

Inspection of Ash Grove Academy

Belgrave Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 7TF

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Judith Ceuppens. This school is part of The Aspire Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kevin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Bowen.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Ash Grove Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Ash Grove Primary and Nursery School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Ash Grove love coming to school. They are happy and enjoy the friendly atmosphere that is created by nurturing staff. Pupils use their understanding of rights and responsibilities to inform the positive relationships that they have with each other. Pupils' conduct is impeccable. They are polite and listen to each other's viewpoints, such as enjoying debates in class.

Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations for their achievement. Typically, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve highly. They demonstrate an exceptionally strong understanding across a broad range of subjects.

Pupils develop their confidence and resilience extremely well. There are many clubs and initiatives on offer to foster pupils' talents and interests. For example, pupils enjoy clubs for art and reading, as well as for a range of different sports.

Pupils have a strong understanding of the differences between people. Older pupils relish the wide range of leadership responsibilities available, such as being a subject ambassador or playground leader. As a result, pupils feel that they have a strong voice in changing the school community for the better. Pupils learn to appreciate the wider world and they are encouraged to think deeply about global issues.

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

The school has successfully developed a highly ambitious curriculum for all pupils. The curriculum has been designed to ensure that children in the early years and pupils in the rest of the school build on their prior learning confidently. To support this aim, the school has effective strategies in place to identify where pupils may have SEND. Staff are highly adept at spotting any pupils who may need additional help as early as possible. From the time that children begin in the Nursery Year, staff use their detailed understanding to support pupils expertly. Staff set high expectations for pupils' learning and help them to develop basic skills in depth.

Pupils are enthusiastic about reading because of the highly effective way in which the school promotes a love of books. Children in the Nursery Year develop a strong knowledge of sounds before children in the Reception Year match these sounds to letters. Pupils are afforded a wealth of opportunities to extend their vocabulary. In key stage 1, pupils apply this knowledge with increasing automaticity. For pupils who need extra support with their reading, there is expert help on hand. This ensures that most pupils keep up with the expectations of the phonics programme. In key stage 2, pupils progress well and they read with strong fluency and expression.

The school and the trust ensure that staff are equipped to deliver the curriculum consistently well. For example, high-quality coaching and development for staff have led to strong curriculum delivery. Staff use the key learning identified in the curriculum to make thorough checks on pupils' understanding. Staff use this

assessment information successfully to adapt the delivery of the curriculum so that pupils remember important concepts. Pupils, including those with SEND, learn well.

Most pupils behave well and there is little disruption to learning. For example, in the early years, children, including those in the provision for two-year-olds, are quick to learn new routines. For pupils who need it, the school has developed innovative support for their social, emotional and mental health needs. These strategies have successfully helped these pupils to rapidly improve their own behaviour.

The school has been highly successful in reducing pupils' persistent absence. It has identified and addressed the reasons that have prevented pupils from attending school more regularly. As a result, pupils' rates of attendance are strong.

Pupils learn about other faiths and religions. They know how to be healthy, including looking after their own mental health and learning what constitutes a healthy relationship with others. Pupils' moral and social development shines.

Trustees have clear mechanisms in place to ensure that they are well informed about the performance of the school. Trustees and staff are passionate about making the school the very best place it can be for pupils. Staff morale is high. Staff appreciate the school's consideration of their workload and well-being when introducing new initiatives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	140444
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10314039
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Bowen
CEO of trust	Kevin Simpson
Principal	Judith Ceuppens
Website	www.ashgrove.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ash Grove Academy is part of The Aspire Educational Trust.
- The school added provision for two-year-olds to the Nursery in September 2020.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school runs a before- and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in other subjects, looked at a sample of work in these subjects and spoke with pupils about their work.
- Inspectors heard pupils read to staff and as part of classroom activities.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, and they considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and around the school. They looked at records for behaviour and bullying and spoke with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors discussed the provision in place for pupils' personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicky Parkinson

Ofsted Inspector

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