

Arc School (Formerly the Old School)

Independent school standard inspection report

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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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The Arc School provides education for boys and girls aged seven to sixteen years with significant and persistent socially disadvantaging behaviours and, frequently, learning difficulties. All of the students have statements of special educational needs. The school is located on two sites in the Nuneaton area of Warwickshire, and a third site in the south of the county. It is registered for 100 students. There are currently 74 full-time students on roll, six of whom are looked after children. The school is owned by OS Education Ltd. It opened in September 1987 and was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2008. Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded onto a third site and increased its capacity.

Evaluation of the school

The Arc School provides a good quality of education. Students benefit from an outstanding curriculum which has been very well planned to meet the students' needs. The appointment of a cultural curator has been a significant factor in this development. The excellent attention to engaging the students in purposeful learning and appropriate behaviour is highly successful, resulting in outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and outstanding behaviour. The school's safeguarding procedures are robust. The school has successfully managed its expansion since the previous inspection. It meets all but one of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It provides a very wide range of exciting learning opportunities. There is clear progression through developing basic skills in literacy numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in addition to providing excellent opportunities for students to develop their personal and social skills. The school's 'five keys' structure forms a secure basis for students' learning and development. Consequently, students are very well prepared for the future.

The youngest students benefit from a thematic curriculum and have opportunities to participate in activities such as forest school, rock climbing, water sports and activities on a local farm. These are developed further as students move into Key Stage 3 and engage in a three-phase transitional curriculum based on human

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

endeavour, personal growth and creative purpose. They move on to a preparative curriculum at Key Stage 4 focused on accredited qualifications and independent learning. All students take a full range of qualifications such as GCSE, BTEC, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), Entry Level and functional skills according to their individual needs.

Throughout the school there are excellent opportunities for students' creative development and these meet their individual learning needs very well. Specialist teachers provide expertise in art, music and physical education. ICT is a particular strength with students achieving high levels of success and raising their self-esteem through excellent use of technology. Opportunities, such as preparing multi-media presentations, enable students to develop basic skills including speaking and listening, writing and social skills through very effective cross-curricular work. The publication of the students' work on the school's website and public showings demonstrate how their work is valued. All students receive individual music tuition on a range of instruments.

The curriculum is enriched through very effective use of community resources and artists. For example, pupils have worked with artists to create sculptures, participated in activities on local farms and visited a wide range of local places of interest to support their learning. Visits have included opportunities to develop control mechanics, recording at media studios, places of cultural interest, dance performances and a visit to London. Further opportunities through residential visits, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and after-school 'eXtra' classes enhance the learning opportunities further, ensuring that students are fully engaged in a very wide range of learning opportunities.

Students in Year 11 receive very good support for their future learning and employment. They each meet with a Connexions advisor and an action plan is prepared for each student. 'What's next' evenings ensure that parents and carers are also kept well informed. The success of this work is evident in the 100% success rate of students continuing in further education or apprenticeships.

Teaching and assessment are good. Students' behaviour and emotional development are assessed and monitored very well ensuring that teaching is planned to meet their needs and engage them in their learning. Requirements in students' statements of special educational needs are met well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use resources effectively. They plan lessons with clear learning objectives which are understood by students and are referred to frequently during each session. As a result, students have a good understanding of what they are learning about. Objectives are underpinned by individual targets ensuring that students have achievable goals to aim for. This is particularly effective with the Key Stage 2 students because these targets are frequently revisited as the lesson progresses. Teachers ensure that activities are engaging and work is suitably challenging. Consequently, students maintain their concentration and there is a good pace of learning in each lesson. Teachers use a variety of strategies, including brisk activities and effective use of technology to keep lessons vibrant. They use questioning well to

challenge students' thinking, allowing them time to reflect as well as value others' views. For example, students are respectful when asked to comment on their classmates' work. Students use technology confidently. For example, they use cameras and computers to record and edit multi-media presentations. In music lessons, they use a combination of instruments and technology to create and perform.

Students make good progress. It is not outstanding because, occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to fully extend students' learning through their questioning, or the set task does not provide sufficient challenge for each student within the small teaching groups. The marking of students' work enables them to understand how well they have done, but rarely provides clear guidance about how to improve.

Formal systems to track students' academic progress are at an early stage of development. In Key Stage 2, they are at their best and include appropriate moderation with another school. The absence of a consistent tracking system throughout the school makes it difficult for the school to demonstrate progress over time. Nevertheless, the school uses a wide range of accredited qualifications enabling it to compare students' attainment with its own aims as well as with the performance of other schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students relate very well to each other and to adults. Each day begins with an assembly where students of all ages have excellent opportunities to reflect and use their imagination when responding to music and art. They are respectful as a student reads out the school's prayer. Students are courteous, reflective and confident. They demonstrate very good speaking and listening skills and a high level of respect for others. This continues into the end of day meetings where students reflect on the day and share their feelings openly.

The school has placed a very strong focus on building students' self-esteem. Around the school, students' work and certificates of achievement are displayed well. ICT is used very well by students who each produce 'i-portfolios' in the form of a digitally produced hardback book which provides a highly valued, permanent memory for each student at the end of each phase of their education.

Students' behaviour is outstanding. This is because they respond to the structured routines very well, demonstrating excellent manners at lunchtimes and treating others with high levels of courtesy and respect. Some of the older students develop positive self-esteem from their own achievements, while others are still reliant on tangible rewards. They use their initiative well to ensure success. Younger pupils in particular are very keen to build up large collections of points to exchange for significant prizes. They attend well and have very good attitudes in lessons.

Students are proud of their school and contribute to the environment. They recycle, grow fruit and vegetables, and make things such as picnic tables for the school's gardens and raised beds for growing plants. Their work is proudly displayed in the community and younger students develop good social skills by reading with pupils in the local primary school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. There is a very well established culture of safety on each of the three sites. Students understand the rules very well. They are extremely well supervised and say that they feel safe. This is because staff take very good care of the pupils from the moment they are escorted from their taxis on arrival to the time when they are returned to their taxis for their journey home. Each student is allocated a key worker who plays a significant role in helping them to feel safe and secure. The key workers contribute to strong links with parents and carers through home visits as well as providing high quality pastoral support for the students.

The school's good practice to ensure that students are safe is not consistently reflected in the school's documentation. For example, the first aid policy does not include sufficiently detailed guidance for staff such as how to deal with spillages of bodily fluids. Nevertheless, arrangements for first aid are robust with sufficient qualified first aiders on each site and robust recording of accidents. The school has a separate admissions register on each site, but none of these includes all of the required information.

The school has prepared and implemented a comprehensive safeguarding policy. It includes clear guidance for staff and appropriate links with other policies. There is a suitably trained designated senior member of staff for child protection on each site. The school has implemented a comprehensive range of policies to promote good behaviour including clear guidance about strategies for staff. Exclusion, physical intervention and incident rates are analysed half termly and are reducing. However, the school is aware that exclusion rates remain too high.

Fire risk assessments have been carried out for all three sites and all urgent actions have been addressed. Records of fire evacuation practices and tests of fire alarms and extinguishers are mostly well maintained. However, a minority of paperwork is somewhat disorganised. The school has immediately addressed the issue of a few missed weekly alarm tests on one site. An unplanned fire alarm which occurred on this site during the inspection was well managed with a responsible and safe response from the students. Students participate in weekly physical education lessons and enjoy a healthy lunchtime diet. The Key Stage 4 site has achieved Healthy School Status. The school complies with the Equality Act 2010 and has a three year plan to improve accessibility.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all of the required checks on staff and the proprietors, recording these appropriately on a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is housed on three sites and provides suitable indoor accommodation and extensive grounds for education and recreation. Students in Key Stages 2 and 3 benefit from forest school areas which enhance the outdoor environment. Students in Key Stages 3 and 4 benefit from specialist facilities for art, ICT, design technology food technology and science. Off-site provision for physical education at a local leisure centre for older students and access to a farm for younger students adds to the school's provision.

Provision of information

The school provides parents, carers and others with an extensive range of detailed information about the school through the school's website and printed handbook. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's attainment and progress through the very well-received key worker system as well as comprehensive written reports.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a suitable complaints policy which is readily available to parents and carers.

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.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the school's admission register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006⁴ (paragraph 17).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents/made.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Raise the level of challenge in lessons through the tasks and challenges that are set, and the guidance in marking, to enable pupils to make outstanding progress in the majority of lessons.
- Develop a robust system to track the academic attainment and progress of students throughout the school.
- Review the information and guidance for parents, carers and staff to ensure that information is presented clearly and appropriately for the audience.

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 pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special day school		
Date school opened	1 September 1987		
Age range of pupils	7–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 64	Girls: 10	Total: 74
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 64	Girls: 10	Total: 74
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,762 to £47,046		
Address of school	Church End Ansley Nuneaton CV10 0QR		
Telephone number	02476 394801		
Email address	churchend@arcschool.co.uk		
Director of Education	Cathal Lynch		
Proprietor	OS Education Limited		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Arc School (Formerly the Old School), Nuneaton, CV10 0QR

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome when we visited your school this week. We very much enjoyed speaking with you and visiting your lessons.

You get a good education at The Arc School. The curriculum is outstanding because the teachers have planned it very well to make sure that there is an excellent variety of exciting activities which help you to learn. You behave very well because the school has made the rules very clear and very fair. You all understand the rules and appreciate the rewards you receive. It is particularly good that some of you see the rewards as less important because you realise that it is worth working hard because the qualifications you achieve will help you to get on in life. Although a few of you commented that the rules are too strict, virtually all of you said on your questionnaires that you enjoy school. It was obvious when we talked to you and observed your lessons that most of you really do enjoy school.

You make good progress in lessons because the teaching is good and you have very good attitudes. You could make even better progress if the work was a little more challenging for some of you at times. It would also help you if teachers provided you with more ideas for improving your work when they mark it. If they do write comments or questions on your work, please make sure that you take note of what they have written.

The staff take very good care of you and many of you commented on how much you appreciate the support given by your key workers. We could see what a good job they do.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector

