

The Ashcombe School - Overview

Please visit our website: www.ashcombe.surrey.sch.uk for full information

Context

The Ashcombe School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils of all abilities between the ages of 11 and 18 which has recently formed a MAT (South East Surrey Schools Education Trust - SESSET) as a partnership with 2 other like-minded schools to keep the ethos of the school the same. Pupils come to us not only from the seven Dorking primary schools but also from state and independent schools in other localities, many travelling here by rail and bus each day. There are approximately 1390 pupils on roll (with around 260 in the Sixth Form). The school is highly sought-after, and we usually admit 240 pupils into Year 7.

Standards

The school's academic success is widely recognised. We continue to have a broad & balanced GCSE based curriculum for all pupils. 75% gain 9-4 in English + Maths, similarly 70-80% A*-C in the other core subjects, and there is strong subject value-added. Almost 100% gain 5+ A*-G and a fifth of pupils gain 2 or more A* grades. The Sixth Form has nearly 300 students offering 25 subjects at A-level, where the average points score per student is 300 UCAS pts but with a very open approach to entry. The main focus of achievement and recognition is based on 'value-added' (subject VA at GCSE is strong, and also at A-level) with high EBacc figures for both entry and achievement; we have been very successful in reducing underachievement. Although the school is large, we ensure that our pupils feel secure. Individual care is provided through the tutor groups and through a well-structured pastoral care system.

Organisation

The Head, three Deputy Heads and six Assistant Heads form the Senior Team. There are approximately 70 full-time and 20 part-time teaching staff, with a strong team of support staff. The management structure includes a Curriculum Committee and a Pastoral Committee. Staff Development is a major focus of the School Development Plan. The school is committed to an effective Equal Opportunities policy in all aspects of school life. Recruitment and selection will be in accordance with the "Safer Recruitment" guidelines, and all appointed staff will have to produce enhanced DBS clearance. The school has been inspected by Ofsted five times, most recently in January 2015, and on each occasion received very pleasing reports. As a result, we became a High Performing Specialist School and a Leadership Partner School in 2009. It is an accredited 'Investors in People' (IIP) organisation. The school has a purpose-built day nursery on site for the children of staff and others, professionally staffed on a non-profit making basis. Conditions of Service for staff have been protected in process of forming the MAT.

Accommodation and Resources

Overall the school has very good accommodation which includes eleven Science laboratories, a Design and Technology suite of five workshops, a Study Centre with a mezzanine floor, a gymnasium and a large sports hall, tennis/netball courts and extensive playing fields and an Assembly Hall, fully equipped for dramatic and musical productions. The Bradley Arts Centre opened in September 2005 with 3 Art rooms, a large multimedia Performance Area, 2 fully equipped Drama teaching rooms and 2 Music teaching rooms with excellent practice facilities. On becoming a Language College the school was able to equip two outstanding ICT rooms based on the application of 'cutting-edge' technology. There are 6 further specialist ICT rooms and 2 classrooms equipped with dual-purpose computer desks. ICT is used extensively by staff both in teaching and administration.

Language College, Dorking Schools Partnership and Leadership Partner School

We gained **Language College** Status in September 1998. The school's approach has been one of "extra opportunities" and sharing. The Modern Language interactive digital videos on the website have gained the school an international reputation. There are regular free workshops on ICT in MFL. As part of the Language College work, the school is a member of a very active partnership group of all the schools in

Dorking including the other secondary schools and special schools. This approach has continued since the withdrawal of funding in 2010.

This commitment to working with our local schools has been developed with creation of the **Dorking Schools Partnership**, which includes taking responsibility for the Pupil Support Services for the area. We are also part of the **South East Surrey Schools** which links the secondary schools in the area to facilitate collaborative working in areas such as Alternative Learning Provision and Staff Development

Becoming a **Leadership Partner** School in 2009 provided funding to support leadership development both within the school and wider afield. Although the funding stopped in 2010, the school still has a strong outward-facing approach and offers help to many schools. This spirit of cooperation and partnership working is fundamental to South East Surrey Schools Education Trust (**SESSET**), the MAT we have formed with Therfield School and The Warwick School. It is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 10479401. The registered address is The Ashcombe School, Ashcombe Road, Dorking Surrey, RH4 1LY

Extra-curricular activities

Beyond the curriculum, the School has earned an outstanding reputation for its dramatic and musical productions. There are many school sports teams and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is thriving with over half of Year 10 doing the Bronze Award. Annually a large number of visits and trips are organised, both in this country and abroad. The school has links with schools in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, China and Uganda. There is a long standing charities link with a community in Romania.

Location and further information

The school is situated on the north-east edge of Dorking, in close proximity to some delightful Surrey countryside including Box Hill and Ranmore Common. The A24 (5 minutes to the M25), A25 and both Dorking railway stations (serving London, Horsham, Guildford and Reigate) are close by. Surrey house prices are relatively high, particularly in Dorking itself, and many staff prefer to live near Horsham, Reigate, Outer London or further afield. The school is a no smoking site.

Summary of main points from Ofsted report (January 2015)

The 2008, 2010 and 2015 reports are available on the school website in About the School > [Ofsted reports](#) together with the Letters to Parents. The following extracts come from the 2015 Letter to Parents:

The recently published DfE Performance Tables [Jan 2015] confirmed the academic strengths of the school across the ability range, and this is endorsed in the Ofsted Report. We are delighted that the Report also praises other facets of the school not found in the Tables such as the "*exceptional pastoral care*" and the wider curriculum. "*The school makes an impressive contribution to students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.*"... "*The strong moral purpose of the school assists students' moral development and they know clearly the difference between right and wrong.*".... "*It provides many opportunities for students to take part in sporting, musical, artistic, charitable and voluntary activities.*" "...*the school prepares students well for life in modern Britain*". The text of the report gives a strong positive flavour of what the school is like... The Ofsted team told us how close we were to being judged "outstanding".

The teaching in Maths and English was particularly commended, and taken as a whole the teaching over time and careful planning by staff was considered to lead to progress which is significantly above the national average across subjects. The Report refers to the excellent results achieved at A-level by those who have entered the school as "most-able" (Level 5 in KS2 English and Mathematics).

The Ofsted team praised the atmosphere and ethos permeating the school. "*One of the strategic intents is that the school 'is a safe, warm and welcoming place'. Inspectors found this to be so.*" "*The school is quiet and calm even at breaks and lunchtimes. Students move around the buildings in an orderly manner. They are extremely polite and courteous to visitors. They greet each other and adults warmly.*".... "*Each member of the community is valued and their well-being matters to everyone.*"