

Arnfield Independent School

Manchester Road, Tintwistle, Glossop, SK13 1NE

Inspection dates

19–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness

Adequate 3

Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- The quality of teaching, the curriculum and aspects of leadership are not good enough to ensure students' good progress. In addition, not all staff have been trained in safeguarding at the appropriate levels.
- The school's assessments are too general and they do not identify specific skills and targets for student to achieve in order for them to make rapid progress. As a result, activities are not always matched to individual needs.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to learn for themselves or to use their enquiry skills in all lessons, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Improvement planning is not rigorous enough to move the school forward at a faster rate. The priorities are the right ones, but there are no measurable targets to assess what progress the school is making towards them. Plans are not monitored regularly enough.
- The proprietor does not provide staff with enough support and training in order for them to improve the quality of their teaching, or for the headteacher to regularly check the work of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Students make good progress in their personal development. They make significant gains in their confidence and self-esteem and quickly re-engage in their learning.
- Staff ensure that students are well cared for and they keep them safe. Students appreciate the support and help they receive from staff.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Activities such as art and the outdoor education have a very positive impact on aspects of students' learning and their personal development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards'). The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- The headteacher was notified of this inspection on the day before the inspection started.
- The inspector observed six lessons taught by two different teachers. The inspector also made short visits to other activities and listened to some students read during their lessons. Discussions were held with a range of school staff and pupils.
- The inspector checked a range of documentation, including schemes of work and the safeguarding procedures and policies. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's Parent View to be reported on. Five staff questionnaires were also taken into account.
- At the time of this inspection, there was an inspection of the associated children's home. A separate report has been written which is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Arnfield is a small independent special school for up to eight students. It operates within two children's homes which are located two miles apart. It is a co-educational school catering for students between the ages of 11 and 18 years who are in need of care, accommodation and education. Students are placed in the homes by local authorities across England.
- One of the children's homes provides short-term placements, offering crisis intervention, and the other provides longer-term placements. All students have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and some have complex learning difficulties. There are currently eight students in the school. Three students have a statement of special educational need, and all are in the care of their local authority.
- The school 'endeavours to provide a safe, structure and stable environment where young people can experience new and achievable challenges which can lead to success and a return to mainstream schooling, a return to their families or independent living in the community'.
- The school was last inspected in November 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that students make good or better progress by:
 - assessing students' levels of attainment and understanding in English, mathematics and science more precisely so that activities are better matched to their needs
 - identifying targets and key skills for students to aim for within lessons and in a series of lessons to speed up their progress
 - giving students more opportunities to learn for themselves, to apply their writing skills creatively and to evaluate their own progress through planning, investigating and applying their skills in all lessons, particularly in mathematics and science
 - providing time for teachers to observe good and outstanding practice in other schools
 - ensuring that those students who are capable and are in school long enough are able to study nationally recognised courses.
- Strengthen leadership and management so that improvement is more rapid by:
 - providing more time for the headteacher to monitor the work of the school
 - reviewing the school improvement plan, so that priorities have measurable targets based on the students' performance
 - monitoring the progress made towards meeting these targets using student performance information and checking the progress against national norms
 - undertaking an audit of staff's strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the planning and assessment of key subjects, so that teachers are able to improve their practice and raise students' achievement
 - refining the appraisal process, so that teachers have targets that are based on the school's priorities.
- **The school must meet the following independent school standards.**
Part 3
 - Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State by making sure that all staff have appropriate levels of safeguarding training (paragraph 7).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

The quality of students' achievement is adequate. Students often have very low levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science when they enter the school. All have had severe disruption to their education as a result of being permanently excluded from mainstream schools, as well as experiencing major traumas in their life. Many have not attended secondary schools at all. As a result students initially have low self-esteem; they lack confidence and are not motivated to learn or want to achieve their best.

Students learn through activities in the classroom and through outdoor education. All students quickly re-engage in their learning. They make expected progress in their basic literacy and numeracy skills and some make good progress, especially in their reading. Teachers provide suitable activities to ensure that students' skills are developed effectively. However, more able students do not take nationally recognised formal courses in English, mathematics and science, including Functional Skills or GCSEs. This is partly because some students only spend a relatively short period of time in the school. Nevertheless, there are some students who could achieve a great deal more, particularly those who remain in the school for a longer period of time and the most-able students.

All students have individual plans based on initial assessments when they enter school. Activities are suitably tailored to their stages of development and broadly reflect their individual education plan if they have a statement of special educational needs. Students' progress is checked through regular monthly tests, which identify any gaps in their learning. However, this information is too general and does not pinpoint precisely what students need to learn next in order to secure good progress, as well as closing the gaps in their learning. Work is not always pitched at the right level of challenge and does not systematically build on what students already know. The performance information collected is not compared to schools nationally at key points throughout the year. Consequently, students make adequate progress, including those who have a statement of special educational needs.

Students' work books and achievement in lessons confirm that they make expected progress because the impact of teaching is adequate. Students make more rapid progress through the ASDAN awards scheme (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and the outdoor education programme. In the latter, students are able to take Unit Awards which have three accredited levels. Both programmes have a significant impact on students' personal and physical development.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development are good. Students make good progress in their behaviour from when they start in the school. They usually concentrate well and they try their best in lessons. They are keen to improve and are motivated to want to learn more. Students often make remarkable progress in their social and emotional development, because both education and care staff work seamlessly to provide the appropriate level of support and encouragement. Students respond well to the high expectations for their behaviour, and respect the clear and constant boundaries. Throughout their time in the school and home, students' self-belief and confidence soar. Students enjoy school and their attendance is excellent.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is effectively promoted through the school's personal, social, health education (PSHE) and citizenship programmes. Students have a good understanding of right and wrong, and have a respect for criminal and civil law. Displays in art and the outdoor education activities show that staff find out at what

students excel so that they experience success, and have good opportunities to express themselves creatively. Topics also enable students to discuss differences and to develop their tolerance and respect for each other, and those from different ethnic and cultural heritages. Issues of stereotyping and prejudice are confronted within these discussions. Staff ensure that students are presented with balanced views when discussing these and other topics. Students have a good understanding of the many types of bullying. There are many opportunities for students to contribute to their local community. For example, they recently hosted a coffee morning in school for local residents to raise funds for a national charity. Visits from the community police officer's visit reinforce the effective community links. This, together with other visit and visitors helps to students to develop a good knowledge of public institutions and services in Britain.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate. All students, including those with special educational needs, enjoy learning in small groups and the one-to-one support they receive from adults. Teachers and the teaching assistant know their students' personal development needs very well but are less secure in promoting their academic and vocational learning at the right level. Students sometimes receive feedback on how they are doing, as teachers use a colour-coded check list, but this is not consistent. It does not provide enough detail for teachers to plan activities which are tailored effectively to meet the students' differing needs. As a result, students make expected rather than good progress as the work is sometimes too easy or too hard. Similarly, students do not have enough opportunities in class to work on their own, to research and investigate problems using a wide range of resources, including information and communication technology, especially in mathematics and science. At times, students are over-reliant on adult support which prevents students from practising their skills such as reading in a wide range of different contexts, as too often teachers will read out instructions for them. Students spend a great deal of time practising and developing their grammar, punctuation and spelling but do not have enough opportunities to use and apply these skills in creative writing.

When teaching is good, teachers question students effectively to extend their ideas and develop critical thinking. In these lessons, learning is active and relevant, which secures students' sustained attention and interest. For example, in one lesson the teacher used the students' current fascination about insects to develop their vocabulary, knowledge and observational skills by using an electronic microscope to observe some captured spiders. The students remained fascinated and absorbed for a sustained period of time. In discussions with students, they say that they enjoy the outdoor activities, which promotes their confidence and ability to work together as a team.

Quality of curriculum

Adequate

The curriculum is adequate. All the required areas of learning are suitably planned for and experienced by the students through the detailed schemes of work and the topic based activities. However, there are some missed opportunities for students to develop and practise key skills in writing, mathematics and science. Equally, there are no nationally recognised academic examination courses for students to work towards. This slows down their progress and prevents them from being better prepared academically for their next stage of education, employment or training. This is especially the case for those students on long-term placements and more-able students. Other aspects of the curriculum are rich and varied. Students are able to develop crucial life skills, where staff capitalise on their interests through project-based activities beyond the classroom. These off-site locations bring learning to life, and provide first-hand experiences through visits to local places of interest such as the museums, library and the shopping centre. Activities promote all aspects of PSHE and citizenship, through topics such as beliefs and values, citizenship and the community and vocational preparation and work related activities. For example, one student's love of animals resulted in voluntary work experience at the local kennels. This student completed a course on animal care and another student has undertaken work experience at a local school nursery. The outdoor education provides students with opportunities to learn

through practical challenges and first-hand observations, exploring the local environment and further afield such as Loch Lomond. They learn effectively through a wide variety of activities, including bush craft, horse riding, canoeing, and kayaking.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Adequate

The school makes adequate provision for students' welfare, health and safety. All but one of the regulations for this standard are met. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. They are not good because, while other staff have been suitably trained at the appropriate levels in safeguarding procedures, the designated child protection officer and one teacher have not undertaken recent training, as required. Nevertheless, the child protection officer has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of safeguarding matters. This, together with the up-to-date higher level training that other staff have received, secures effective support and advice for staff. As a result, students' welfare is not compromised. All the required checks are carried out on the proprietors, staff and volunteers to ascertain their suitability to work with children. These checks are appropriately recorded in a single central register. The essential policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks are implemented consciously and reviewed regularly.

Both education and care staff work very well together to ensure that all students feel safe and are kept safe. All the required policies are in place, and these are effectively implemented. All serious incidents are systematically recorded. Students say there is little bullying, which the school log confirms, reflecting the effectiveness of the school's preventative measures. They say that they feel very well cared for. Students' behaviour is managed well because there is a consistency of approach by all staff underpinned by a clear policy and procedures. Staff use positive behaviour strategies which reduce student anxiety, as well as the incident of restraints. There are highly positive relationships where students trust and respect each other and adults. This results in a significant decrease of incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Students gain better self-control, and they start to make appropriate choices.

Many students have previously not kept themselves safe and have put themselves at significant risk. They now have a good awareness of how to assess and manage risks appropriately. Likewise, all students understand the importance of keeping healthy and usually lead healthy lifestyles while in school. The comprehensive outdoor activities provide highly effective daily opportunities to keep fit and healthy. Staff provide a good level of risk assessment at the school and when on visits and expeditions. There are very effective links with external agencies, including those from the health and mental health services, which have a positive impact on the students' personal development.

Leadership and management

Adequate

The quality of leadership in, and management of, the school is adequate. The headteacher has a full-time teaching commitment. This means that he has not been able to regularly monitor and evaluate fully the impact of the school's work. As a result the quality of teaching has remained adequate since the previous inspection, and students make only expected progress academically.

Leaders have the support of the staff team. Staff are totally focused on developing students' personal development and securing their emotional and social readiness to move onto their next stage of development. Both the education and care staff are highly successful at re-integrating students back into mainstream education. All but one of the regulatory requirements for independent schools are met.

The headteacher has the support from an external adviser and together they have planned for improvement. They have begun to develop a system to strengthen the quality of teaching. However, the improvement plan does not identify measurable targets based on students' achievement, and there is no check on student progress against national information. Furthermore, the appraisal process is not sufficiently linked to the school's priorities because teachers' targets

are too general. The headteacher has developed some effective links with other schools and staff have benefited from some training sessions. There are plans to develop this further, but to date there are too few opportunities for teachers to observe good and outstanding practice or to attend specific training based on their professional needs.

The premises provide suitable accommodation for teaching and learning. The school has established strong and effective partnerships with placing local authorities and provides them with a good range of information. The school prospectus and website provide access for parents, carers and others to the full range of school policies and information, including details of the complaints procedures.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education.

School details

Unique reference number	135187
Inspection number	422784
DfE registration number	830/6034

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	12–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Paul Keenan
Chair	Paul Keenan
Headteacher	Robert MacKenzie
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,700
Telephone number	01457 860200
Fax number	N/A
Email address	teacher@arnfieldcare.co.uk

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