

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



18 December 2017

Ms Ranjna Shiyani
Headteacher
Ashley College
Ashley Gardens
Wembley
Middlesex
HA9 8NP

Dear Ms Shiyani

Short inspection of Ashley College

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2017 with Mark Dale-Emberton, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The school has undergone significant changes since the previous inspection. The local authority reviewed the school's provision and it now offers a predominantly short-term placement for pupils who have been unable to attend school, mainly for medical reasons. The school is much smaller than it was at the last inspection, with 20 school-based places and a home tuition package for pupils currently unable to attend school.

The new leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up your post as headteacher in September 2016. In September 2017, a new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher joined the school. Following your appointment, one of the first things you did was to set about improving attendance and the pastoral support given to pupils and their families. The different skills that senior leaders bring to the team complement each other well and have continued to build on the successes of your previous work.

In November 2016, local authority officers commissioned an external review of the effectiveness of the management committee that governs the school. As a result of the review, new members joined the committee and have brought additional knowledge and skills. The committee is now much more clearly holding leaders to account for the impact of their work.

You have put in place more thorough checks and analysis of the school's work. As a result, senior leaders and members of the management committee have a firmer grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Overall, there is much more ambition and

aspiration for pupils. Everyone is energised and focused on improving the school still further. The school building is vibrant and welcoming. There are a wide range of resources, including new technologies available to teachers and pupils. Attractive displays of pupils' work around the school proudly celebrate their achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have put in place clear and secure systems to ensure that pupils are helped to keep safe. When pupils start their placement at the school, a great deal of care is taken to find out about their welfare needs. Leaders ensure that appropriate and personalised early help is in place so that pupils can settle quickly. Leaders hold six-weekly reviews for each pupil. Parents and carers, healthcare and local authority professionals also attend these meetings. This ensures that pupils and their families receive the care and support they need, at the right time.

Staff are well trained in managing pupils' welfare needs. They report and share any concerns that they have quickly. The school has a daily briefing where staff discuss pupils' successes and any concerns. Staff take a great deal of care on how they teach pupils about staying safe. Leaders make sure that they consult with external agencies and are sensitive to pupils' previous experiences when they teach, for example, health-related topics.

Pupils feel safe at school. They told inspectors that bullying does not happen. They know how to stay safe online. There were no replies to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. However, inspectors spoke to parents and reviewed the school's own surveys. Parents believe that their children are safe and well looked after. One parent reported, 'The support is holistic, very well organised and welcoming.' Overall, the leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- We first agreed to focus on the actions leaders are taking to improve pupils' attendance. This is because pupils referred for placements at the school have typically very poor attendance.
- Leaders have put a great deal of time and persistence into improving attendance. Systems and procedures to monitor attendance are now more thorough. For example, staff use rewards to celebrate good attendance and the decision to introduce breakfast clubs has supported Year 11 pupils to improve their attendance. However, staff will also have difficult conversations with parents and pupils where needed to highlight the importance of attending school regularly. Higher expectations, strong oversight by senior leaders and the development of a 'no excuses' culture are at the heart of the school's attendance strategy.
- Inspectors reviewed a variety of attendance information and case studies for individual pupils. Over the last two years, there have been significant improvements in overall attendance, including for those who receive and engage in home tuition.
- We next agreed to look at the extent to which the school was able to help pupils settle quickly and make a success of their time at the school.

- The school's work to help and support pupils is a strength of the school. Leaders quickly build an accurate picture of pupils' learning needs and backgrounds. They share and discuss information with teachers quickly. As many pupils have been out of school for a long time, leaders and teachers also check on pupils' prior knowledge and skills.
- These checks help teachers to understand what pupils can and cannot do in relation to their different subjects. Reviews of work and observations of learning show that teachers effectively plan to help pupils to close gaps in their knowledge and understanding. They monitor progress effectively and ensure that pupils access appropriate tasks and make good progress. This equally applies to pupils receiving home tuition. For example, teachers make arrangements to ensure that these pupils take part in science experiments where practicable. These activities help to engage pupils' interest and to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils reported that their teachers are helpful and encouraging. They help pupils to become confident and to believe in themselves. One parent commented: 'Staff pace learning according to my child's needs.'
- Leaders are aware that some pupils' targets could be even more aspirational, particularly for pupils staying at the school on long-term placements. Leaders acknowledged that, in some cases, there was scope for teachers to help pupils to be even more resilient by challenging them, in a sensitive way, to take on more difficult work.
- Finally, we agreed to evaluate the school's curriculum and how it helps pupils to achieve well, taking into account their different needs and abilities. This was because some pupils, such as those in Year 11, are on long-term placements and take their examinations at the school. We also explored how successful the school is in helping pupils move back to a mainstream school.
- The well-designed curriculum provides a variety of GCSE and work-related courses that suit pupils' needs and aspirations. Leaders carefully choose work-related courses that help pupils to gain valuable knowledge and skills, particularly when they have been out of education for a long time. For example, in 2017 all pupils achieved a range of accredited qualifications, including mathematics, science and English, enabling them to successfully move to the next stage of their education. The most able achieved well and progressed on to sixth forms or colleges to study A-level courses. Overall, all groups of pupils typically make good progress and achieve well.
- At key stage 3, effective links with the 'home school' help teachers to have a clearer picture of what pupils were previously learning. There is also a suitable focus on teaching pupils the literacy and numeracy skills they need to be successful learners. Pupils receiving home tuition study a personalised package that leaders and teachers review regularly. This helps pupils to become more motivated with their learning.
- The school has been successful this year in helping some pupils move back into a mainstream school. The school has also been successful in enabling some pupils to move from receiving their education at home to attending the school site. As the school is now admitting more short-term placements, leaders acknowledge that the number of pupils moving back into mainstream schooling needs to increase.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to refine the process for setting pupils' subject targets to ensure that they are even more aspirational
- teachers fully challenge pupils in their learning so that they make substantial progress and become even more resilient
- they further improve the number of pupils who successfully move back into mainstream schools after completing their placements at the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Brent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sam Hainey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- meetings with you and other senior leaders, staff, representatives from the management committee and the local authority
- visits to classrooms with senior leaders and also reviewing a range of pupils' books in different subjects to evaluate their learning
- meeting with a group of pupils
- evaluation of information provided by the school, including safeguarding records, attendance data, case studies, the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress
- taking into account the views of pupils and staff to Ofsted's questionnaires; there were no replies to Parent View
- reviewing the school's own surveys of parental, staff and pupils' views of the school's work. Inspectors also spoke to two parents by telephone.