

Arnfield Independent School

C/O Arnfield Care Ltd, Brookbank House, Wellington Road, Bollington, Cheshire SK10 5JR

Inspection dates

18–20 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The quality of teaching is good. Pupils enjoy their classroom learning. They cooperate well with staff and engage positively in the activities provided.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics improves at least in line with other pupils nationally. Pupils begin to fill the gaps in their previous learning.
- Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' progress across all subjects have improved since the last inspection. Teachers have a much better understanding of pupils' starting points.
- The school is successful in achieving its aim of enabling a number of pupils to return to full-time mainstream education.
- The impact of outdoor education on pupils' motivation, engagement and achievement is outstanding.
- Pupils make strong improvements in their attendance, behaviour and personal development, mostly from low starting points.
- Strong and effective relationships between school and home contribute positively to the safety, welfare and progress of pupils.
- The headteacher has worked successfully with the proprietors to improve monitoring arrangements, the management of staff performance and the quality of teaching.
- While curriculum planning is mostly effective, schemes of work for art and design and for personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE) are not sufficiently comprehensive and coherent.
- Pupils' individual achievement targets are not consistently demanding across all subjects studied. The use of externally accredited awards to motivate and reward pupils is uneven.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress and achievement of pupils by:
 - making individual pupils' targets more challenging, particularly for pupils at key stage 4
 - increasing the use of appropriate accreditation and other means to reward small steps in achievement.
- Improve schemes of work for art and design, and personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE) by:
 - setting out clearly the subject content and learning objectives which are to be taught at each age and key stage
 - extending the range of themes, tasks and activities studied in each subject.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have established a calm and orderly ethos, which provides pupils with considerable help to overcome their emotional and social barriers to learning.
- Senior leaders work closely with the proprietors to monitor effectively all aspects of the school's work at both sites. They have a strong understanding of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and work constantly with all staff to provide a broad and varied curriculum for all pupils.
- Pupils have access to all the required areas of learning, including any specific aspects required by their education, care and health plans, or statements of special educational needs. The school has developed outdoor education particularly well; this makes an outstanding contribution to the level of challenge and success enjoyed by pupils.
- Pupils trust the staff with whom they work. They do not always find it easy to focus and to sustain their concentration, but mostly they respond positively to the sensitive way in which staff help them to work through their difficulties and to achieve success.
- Staff demonstrate a united commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. They take full account of pupils' different starting points and individual life experiences, while ensuring that these do not act as barriers to their progress.
- The proprietors and senior leaders understand the strengths of the school and areas that require improvement. They have implemented a number of improvements to teachers' planning, the assessment of pupils' progress and the curriculum since the previous inspection. Consequently, pupils now make good progress across a range of subjects.
- All members of staff understand their personal targets, based on regular supervision and appraisal. Staff are enabled to extend their professional expertise through additional training related to their individual teaching or pastoral responsibilities.
- All members of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire are proud to be members of staff at the school.
- The curriculum, together with strong, continuous cooperation between school and home, contribute strongly towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils gain an excellent understanding of British values; however, the school's scheme of work for personal, social, citizenship and health education does not provide an accurate and comprehensive summary of what is to be taught and when.
- Assemblies, together with themes studied in the curriculum, take excellent account of pupils' personal concerns and curiosity. Pupils respect diversity within the school and wider community, based on planned opportunities to explore issues related to race, gender, disability and personal beliefs.
- Staff have worked together to improve individual education plans for each pupil. They base these mostly on suitable schemes of work and effective arrangements for assessment of progress. Further work is required to improve planning for art and design, and for PSHE, and to ensure the development over time of suitable knowledge, understanding and skills.

- The school makes some use of unitised awards and entry-level certificates to reward and to motivate pupils; however, leaders do not plan and implement these motivating awards consistently across a wide range of subjects and experiences.

Governance

- The quality of oversight by the proprietors is effective and supports the headteacher well in the development of the school. The proprietors have a good understanding of the independent school standards and have ensured that the school meets all of these requirements.
- The proprietors make effective use of the evaluation by and recommendations of external consultants to ensure rigour in their dialogue with the headteacher and staff.
- The proprietors meet regularly with the headteacher and senior staff. They ensure that staff give appropriate attention to the personal development of pupils, alongside their academic achievement.
- The proprietors oversee appropriate arrangements for rewarding staff performance, including outstanding contribution to the life of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel and are safe and all staff give a high priority to aspects of pupils' individual welfare in the daily work of the school.
- The school has published its safeguarding policy on the school's website. The policy and associated procedures have regard for the latest statutory guidance. Staff implement the requirements of the policy effectively and consistently.
- Senior leaders ensure that all staff complete essential training within required timescales, including safeguarding, the management of behaviour, risk assessment, fire safety and first aid.
- Arrangements for the recruitment of suitable staff are rigorous. Staff are aware of the risks to which potentially vulnerable pupils may be exposed, including risks associated with child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
- Senior staff monitor work in classrooms and with individual pupils to ensure that all staff offer a balanced presentation of opposing views on any political issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress over time. The majority of lessons consist of one-to-one sessions, which enable pupils to concentrate effectively without distraction.
- Teachers plan tasks carefully, mostly using schemes of work which enable them to identify suitable next steps in learning, based on regular assessment of pupils' progress.
- Pupils often arrive at the school with very little information about their previous learning and attainment. The school has improved its arrangements for assessing pupils' starting points and staff ensure that they respond flexibly in their planning as pupils' abilities become more evident over time.

- Pupils know what staff expect of them because the objectives and intended outcomes for lessons are made clear to them. Teachers use practical, everyday situations, for example in mathematics, to enable pupils to understand scale by setting out furniture in a bedroom, based on scale drawings.
- Pupils mostly engage well in their learning and sustain their concentration sufficiently to complete set tasks. They are confident to discuss their ideas and to ask appropriate questions, for example when discussing the characters and events in 'Blood Brothers' during an English lesson.
- The majority of pupils enjoy reading and are proud of their achievements, such as reading five books by a famous children's author since the beginning of the term.
- Teachers question pupils effectively and ensure that the pupils extend and deepen their oral answers. Pupils mostly present their written work well and they take care with handwriting, even though their spelling and grammar require further development.
- Pupils understand what they have achieved and are clear about the next steps in their learning. They are assisted in this by an assessment record attached to the front of their books. Teachers also mark written work regularly and provide helpful positive comments, together with ideas about how work might be improved, as required by the school's marking policy.
- Pupils have good opportunities to investigate and to seek information for themselves using the internet. They are skilled in their use of technology and enjoy the responsibility of taking the lead, when appropriate.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour appropriately through the tasks and activities provided and by continuous dialogue throughout the school day. They deal appropriately with occasional incidents of unacceptable behaviour or disruption, using the school's agreed procedures.
- All pupils take part in outdoor education regularly within their weekly timetables and through camping expeditions. Staff skilfully integrate important aspects of other subjects, such as science, geography and mathematics, into the outdoor activities.
- The outdoor activities provide a high level of challenge and make an enormous contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils have, for example, cycled the coast-to-coast route, incorporating Hadrian's Wall, and canoed around the circumference of a Scottish island.
- Teaching builds effectively on pupils' strengths and generally helps them to make progress in their learning in manageable steps. At times, written tasks are not sufficiently challenging for older pupils and do not develop levels of skills appropriate to their age, for example in constructing an argument or justifying a decision.
- Staff introduce imaginative and creative activities, which enable pupils to develop their artistic and design skills, for example, burning an etching of a sports car into a cheese board; however, experiences of art and design are not planned into a coherent programme which provides for the development of themes and skills across the age range of the school.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils improve their confidence and self-esteem considerably, often from very low starting points.
- Staff use assemblies and whole-school meetings effectively to introduce relevant themes, which address pupils' emotional well-being. They encourage pupils to be reflective and to consider the consequences of their attitudes and actions. Pupils appreciate these events and the fact that staff address their concerns and respond to their ideas.
- The school provides a range of challenging outdoor activities, which include a clear emphasis on the development of physical and social skills. The activities are extremely effective in building fitness and resilience and enable pupils to identify alternative ways of dealing with issues.
- Pupils learn about the risks that are present in daily life, including those associated with substance abuse, sexual exploitation, extremism and inappropriate use of the internet. Staff are very aware of the potential vulnerability of pupils and work very effectively through strong relationships between home and school to ensure consistency in the messages conveyed.
- Pupils understand the various forms of bullying that they may encounter. One-to-one teaching and close supervision throughout the school day ensure that there are very few opportunities for bullying.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Over time, pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. They respect the adults that they work with and learn to manage their concentration and to avoid distractions.
- The school is a reflective community, which helps pupils to manage their own emotional and social issues, to seek ways to address these and to behave responsibly.
- Staff challenge any use of inappropriate language by pupils. Pupils mostly respond positively and make genuine efforts to ensure that they address others appropriately.
- A small minority of pupils demonstrate behaviour that is more variable; they require continuing interventions to conform to the school's required standards. The school rarely fails over time to have a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour of any pupil.
- Pupils' attendance is good and unauthorised absence is rare. There are no persistent absentees. School staff work very closely with pupils' homes to ensure that school attendance is taken seriously. Many pupils achieve excellent improvements in attendance, compared with their previous placements. Punctuality to lessons is good.
- Managers of off-site provisions, where some pupils attend for vocational learning or work experience, report positively about the engagement and response of pupils. They understand the potential challenges presented by pupils' attitudes and enable the pupils to overcome these and benefit productively from the experiences provided.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics from low starting points on entry to the school. All current pupils entered the school with levels of attainment below, or well below, the standards expected for their age.
- The majority of pupils have had poor attendance or long periods out of education before joining the school. Staff take immediate steps to remove the resulting gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Pupils make progress in small, but measurable steps. The school's effective assessment arrangements make it possible for these small steps to be recognised and staff communicate them effectively to pupils. The information gained from regular assessment demonstrates that pupils make good progress overall across a range of subjects.
- All pupils at the school are disadvantaged and they begin to make progress gradually towards the standards expected for their age. Their progress in English and mathematics is close to, or improving towards, that of other pupils with the same starting points.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress from their starting points. They become established readers and develop the confidence to apply their numeracy skills in a number of subjects and situations.
- The majority of pupils enjoy reading. They increase their fluency and expression because of regular opportunities to read aloud and to discuss the content of their reading. Many are proud of their progress with reading and happy to demonstrate their success.
- A number of pupils have made good progress in a several subjects, including English, mathematics, history, geography, and food technology.
- Staff use unitised awards and entry-level certificates to reward aspects of the pupils' achievement. These methods serve as effective motivators for older pupils to press on towards achieving functional-skills and GCSE certificates; however, externally accredited certificates are used unevenly and opportunities are missed to reward good and outstanding achievements.
- Pupils make considerable progress in outdoor activities. A number of pupils have achieved externally recognised qualifications in indoor climbing, canoeing and kayaking, navigation, and sport and active leisure. The curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to work towards appropriate qualifications in sport and active leisure, or to achieve leadership, coaching or safety awards.
- The school has achieved its aim of enabling a number of pupils to return to full-time education in mainstream schools. Pupils who have remained in the school to the end of Year 11 have progressed successfully to placements in further education colleges or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	135187
DfE registration number	830/6034
Inspection number	10020753

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

Type of school	Independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Paul Keenan; Patricia Keenan
Chair	Paul Keenan
Headteacher	Robert MacKenzie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,452
Telephone number	01457 860200
Website	www.arnfieldcare.co.uk
Email address	teacher@arnfieldcare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–21 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is registered to provide education for up to 15 pupils aged between 12 and 17 years of age.
- All of the pupils have social, emotional or mental health difficulties and some have complex learning needs. Most pupils enter the school with poor previous attendance, or after significant periods out of school.
- All of the pupils are in the care of their placing local authorities. A small proportion have an education, health and care plan, or a statement of special educational needs.

- The school is located at two sites, Arnfield and Greenfield, which are approximately two miles apart.
- Ofsted previously inspected the school in November 2013.
- The school currently uses the services of the following alternative providers to contribute to the education of selected pupils: Tameside College and Godley Stud Stables.
- Outdoor education is an integral part of education for all pupils at the school.
- The school states in its aims that 'the school's emphasis is on providing a safe and nurturing environment that will encourage and support each young person to re-engage in the process of learning. The ultimate aim is to facilitate students' return to full-time mainstream education at either a maintained school or at college.'

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning at both sites operated by the school. He met with a number of pupils individually and scrutinised examples of their work in a variety of subjects.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietors, the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and classroom support assistants. In addition, he considered responses to inspection questionnaires submitted by nine members of staff.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire for these to be taken into consideration.
- The inspector conducted telephone conversation with the representatives of the two alternative providers currently used by the school.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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