

THE ASHCOMBE SCHOOL OVERVIEW



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

Introduction to the school

The Ashcombe School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils of all abilities between the ages of 11 and 18 based in Dorking, Surrey. It is part of a small independent Multi-Academy Trust (The South East Surrey Schools Education Trust or SESSET) which is comprised of 3 like-minded state secondary schools (Ashcombe, Therfield in Leatherhead and The Warwick in Redhill). The Trust was established to enable each of the schools to retain their own ethos and decide their own futures. There are approximately 1,450 pupils on roll at Ashcombe (including around 250 in the Sixth Form) and 150 members of staff.

The school is highly sought-after and is over subscribed for September 2021. This is due to a wide range of factors including its facilities, academic results, standards of teaching, pastoral care, the wide range of trips and extra-curricular activities and the resultant attitudes of its pupils. In its January 2019 visit, Ofsted commented that "Pupils' attitudes towards learning are very positive. Pupils are attentive and responsive in equal measure in lessons. As a result, there is a very harmonious learning atmosphere".

An Inclusive, Compassionate and Aspirational Ethos

The core elements of our ethos are focused on providing a caring environment that enables every individual within the school to realise their potential:

- We are a **fully inclusive school** that focuses equally on pupils of all ability levels
- We provide a **calm and caring environment with a significant emphasis on pastoral care**. The most recent Ofsted report noted that "Pastoral care is exceptional. Each member of the community is valued and their well-being matters to everyone"
- Our community is based on **mutual respect and high quality teacher-pupil relationships**
- We encourage a culture of self-betterment for all who work at the school, with high quality **training and development opportunities** for all staff
- The school operates a **no-blame culture** that emphasises the importance of collaboration and mutual support
- We strive to create well-rounded individuals, believing that **great education is about much more than the lessons we deliver in the classroom**

Parents in a recent survey overwhelmingly reinforced the positive views identified by Ofsted. The survey found that:

- 95% of parents would strongly recommend the school to other parents in the community
- 95% of parents said their children were happy and safe and that the school was well led

These are exceptionally high figures given we are a fully-inclusive state school, and highlights the high regard that the local community has for Ashcombe. The school's reputation has flourished through lockdown. This quote from a parent has been echoed throughout our community,

"In what is such an uncertain situation we remain grateful for all the hard work by you and your team, and for the fantastic school our children are fortunate to attend."

A Broad Curriculum with High Academic Aspirations for all

- We offer a broad & balanced GCSE-based curriculum with double science and languages for all pupils alongside humanities, creative subjects, Maths and English. This breadth is shown through the EBacc entry levels – which hit 78% last year vs a 38% national average
- Ofsted praised this approach, stating that "Your vision for an academic curriculum, supported by high quality teaching and learning, that prepares pupils well for life in 21st Century Britain is shared by all staff at the school"

Key features of our results last year include:

- Grades 9-4 (formerly A*-C) were achieved by between 70% and 80% in each of English, Maths and Combined Science
- Over 30% of our students achieved grades 9-7 in Art, Computer Science, Geography, History, Maths, DT (Product Design), RS, Spanish and Science
- 16% of all students gained a 9-9 grade in Science
- 39% of students gained at least one "top" grade (9 or 8 or A*)

A Flourishing 6th Form

We have a thriving 6th form* with around 250 pupils each year and encourage as wide an intake as possible where we believe pupils have the ability to succeed at A level. Our key successes include:

- High value-added scores across the full breadth of subjects and ability ranges
- A long tradition of students gaining places at Oxbridge and Russell Group Universities
- A student-centered approach for pastoral care and careers support

*a copy of our 6th Form prospectus is attached to this listing.

Extra-curricular Opportunities for All Students

We believe that the most important moments in school are often those that are remembered once the lessons have been forgotten. Ashcombe has earned an outstanding reputation for the diverse range of opportunities offered outside of the classroom. Highlights include:

- More than 30 clubs ranging from Sports and Minecraft to Debating and Humanitarian issues
- A huge range of visits and trips throughout the school both within this country and abroad. Overseas trips have included visits to China, Uganda, the USA, Germany, France and Romania. Departments have also organised study-based trips including Iceland (Geography), Paris (French Exchange) and the Normandy Battlefields (History)
- A flourishing Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme with over 250 students involved across 3 year groups
- A wide selection of sports teams and individuals competing at local, regional and national levels
- A commitment to pupils supporting others including charity fund-raising, work on development projects and in humanitarian charities abroad and peer mentoring and support within the school
- An inspiring programme of music and drama performances throughout the year

A Friendly and Welcoming Teaching Community

We pride ourselves on treating people well and this was identified by Ofsted which noted that "the school has dedicated, enthusiastic, skilled staff who are supported by a fabulous senior leadership team" and that "One of the strategic intents is that the school 'is a safe, warm and welcoming place'. Inspectors found this to be so".

This view was supported more recently by our Investors in People Report which noted that "The school has held Investors in People accreditation for almost 20 years and there remains a genuine and sustained commitment emanating from the top to looking after and investing in the staff". Whilst "The content and pace of the school's NQT programme and the support provided by mentors is rated highly".

Quotes from our staff in a recent survey are similarly positive: one noted a theme reflected by others that

"You feel supported, not overburdened or pressurised"

Whilst inevitably we don't always get it right, the overwhelming feedback reflects the view outlined by one teacher who commented that

"I love working here, there are opportunities for professional development, they care about staff, and they trust you"

In the interim review in 2020, staff commented that “We are being encouraged to give input and suggestions – it’s really good and it’s nice to know your ideas count.” And also “I love my job, its lovely working in a school that is so positive and understands how important the students are”. “It is a great place to work, and I can see all the things that are happening – it’s all positive”.

A Strong Culture of Self-Betterment

We believe that great training is always at the heart of an effective school. We recognize that investing in staff development helps us to remain open to new innovations, to improve the quality of the service we offer our students and enables our staff to grow. Recent developments in training at Ashcombe include:

- The development of a highly successful NQT programme led by a group of experienced mentors
- A coaching programme offered to all staff
- A broad take-up of leadership courses
- A book group established to discuss emerging pedagogy
- Teaching and learning discussion workshops
- Recent whole school inset days covering Mental Health Awareness, the Features of Great Lessons, Rosenshines Principles of Learning, and the Features of Effective Questioning

A Well-Resourced School

Within the inevitable constraints of state-funding, the school prides itself on balancing its budget each year and ensuring that:

- Departments are fully staffed, with sufficient numbers in the admin team to ensure the smooth running of the school’s operations
- Specialist areas including Science and Language labs, Arts, Music and Drama studios, Catering, DT and Sports departments are all well-equipped
- All staff have laptops
- We are able to offer a day nursery on site for the use of staff with young children. The characterful school buildings and spacious and green school grounds are well maintained

A Beautiful and Well-Connected Location

The location has some wonderful advantages:

- In the foothills of the North Downs, the school is within walking distance of some of the most beautiful countryside in Surrey including direct access to Box Hill and Denbies Vineyard – both of which are used by the school for Sports lessons, sponsored walks and DofE practices
- Excellent rail links to London, Brighton, Guildford, Reading, Horsham, Reigate and Redhill
- Access to the major road networks via the A24, A25 and the M25 which is just 5 miles away
- Easy access to the South Coast via rail or road

I hope this has given you a taste of some of the key features of The Ashcombe School and why we believe it is such a special place to work. Please do not hesitate to contact me on panting.chris@ashcombe.surrey.sch.uk if you are interested in applying for a post. I would be delighted to provide any additional information you may require.

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