

Inspection of Ashmole Academy

Cecil Road, Southgate, London N14 5RJ

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Ashmole Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Ashmole School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened in Ashmole Academy's effectiveness before and after it converted to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and sixth-form students cannot praise the school highly enough. Pupils have lots of opportunities to make their voice heard. They contribute to school life through a range of committees and groups. One area of many that stands out is the committee to promote equality and diversity. It has made recommendations that leaders have taken on board and implemented.

The support teachers give to pupils also contributes significantly to learning. Expectations for all pupils are high. Sometimes, however, in Years 7 to 9, teaching plans are not as well thought out as they could be. At times, this makes it difficult for pupils to fully deepen their learning.

Pupils said unanimously that their teachers always help them if they are worried about their academic work or something personal. Sixth-form students appreciate the plentiful support they receive for their next steps, for example the recent careers interviews.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are highly respectful of others and of their teachers. There is little, if any, bullying. Leaders ensure that any bullying is dealt with firmly. Assemblies and form time raise issues about consent and pupils are taught about what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour. No one turns a blind eye to any unacceptable behaviour. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school does many things particularly well. This is recognised by those parents who responded to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Most subject leaders have developed their curriculum effectively. They ensure that pupils learn the fundamental ideas and knowledge before moving on to more complex work. In mathematics, for example, the logically planned curriculum is reflected in what pupils do in the classroom. Learning is planned to ensure that pupils gain a strong understanding of mathematical ideas. In music, geography and religious education, pupils are given work that builds consistently on previous learning. This helps pupils to deepen their knowledge. The quality of pupils' work in these subjects is first rate. In the sixth form too, the curriculum is demanding, and students' work is of a consistently excellent standard.

However, in Years 7 to 9, curriculum thinking is not as sharp in a few subjects. Links between how subject content taught in one unit of work and another are, in a few instances, not explicitly defined. Occasionally, leaders' clear intentions for the curriculum are not put into practice in classrooms. This means that pupils are not able to deepen their learning methodically. Leaders are aware of these inconsistencies and have already begun to tackle them successfully. Nevertheless, these small variations in Years 7 to 9 mean that the quality of education for some pupils is not as strong as it could be.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, including at key stage 4. They take pride in getting pupils and students to achieve well, including in their examination subjects. Teachers receive plentiful training and support for their professional development. However, some aspects of this training are not focused sharply on strengthening teachers' expertise in delivering the curriculum.

Senior leaders, trustees and governors are clear about the school's core mission. They make sure that this informs their decisions and how they work with staff and pupils. One outcome of this is that all staff are highly aspirational for their pupils, including for sixth-form students. Staff have especially strong professional relationships with pupils. This helps to ensure that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are positive. Pupils are highly motivated and work hard to achieve and learn successfully.

The great majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn as successfully as their peers. Pupils' needs are identified accurately, and additional support is provided. This includes extra help for pupils who need support with their reading fluency. Staff routinely make adaptations to teaching, but in a few instances, these adaptations are not fine-tuned to pupils' specific needs. To tackle this, leaders are providing further training for staff to strengthen their expertise in catering for pupils' needs.

Provision for pupils' personal development is comprehensive. Leaders run a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the wider world. For example, leaders and staff work to ensure that all pupils recognise the harmful effects of sexual harassment, and know about the issues around consent. Similarly, pupils are taught about the Equality Act and about what it means to show respect and tolerance to others, regardless of background. After-school clubs, visiting speakers and trips extend pupils' learning. The Ashmolean Scholar programme is highly rated by sixth-form students. They like how it aims to broaden their minds and encourages them to delve into areas of interest.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' welfare and safety are given a high priority. All the policies relating to safeguarding and child protection are up to date and refer to the latest guidance. Staff training is thorough. This means that they understand the procedures for identifying pupils who may need support. Leaders have strong links with outside agencies, including the local authority children's services. This ensures that pupils are given the right help quickly when they need it.

The vetting checks to ensure the suitability of staff are comprehensive. Leaders and governors have appropriate oversight of the procedures and make regular checks to ensure that safeguarding arrangements work well in practice.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' work on the curriculum has been highly effective. In a few subjects, however, leaders have not identified as clearly how knowledge within each unit of work lays the foundation for what comes next. This makes it difficult for pupils to extend their understanding and skills progressively, especially in key stage 3. Leaders know that a few subjects need strengthening further. They are already taking steps to ensure that planned improvements are put into practice swiftly, including any necessary training for staff. Leaders need to build on this work and make sure that, in key stage 3, learning is sequenced coherently in all subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136308
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10199352
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1856
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	550
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rudi Ramdarshan
Executive headteacher	Timothy Sullivan
Website	www.ashmoleacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ashmole Academy is a school for pupils aged 11 to 18 in the London Borough of Barnet. It is part of the Ashmole Academy Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The careers programme meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Deep dives were conducted in science, mathematics, languages, geography, music, design and technology and religious studies. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and with senior leaders, staff, pupils, the chair of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.
- Meetings were also held with the safeguarding lead, and inspectors scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks on adults working in the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of 58 members of staff who responded to the confidential staff survey and 166 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, including the free-text responses.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and students to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school. Inspectors also considered 47 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

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