

School inspection report

19 September 2023 to 21 September 2023

Ashville College

Green Lane
Harrogate
Yorkshire
HG2 9JP

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders' drive to fulfil the school's aims is palpable as the school seeks to ensure that pupils are supported to fulfil their potential. Leaders have recently embarked on an ambitious and dynamic development plan. It is too soon to evaluate the impact on pupils.
2. Governors maintain an informed oversight of leadership and management during a period of considerable change. They bring a wide range of skills appropriate to their role and ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively and that the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.
3. Leaders found that the quality of teaching did not meet their high expectations and have taken appropriate action in response. Clear guidelines have strengthened the quality of teaching. As a result, almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress. They attain external examination grades in line with or above those predicted, based upon their starting points. There is an effective framework to evaluate pupils' work at regular intervals, resulting in targeted interventions which support individual pupils' progress.
4. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is supported by their skilful questioning. Teachers' insightful marking and feedback help pupils to learn. Teachers follow clear guidance in structuring lessons. However, in some lessons, the predictability of the lesson structure leads to pupils feeling less engaged in their learning. Children in the early years achieve good outcomes by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff in the early years understand the sequencing of learning and are quick to identify next steps as children make progress.
5. Leaders safeguard and promote the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders, through effective identification and management of the risk of harm. They ensure pupils' health and welfare needs are met. Planned opportunities to enable pupils to give feedback on their experiences are not yet fully implemented.
6. The school's Methodist values provide a framework for the development of pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils show understanding and respect for diversity, other cultures and faiths and are usually kind and respectful of each other. The recently introduced careers programme is in development but is not fully implemented, particularly its financial education elements.
7. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is effective. Record keeping is adequate, but the variety of systems in use hinders their accessibility by appropriate adults. The school seeks to enable pupils to report any concerns anonymously, but pupils are not sufficiently aware of the different methods available to do this.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

- Ensure that strategies to support consistency in teaching do not hinder pupils' engagement in their learning.
- Develop and embed strategies that promote pupils' economic and financial awareness.
- Embed careers education so that all pupils are well informed about possible career choices.
- Implement planned opportunities for pupils to give feedback and report any concerns anonymously.
- Ensure safeguarding records are organised to facilitate access by appropriate adults.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. The leadership of the school has recently undergone a significant change. Many new appointments have been made to the senior team, reflecting an increased focus on academic rigour and supporting the welfare of pupils. As a result, leaders have launched many new initiatives. These have clear success criteria and a realistic timeframe but are in the early stages of implementation.
9. Governors have identified the need to appoint a strong leadership team to deliver their aims of strengthening academic and pastoral outcomes. They bring a wide range of suitable experience to their role. They monitor the outcomes and on-going progress of recent changes with care.
10. Governors and leaders have developed a broad and ambitious strategic plan to achieve high standards for pupils. New initiatives are usually carefully planned, for example the introduction of personal ICT devices throughout much of the school. However, in a few cases, leaders have not communicated planned changes effectively resulting in some concern among both parents and pupils, evidenced in survey responses. Leaders respond to these concerns quickly. Leaders' self-evaluation, which includes the views of parents and staff, is reported to governors and used to set priorities for the following year. This enables the governing body to provide informed challenge to leaders.
11. Leaders are keen to hear pupils' views. For example, in the pre-prep and prep school, pupils feel that they have a voice through the pupil parliament and student council, and in the sixth form through prefects' meetings. As a result, pupils in these parts of the school have been influential in bringing about change and give feedback on their experiences. However, in the lower and middle part of the senior school, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to be heard. Leaders are aware of this and a new senate structure has been introduced this year with the aim of addressing this.
12. Teachers in the early years setting are experienced and committed, supported by capable and enthusiastic senior leaders. Together they have successfully undertaken a detailed self-evaluation of early years provision and accurately identified children's development needs. Children make good progress because all the staff in early years are clear about what is expected of them as they continue to develop the quality of care for children.
13. Risk assessments are thorough and detailed. Governors and leaders ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with through the effective implementation of health and safety and related policies. Leaders' oversight is systematic with conscientious record-keeping. Similarly, arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders, which meet the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools.
14. Leaders ensure that the range of required information is available to parents. The school has a suitable complaints policy, which is followed consistently. Links are made with other agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders. For example, the school actively supports the integration of pupils moving from the USA through its close links with RAF Menwith Hill and its contractors.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders plan the curriculum with care and ensure it is taught effectively. They clearly articulate expectations for learning in all subjects and systematically monitor the quality of teaching and pupil progress against these. As a result, teaching enables pupils, including those with additional needs to make good progress and develop their skills and knowledge in all subjects. However, in some senior school lessons, pupils find the predictability of lessons limits their engagement.
16. Leaders ensure a well-planned programme develops pupils' linguistic and literacy skills. As a result, pupils communicate effectively and enjoy reading. Teachers develop mathematical skills by establishing a secure foundation in numeracy, which supports the later development of more complex problem-solving skills. The technology curriculum combines both theoretical and practical skills across a range of technical subjects, for example in circuit-building or food technology.
17. Teachers encourage pupils to be creative thinkers and confident in artistic expression. Leaders' decision to deploy subject specialists from the senior school to teach younger age groups effectively supports learning and promotes good progress across the age ranges. In the early years, every child is closely supported by individual key workers, who record progress and activities diligently. Delivery of the curriculum across the seven areas of learning is carefully tailored to meet individual needs. As a result, children make good progress.
18. Teachers are well informed about the requirements of examination specifications and use this knowledge to support pupils in their preparation for external examinations. As a result, pupils' results at GCSE and A level have improved in recent years in relation to national averages. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), attain grades in line or above those expected for their ability, based upon their assessed starting points. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) also make good progress. Assessment results for younger pupils in the prep school in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are above the average for those taking the same tests nationally.
19. Leaders ensure an effective framework is in place to evaluate pupils' work at regular intervals and enable interventions to support individuals where needed. Teachers' marking and feedback help pupils to improve. As a result, pupils are aware of their strengths and know how to improve their work. The evening timetable for boarders has recently been amended to provide additional academic support and give them more time for personal activities.
20. Teachers' skilled questioning prompts pupils' deeper thinking and analysis of the topics they learn. Teachers enable pupils to draw on prior knowledge and apply this in new contexts. In the prep school, lively engaging lessons are delivered by teachers who show an enthusiasm for their subject. As a result, pupils clearly enjoy their learning.
21. Pupils welcome the challenge and high expectations from their teachers. Pupils are typically well focused, task orientated and purposeful in lessons, well-behaved and co-operative. They apply themselves keenly in collaborative work and are enthusiastic over research tasks. These contribute to the good progress they make overall.

22. The learning support department is well organised and led, and systems are in place to help pupils who need additional support in their learning. Recently, additional support has been provided through individual support in lessons, rather than through withdrawal sessions. This has not been communicated sufficiently clearly to pupils and parents, leading to some concerns. The changes are too recent for outcomes for individual pupils and the impact of a new wellbeing hub to be evaluated.
23. Leaders ensure that pupils undertake a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport and music. There is a large and varied number of opportunities and pupils of all age groups take part with enthusiasm. Pupils speak very positively about the programme and the opportunities to try new activities. Leaders track and check participation with care to support pupils' access to the range of activities on offer.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

24. Leaders encourage pupil participation in a wide range of physical education and personal development activities. Pupils learn about physical health through both competitive sport and extra-curricular activities, which they participate in fully. They understand that regular exercise and creative pastimes impact positively on their physical fitness, mental health and emotional wellbeing. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the opportunities they have.
25. An effective programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) supports the school's aims and ethos. This includes suitable age-appropriate provision for relationships and sex education (RSE). This programme is effective in encouraging respect for others. Pupils welcome opportunities to talk openly about diversity, which increases their understanding. Teachers help them to feel confident about navigating social media and the need for self-regulation. Adults in the school challenge instances of discriminatory language and use them as an opportunity to educate where they occur.
26. Pupils have positive behaviour and attitudes. Their spiritual and moral understanding is reinforced through the values which underpin the ethos of the school. These values are regularly affirmed through assemblies, the chaplaincy, termly services and in the culture of positive relationships between pupils and adults in the community. Senior prefects are keen to express their pride in being part of such a community. The school has an effective programme to integrate pupils who are the children of United States military personnel serving at a nearby base, and ensures they are supported during their transition.
27. Pupils in the boarding houses feel known as individuals. Pupils are generally respectful towards others and their possessions. House staff are readily available to provide support and there is a suitable programme of induction for new boarders. Boarding houses are comfortable, welcoming and adequately maintained. Boarding staff ensure boarders are well cared for and their welfare needs are met. Aside from their meals in the main dining hall, boarders have access to a range of snacks. They enjoy the opportunities to prepare their own meals with staff at the weekends. Boarders' views are sought and acted upon, including through regular boarding meetings.
28. Pupils communicate confidently and respectfully with adults. They behave well in lessons because teachers have clear expectations. Some behaviour outside lessons falls below the expected high standards of the school. Leaders are aware of this and there is a plan to address this behaviour through providing additional supervision and more social spaces for pupils. Leaders have actively addressed recent behavioural issues by applying rules and sanctions more consistently, emphasising their enhanced expectations to both pupils and parents. Behaviour has improved, and pupils recognise the need for these changes and regard them as fair.
29. Pupils are usually kind and respectful of each other. The school has appropriate policies to prevent bullying and these are implemented effectively. Various initiatives take place during the year to educate pupils about bullying, how to prevent it and what to do should it occur. Instances are rare and dealt with appropriately and swiftly.
30. Leaders ensure that the welfare and safety needs of the pupils are met. These include effective supervision and health and safety procedures. Record keeping in this area is thorough. Attendance

and admission registers are properly kept and the relevant notifications are in place when pupils transfer to another school.

31. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained. Suitable precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Fire evacuation drills take place termly, including in boarding time, and staff receive regular training. If pupils are unwell or suffer an accident, there is a medical centre on site. Staff receive regular first-aid training, including paediatric first aid for early years staff.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

32. Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum that has many opportunities for all pupils to learn about life in British society and the wider world. Teachers relate their subject matter to wider themes and other cultures. As a result, pupils are well informed about current affairs.
33. Leaders actively encourage pupils to respect diversity, other cultures and faiths through discussing different religious practices and festivals and inviting speakers from diverse backgrounds into assemblies. Pupils show their understanding and respect.
34. Pupils appreciate right from wrong, have a strong moral code and understand the role of civil and criminal law in resolving disputes and redressing wrongdoing in wider society. Pupils understand from an early age that living in a democracy means that they accept that others may think differently to them.
35. Careers provision is currently an area of development. An ambitious programme is planned to incorporate a wide range of advice and opportunities to discuss options for the future. Senior pupils feel that the support they have received in the past year as part of the new programme is personalised and valuable for identifying future pathways. The week of work experience was instrumental in highlighting possible career options. Senior leaders recognise that economic education is not as fully developed as other aspects of the curriculum and plan to incorporate additional elements into the PSHE programme. An optional financial awareness course is now offered to sixth-form pupils which they find helpful in preparation for their next stage in life.
36. Leaders encourage pupils to fundraise by undertaking charitable activity so that pupils make a positive contribution to a cause and understand its aims. In the senior school, pupils are aware of their social responsibilities and engage with the local community, for example, through weekly volunteering in local senior citizens' homes. Other pupils volunteer through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils are enthusiastic in charity fundraising for a range of local, national and international causes.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society:

All the relevant Standards are met

Safeguarding

37. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. Leaders promote a culture of openness and that 'it could happen here'. Leaders work effectively with external agencies when concerns arise. Any referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and, if needed, the police are made promptly.
38. Leaders ensure that all staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training as they join the school. This is updated at regular intervals. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive appropriate training. Staff are knowledgeable in child protection procedures, including those for online safety and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. They understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern and are alert to the need to check pupil attendance.
39. Reported safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly. Record keeping for individual safeguarding cases requires greater consistency to reflect best practice. Adequate records are kept securely but are not always readily accessible to the designated staff.
40. The school's published safeguarding policy required minor updating at the beginning of the inspection to bring it into line with the most recent guidance and to reflect the school's safeguarding practice. This was rectified during the inspection.
41. Senior prefects are trained in safeguarding to both protect themselves and support younger pupils in the school. The school plans to create a more consistent system to share safeguarding concerns anonymously and add a further level of support for individual pupils. This is not yet in place.
42. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils inform their planning. Leaders respond to the needs of boarders and take action to support individuals. Pupils report that they feel safe physically, emotionally and online, and can speak to any member of staff with their concerns.
43. Safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors and a suitable central register is kept.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to safeguarding:

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Ashville College
Department for Education number	815/6028
Registered charity number	529577
Address	Ashville College Green Lane Harrogate Yorkshire HG2 9JP
Website	www.ashville.co.uk
Chair	Mr Jamie Search
Headteacher	Mrs Rhiannon Wilkinson
Age range	2 to 19
Number of pupils	800
Number of boarding pupils	58
Date of previous inspection	November 2019

Information about the school

44. Ashville College is an independent day and boarding co-educational school situated on the outskirts of Harrogate, North Yorkshire. Founded in 1877 as a boys' boarding school, it has been co-educational since 1984. An associate member of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, the school is a registered charity, overseen by a board of governors.
45. Since the previous inspection and following the death in service of the previous headteacher, a new headteacher has been appointed and there have been significant changes to the leadership team.
46. There are two boarding houses, for male and female pupils respectively. Pupils board from Year 7 to Year 13.
47. The Early Years Foundation stage, the pre-prep, is for children aged 2–5 years. The prep school is for pupils in Year 1 to Year 6; the senior school for pupils in Years 7 to 11; and the sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 19 years.
48. The school has identified 151 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan.
49. English is an additional language (EAL) for 31 pupils.
50. The school states that its aims are to be a caring community that develops the full potential of each pupil, whilst embracing the Methodists Schools' principles appropriate for the demands of a modern, independent society. It expects all pupils to realise their academic abilities, discover and nurture their talents and develop their sense of self, so they can play a positive role in their communities and the wider world. It seeks to maintain high educational standards and stimulate excitement in learning and discipline in study.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 19 to 21 September 2023

51. A team of eight inspectors visited the school two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.
52. Details of inspection activities undertaken include:
 - lesson observations
 - discussions with pupils
 - examination of samples of pupils' work
 - discussions with members of staff
 - discussions with a group of governors
 - observation of a sample of the extra-curricular activities
 - attendance at form meetings and school assemblies

- visits to the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas, medical centre and boarding facilities
- scrutiny of the curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

53. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate 2023

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