

# Arnfield Independent School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon
Social care inspector	David Morgan

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

## **Information about the school**

Arnfield independent special school is situated within two children's homes which are located two miles apart. Both have a classroom. Boys and girls in the age range of 12 to 17 years who are in need of care and accommodation are placed in the homes by local authorities across England. One children's home offers short-term placements, often in an emergency, and the other offers longer-term placements to young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The last inspection of the children's home was in March 2010 and of the school was in November 2007.

At the time of the inspection, five students from one home, and seven from the other were on the roll of the school. Two had been on roll for just one week. Across both sites, students' age ranged from 12 to 16 years. Three students had statements of special educational needs identifying behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Three students who are 16 years old and over attend college for part of their education and one attends a local secondary school part-time.

The school, in partnership with the children's home, aims to provide all students with the best educational opportunities possible, irrespective of race, gender, culture or ability. The provision emphasises the importance of outdoor activities in promoting learning, academic achievement and personal development.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The quality of education is satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Almost all of the regulations are met. The school and children's home work together very closely to achieve similar aims. This is outstanding in relation to students' welfare health and safety, including safeguarding arrangements. Outdoor education makes a significant contribution to improving student's engagement, self-

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

confidence and behaviour. As a result, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum policy has established clear and appropriate educational aims leading to a breadth of full-time study incorporating all the required areas of learning. Art and design in particular are stimulated by strong subject knowledge. As a result of the substantial resources and expertise in outdoor education promotion of students' physical development is strong. This together with the well-planned children's home programmes further support students' personal development, for example in keeping them safe and staying healthy.

The aim of placing students in mainstream education is successful because of the good links developed with local schools and colleges and the support given for these students to cope with the demands of mainstream education. In particular, students have gained National Vocational Qualifications at college which prepares them well for future employment.

Work in English, mathematics and science relies mainly upon a commercial scheme of work, resulting in students making satisfactory progress in these subjects. Students have the opportunity to gain some accreditation for their work from the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance Unit Awards as well as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Bronze and Silver Awards. This accreditation has strengths but also limitations. The standards reached by some more able students in mathematics and art suggest they should follow more demanding Entry Level Certificate and GCSE courses. However, Unit Awards in outdoor education, which are set at three levels, offer a real challenge to students and help to promote a wide range of skills and good progress in physical and personal development.

There is insufficient regard for the contents of statements of special educational needs for those students who have one. Emergency, short-term placements and problems with acquiring up-to-date, accurate information exacerbate the difficulty of incorporating the educational provision required by statements. This is especially the case for students in shorter-term placements. The children's home and school meet the behavioural, emotional and social needs of the students, but more specific requirements relating to communication and other learning difficulties are not being provided for adequately.

The planning and organisation of outdoor education is separate from school timetabling as they are managed by the outdoor education co-ordinator and headteacher respectively. This causes clashes at times when a planned outdoor activity overlaps with the school timetable and students do not turn up as expected for lessons.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Teachers, classroom assistants and care staff work together very effectively to settle students and build positive relationships with them. Initial antipathy towards school and reluctance to learn, very often

significant barriers to achievement, are overcome quickly; few problems of co-operation arise in the classroom and these are managed effectively and sensitively. Students behave well. They are generally positively engaged in learning and often make good efforts with their work. However, lessons are not always sufficiently challenging because work is more determined by the structure of the commercial scheme than the rigorous application of teachers' assessment to meet individuals' needs. Learning objectives for lessons are vaguely described, as are the targets set in students' individual education plans. As a result, progress is satisfactory as students do not have something specific to aim for. However, in extra-curricular provision, which is in part outdoor education and in greater part, the contribution made by the children's home to personal, social and health education, progress is good. In the respite afforded by their placements in the children's home, students learn effectively about managing anger, dealing positively with emotions, developing independence and understanding risks they face to their health and safety.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Their confidence and self-esteem receive a tremendous boost from their experiences in outdoor education and from the relationships and support provided by staff. Students find much that they enjoy in what is offered, and this is reflected in their positive attitude to learning and the views they express. They contribute well in terms of their co-operation, good behaviour and help with duties in the children's home. The ethos common to the children's home and school produces high quality teamwork. This leads to a consistency of approach which students appreciate and benefit from, particularly in terms of improving their behaviour and acting appropriately in relation to what is right and wrong. The citizenship scheme makes provision to enable students to broaden their knowledge of public institutions and services. This is complemented by well-planned work in the children's home which introduces students to the range of public services they will need and might encounter when independent. Together with the progress students make, this adds considerably to good preparation for future economic well-being. The opportunity to learn about other cultures is satisfactory. Students explore this through art and other topic work such as on the slave trade, which recently incorporated a visit to the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool.

## **Welfare, health and safety of students**

Students' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. Individual needs relating to students keeping safe and staying healthy are assessed thoroughly in the children's home and met comprehensively through the home's programmes and the school curriculum. The school and children's home implement the common, detailed safeguarding policy and arrangements are rigorous. All staff are trained to the appropriate level in accordance with their responsibilities for safeguarding and child protection. Great care is exercised in the recruitment of staff and volunteers to ensure all of the required checks are undertaken and recorded. Staff are very alert to child protection matters, procedures are robust, and work with agencies and various

local authorities is competently managed. Students understand how they can make complaints and any that are made are taken seriously and fully investigated. Outdoor education staff hold the appropriate qualifications for the land and water-based activities provided. Trips are well-planned and covered by comprehensive risk assessments.

Responsibilities are met in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended. The school and children's home have a common policy setting out clear aims for increasing access to premises and provision which informs a suitable three-year plan for improvements.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All staff, including sessional instructors for outdoor education activities, have been checked for their suitability to work with children. The record of all of the required checks on the proprietors and staff is kept in accordance with requirements and is up-to-date.

### **Premises of and accommodation at the school**

School accommodation, comprising single classrooms on both sites, is adequate for the small numbers of students. Both classrooms are secure and safe and support learning effectively. The scope for practical science is restricted, although this is offset by the learning opportunities provided in the garden and pond area. The acquisition of large equipment for science and subjects like music is restricted by the lack of storage space. However, space for the storage of outdoor education equipment is good, which means it is well organised and maintained, thus contributing to safety.

### **Provision of information**

All of the regulations relating to the information provided to parents, carers and others meet requirements. The statement of purpose, which includes the necessary information about the school, is up-to-date, detailed and clearly communicated. A wide range of policies is made available to parents, carers and local authorities on request. Regular school reports are written on each student setting out their progress although the information on improvements in attainment lacks detail.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's policy and procedures meet requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the last academic year.

The residential provision was judged to be good and national minimum standards were met. A full report on this provision is available in the social care section of the Ofsted website.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- implement effectively the curriculum policy as set out in writing (paragraph 2(1))
- fulfil the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs (paragraph 2(2)(e)).

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure the learning objectives written for lessons and individual education plan targets are focused sharply on what students need to learn
- plan the use of time for classroom activities and outdoor education more effectively in order that their timetabling is organised and clear.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made)

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs			✓	
How well students make progress in their learning			✓	

### Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of students		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students	✓			
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	A special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	27 February 2007		
<b>Age range of students</b>	12-17		
<b>Gender of students</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time students)</b>	Boys: 7	Girls: 5	Total: 12
<b>Number of students with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
<b>Number of students who are looked after</b>	Boys: 7	Girls: 5	Total: 12
<b>Annual fees (day students)</b>	£137,598		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert McKenzie		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Paul and Patrica Keenan		