

# Inspection of Ash Meadow School

Jubits Lane, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 4RT

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Inspection dates: 11 to 13 July 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils love coming to Ash Meadow School, where they feel happy and safe. Pupils thrive in the calm and caring environment of the school. They form close and trusting bonds with staff and each other.

Older pupils have a strong understanding of equality and cultural diversity. They know that discrimination of any kind is wrong. For example, pupils told inspectors that people should not be judged because of what they look like. Should bullying take place, leaders stop it from happening swiftly.

Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well. Leaders use a range of strategies to support pupils to successfully manage their own behaviour. Staff's determination that pupils will succeed, coupled with their high aspirations, helps many pupils to excel in their learning.

Pupils benefit from many opportunities to enhance their wider personal development. For example, they enjoy demonstrating their understanding of democracy when electing their peers for different positions on the pupil council. Recently, pupils sent a letter to Buckingham Palace expressing their deepest sympathies for the death of Queen Elizabeth. Pupils were overjoyed when King Charles wrote back to thank them for their good wishes.

Pupils like to explore their local environment, including the adjacent Sutton Manor site. Pupils develop their social skills well. They recently held conversations in Spanish with shop owners in Liverpool. Pupils enjoy visiting museums, trampolining and mastering their cycling skills.

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

Leaders, governors and the proprietor body have thought carefully about the curriculum that they want pupils to experience. Leaders have created a broad, varied and highly ambitious curriculum for each pupil, which helps to develop their knowledge and skills exceptionally well. Leaders focus on identifying and removing barriers to pupils' learning. They are determined to ensure that each pupil achieves their absolute best.

Leaders have thought carefully about what each pupil will learn and when this learning will take place. Nonetheless, staff know that some pupils have difficulty processing and retaining information. To address this, teachers ensure that they provide opportunities for pupils to revisit past topics and units of work regularly. Comprehensive checks are in place to help teachers to identify how well pupils are learning the curriculum. This helps to reinforce and consolidate pupils' understanding.

In the main, teachers deliver the curriculum well. However, some subject leaders are new to their roles. These subject leaders are still developing their expertise and their

understanding of how well the curriculum is implemented in their specialist areas. This sometimes hinders these leaders from providing effective support to teachers who need to improve their delivery of the curriculum. From time to time, this affects how well some pupils learn in these subjects.

Leaders have placed reading at the centre of the curriculum. Staff skilfully use a variety of different strategies to help pupils to develop their confidence and fluency in reading. For example, some pupils become adept at using electronic equipment to accurately spell out words. Others demonstrate their understanding by adding the correct endings to words. Pupils enjoy reading popular children's books.

A small number of pupils who find reading more difficult access a phonics programme. Typically, these pupils like to sing songs and nursery rhymes. Pupils also take pleasure in sounding out letters and words. However, some staff do not deliver the phonics programme sufficiently well. This prevents a small number of pupils from developing their reading fluency as quickly as they should.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Staff are aware of what they need to do to meet each pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders work closely with parents and carers, and external specialists, to make sure that pupils receive appropriate support. In addition, different therapies, including speech and language and occupational therapies, are an essential part of the curriculum. Professionals are highly effective in helping staff to support pupils to access and engage in their learning.

Pupils manage their feelings and emotions exceptionally well. Their engagement in learning is exemplary. Pupils consistently demonstrate mature attitudes when discussing sensitive topics. Disruption to lessons is rare.

Leaders have created a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities, which stimulate pupils' interests. Pupils attend many clubs, including art, film and history clubs. They also enjoy pursuing their interests in food technology, cycling and music. Pupils are competitive. For example, Ash Meadow's mixed football team is quickly gathering a reputation for its success in inter-school competitions.

Pupils are active citizens. They raise funds for different worthy causes, including children's charities. Pupils also help to run the school's food bank. Pupils exercise regularly. They understand the importance of a balanced diet.

Pupils benefit from independent careers advice. Leaders encourage pupils to aim high. Some pupils aspire to go to university. Specialist partners inform pupils of the qualifications that they need for various pathways into higher education.

Staff are highly positive about working at the school. They feel that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being.

Leaders fully involve parents in the life of the school. Parents who shared their views with inspectors expressed their amazement at their children's social development

and academic achievements.

The proprietor body and the chair of governors have an accurate overview of the school's strengths and leaders' priorities for further improvement. They support and challenge leaders and staff in equal measure. The proprietor body ensures that all the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently well.

The proprietor body, governors and leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Pupils' health, safety and well-being are promoted especially well.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are especially vigilant when it comes to safeguarding pupils. Thorough procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and processes.

Staff are aware of current government guidance for keeping pupils safe in education. Leaders update staff regularly on matters pertaining to pupils' welfare and safety. Staff record and report any concerns that they have about pupils swiftly.

Leaders work closely with different external agencies to make sure that when required, pupils receive appropriate support.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe through different areas of the curriculum.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and is available to parents on request.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Some staff do not deliver the phonics programme consistently well. This means that, on occasion, some pupils do not learn to read as quickly and fluently as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff are fully equipped to implement the phonics programme effectively.
- A few subject leaders are developing in their roles. As such, the advice and support that they provide for teachers on how to improve the delivery of the curriculum is not as strong as it could be. Leaders should ensure that these subject leaders are suitably skilled to support teachers in delivering the curriculum consistently well.

## 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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148797
<b>DfE registration number</b>	342/6007
<b>Local authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254709
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	23
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Bright Futures Ltd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vicky Tijani
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£56,650 to £103,500
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 759162
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.brightfuturescare.co.uk">www.brightfuturescare.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ashmeadowschool@brightfuturescare.co.uk">ashmeadowschool@brightfuturescare.co.uk</a>

## Information about this school

- In March 2022, Ash Meadow School was granted registration for 35 pupils aged from five to 19 years. This was the school's first standard inspection. At the time of the inspection, there were no key stage 4 pupils, or sixth-form students, attending the school.
- The school caters for pupils with autism and/or social, emotional and mental health needs. The school also provides for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- Ash Meadow is housed in a purpose-built school located at Jubits Lane, Sutton Manor, St Helens, WA9 4RT.

## Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The lead inspector held meetings with other leaders, including those responsible for SEND, pupils' behaviour and attendance, and personal development.
- The lead inspector spoke to safeguarding leaders about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents. He also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy. Inspectors talked with pupils about their safety and welfare. They examined a range of policies and documents.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with a representative of the proprietor body. He also met with the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a member of the therapy team that works with the school. He held a telephone discussion with a representative of a local authority responsible for placing pupils at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector

met with pupils to discuss their learning in some other subjects.

- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to school staff.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector met with a group of parents. He reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school premises to check leaders' compliance with the standards.

### **Inspection team**

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector



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