extremely well.
- The school presents to students a very positive experience of education. They thrive on the caring and personally tailored approach that nurtures their increasing independence. They work collaboratively and socialise contentedly, while respecting each other's aspirations and independent ways of working.
- Personal tutors provide valuable additional support for individual students. Whether needing help with academic work or dealing with complex pastoral matters, personal tutors rapidly get to know their students very well. They know what is needed for each student to be successful in all aspects of their life at Ashbourne.

- Ensuring that students are very well prepared for the next stage in their education is a strength of the school. Teachers devote much time to helping students with university applications and boosting their readiness for interviews and independent studies in the future. Students access informative and bespoke advice so that they are able to choose the courses that are right for them. Combined with highly productive and motivating work experience, students are very well placed to achieve the careers to which they aspire.
- Students are alert to risks in the local community because of the very high level of care taken by school staff to check on their well-being and keep them safe. Strategies to support their mental health are appreciated by students. Some would benefit from more encouragement and opportunity to take part in physical activity and extra-curricular events.

## School details

Unique reference number	100537
DfE registration number	207/6348
Inspection number	10020765

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 21
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	264
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable
Proprietor	Mr M Hatchard-Kirby
Chair	Mr M Hatchard-Kirby
Headteacher	Mr M Hatchard-Kirby
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,000
Telephone number	020 7937 3858
Website	<a href="http://www.ashbournecollege.co.uk/sixth-form-college-london">www.ashbournecollege.co.uk/sixth-form-college-london</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@ashbournecollege.co.uk">admin@ashbournecollege.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	December 2010

## Information about this school

- Ashbourne College is an independent school providing education for 13- to 21-year-olds studying GCSEs and A levels. Most students are enrolled on two-year A-level courses.
- The school is currently registered for 157 pupils and has applied to increase this to 300. The number on roll at the time of this inspection was 292.



- The school was last inspected in December 2010, when it was judged to be outstanding in all aspects.
- The school deregistered as a provider of boarding in January 2013.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in parts of 22 lessons. The lead inspector completed tours of the site with the proprietor and the facilities manager.
- Inspectors held meetings with the director of studies and other school leaders, teachers and groups of pupils and students representing all year groups.
- Inspectors reviewed the surveys completed for this inspection by 51 members of staff and the 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Correspondence from parents was also received and considered.
- The inspection team evaluated a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, safeguarding documentation, including a range of case studies, the single central record and achievement information.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school sites. Inspectors held informal conversations with staff and pupils in and out of lessons.

## Inspection team

Amanda Carter-Fraser, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Brian Oppenheim	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Davies	Ofsted Inspector
David Scott	Ofsted Inspector

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