

# Arnold Academy

Hexton Road, Barton-le-Clay, Bedford, MK45 4JZ

**Inspection dates** 17–18 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Leaders have been effective in steadily raising standards over the last two years.
- By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above what is usual at this age and continuing to improve. This represents good achievement for all pupils.
- Teaching throughout the school is mostly good and some is outstanding. In the main, teachers plan learning well and check pupils' progress frequently during lessons.
- The few pupils in the specialist unit for pupils with autism make excellent progress and their achievement is outstanding.
- The school provides excellent opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in particular through the values it makes central to pupils' education.
- An exciting curriculum motivates pupils and fosters in them a strong love for learning.
- Leaders, including governors, provide strong leadership and clear direction. There is a sharp focus on improving achievement and teaching. Teachers are held accountable for the progress pupils make.
- Pupils feel very safe and their behaviour is good. They are keen to learn and are unreservedly polite and courteous to each other.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching, partly because the work teachers set is not always adjusted enough to match the full range of pupils' abilities.
- Teachers do not make full use of marking and guidance to help pupils improve their work.
- Pupils' progress and standards in Years 5 and 6 are not as strong as in Years 7 and 8.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 teachers teach and visited 30 part lessons, of which three were observed jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, the school improvement consultant and school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school’s progress-tracking data, planning and monitoring documentation, self-evaluation summary, the safeguarding policies and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors took account of the 41 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the outcomes of the school’s own parental surveys.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about the school’s work and listened to some pupils read.

## Inspection team

Nasim Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Simon Hughes	Additional Inspector
Kate Robertson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy school in July 2011. When its predecessor school, Arnold Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school is part of a partnership trust called the Harlington Area Schools Trust (HAST).
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular pupils, including those eligible for free school meals) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is slightly below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for six pupils with special educational needs for autism, with a particular focus on improving these pupils' communication skills. Most of the pupils in the unit are integrated into mainstream lessons for part of the timetable.
- The large majority of pupils are White British and others come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- The school has no offsite alternative provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - using assessment information consistently well to provide learning activities that take full account of what pupils of different abilities already know and can do
  - ensuring that pupils understand the next steps to take to improve their work, and act upon teachers' guidance and marking.
- Further increase pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 so that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above average at Key Stage 2, by:
  - making full use of the information collected on pupils' progress and attainment to rapidly identify any pupils who are slipping behind in their work
  - taking immediate action to provide the help and guidance necessary to accelerate their progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Leaders have established effective systems to check the standards of pupils when they join the school in Year 5. The school works with another school in the local partnership to make sure that the checking process is accurate. These reliable results show that pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 5 is broadly typical of this age group.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and their attainment rises in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 8 to be ahead of that in most schools. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders have rightly focused on accelerating pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 because it has not been as strong as it is in Years 7 and 8. School data show early signs of good impact from the action taken. For example, additional focused work with those pupils working below expectations for their age is contributing well to them making more rapid progress. Good progress over time was observed in these pupils' books, though more remains to be done to make progress equally strong at Key Stage 2 as it is at Key Stage 3.
- The school actively promotes equality of opportunity by ensuring that pupils who are not making sufficient progress are given extra help to achieve well. Regular checks on pupils' progress mean that most who need extra support are quickly identified and provided with specific support either in small groups or with one-to-one tuition. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress with the help they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The few pupils in the specialist unit for pupils with autism make excellent progress and achieve outstandingly well – better than most pupils across the school – because the support they receive is highly focused on them as individuals and tasks are very well matched to ability, resulting in rapid improvements in their communication skills.
- At the end of Year 8, pupils eligible for pupil premium funding attain standards slightly lower than those of their classmates – approximately six months behind in reading and writing and eight months behind in mathematics. Nevertheless, their starting points are lower and these pupils make good progress throughout the school. The most recent information shows that the gap between the attainment of eligible pupils and others is narrowing as a result of well-targeted support and good teaching.
- Teachers' assessments show that progress of pupils from all backgrounds, including the few who speak English as an additional language and the most able, over the past year has been good in most subjects and in all year groups.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are given good opportunities to develop their reading skills. In addition, pupils' speaking and listening skills are strong because they are regularly asked to discuss their ideas in pairs and small groups and their positive attitudes to these activities contribute considerably to their learning and progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The majority of teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding teaching. Effective teaching motivates students to learn and all show positive attitudes to their work. This is

particularly evident in Years 6, 7 and 8 and in the school's specialist unit for pupils with autism. Teachers use skilful questioning, well-matched activities and focused support, enabling most pupils to make rapid progress.

- Teachers and other adults create a highly positive learning environment which fosters good relationships and excellent attitudes to learning. They have good subject knowledge and are well-trained to support pupils' learning and progress.
- The teaching of writing has improved over the last year. This is the result of the school's focus on promoting writing skills across all subjects. The use of resources such as subject-specific 'writing mats' are effective in motivating pupils to focus on sentence structure and punctuation in subjects other than English. This is having a positive impact on their higher attainment in literacy, including that of the most able pupils.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in lessons to support pupils. Their efforts and well-planned teaching enable disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make good progress.
- Most work is set at the right level. Where teaching is outstanding, teachers inspire pupils to learn and tasks are set to challenge their thinking and reasoning skills. For example, a teacher's attention to detail and determination to involve all pupils, including those not engaging on the field, enabled Year 7 pupils to make excellent progress in developing their dribbling skills in hockey, or deepening their understanding through checking the performance of participants.
- Effective teaching of mathematics gives pupils many opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding in practical situations. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, applying the concept of ratio and proportion to real-life contexts enabled pupils to sharpen their thinking and reasoning skills and make good progress. The most able pupils were well motivated because they were given tasks that demanded deeper thinking and sharper analysis.
- In less effective lessons, teachers do not always make the best use of assessment information to fine-tune work for the full range of pupils' abilities and this limits the progress they can make. The least able and the most able pupils are most affected in these situations, and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- There are examples of good marking, for instance in English, where pupils get detailed feedback on how to improve their literacy work, to which they are expected to respond. However, on some occasions pupils are not clear about what they could do to make their work even better because teachers do not give them clear pointers on what to try out. Also, teachers do not always make sure pupils have learned from the guidance that is given, for example by reflecting on and discussing the guidance, or attempting further challenges so as to consolidate what they have learned.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The school has a purposeful atmosphere conducive to good learning. Pupils are able to work collaboratively in a mature way. They enjoy learning and want to come to school. This enthusiasm is reflected in the above-average attendance of all pupils, including key groups such as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Parents and pupils confirm that behaviour is good within the school. Pupils are unfailingly courteous and treat each other and the adults who work with them with respect. The few pupils

in the specialist unit for autism form positive relationships and behave as well as other pupils.

- Pupils understand that there are different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and name calling. They say, and school records support this, that bullying is not a problem at the school and that any poor behaviour is rapidly dealt with. Parents are confident that any concerns are dealt with effectively.
- Pupils feel very safe within the school because of the importance the school places on the well-being of all pupils, and parents share this view. Pupils value the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, that are provided and which have a positive impact on their health and well-being.
- Where behaviour falls short of the high standards set by the school, there are effective systems in place to help pupils think about the consequences of their actions. The school's data show that this often has the desired impact, as seen for instance in the fact that there has been just one fixed-term exclusion in the past two years.
- The school's strong promotion of values such as peace and respect helps to create an inclusive environment in which pupils from different backgrounds get on really well with each other and where discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in a few lessons where teaching is not good, a few pupils lose interest and become disengaged.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The effective leadership of the headteacher is having a positive impact on the school. Responses to parental and staff surveys show strong support for his vision for continuous improvement and clear direction to take teaching and achievement forward. With the full support of the senior leadership team and the governing body, good management systems and structures have been established to implement the drive for improvement.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching thoroughly by observing lessons, examining work in pupils' books and checking teachers' planning of learning. Subject leaders are effective in using data on pupils' progress and attainment to evaluate pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility and use this information to produce clear action plans for improvement.
- Teachers are given clear guidance how to improve their practice and appreciate the professional training available to them. Teachers are held accountable for the progress pupils make and their performance is linked to salary progression. Leaders recognise that the links between areas for improvement identified in teaching and the professional training provided for staff are not always strong enough. For example, in a few cases, assessment information on pupils' progress is not used to full effect in taking more immediate action to accelerate the progress of the few pupils identified from school data as falling behind.
- Leaders have accurately identified, in the school development plan, the priority to further accelerate progress in Years 5 and 6 to ensure that standards are consistently above average by the end of Key Stage 2. Good coaching and training for subject leaders has equipped them with the skills to work closely with teachers to improve the quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6. The impact on Key Stage 2 pupils' performance is already ensuring more rapid progress and above-average standards – as currently seen from the school's performance data and from pupils'

work. Leaders have successfully maintained strong standards in the two Key Stage 3 years.

- The curriculum is very broad and provides Years 7 and 8 pupils, for instance, with imaginative options from which to choose to foster a love for learning. As a result, pupils are prepared very well for the next stage of their education. The school maximises its fortunate position in having access to a wide range of specialist facilities, for example, in sports, science, technology and music, which enrich pupils' wider educational experiences.
- The provision for developing the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' education is excellent. It is driven by the school's priority of making values central to pupils' learning supported by the breadth and depth of the curriculum.
- Pupil premium funding is used wisely. Leaders are determined that pupils who are eligible for this funding will make accelerated progress. The good programmes in place are helping to ensure that disadvantaged pupils, including those in Year 7, catch up quickly through extra help with literacy and numeracy.
- The new primary sports funding is used in part to increase participation rates across the school to enable pupils to develop healthy, active lifestyles. More pupils are now engaged in lunchtime sports clubs organised by a staff member deployed for this purpose.
- Leaders have found the work of the school improvement consultant useful in checking the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation. The school has helpful links with the Harlington Area Schools Trust (HAST) and benefits, for example, from the external checking of the accuracy of its teacher assessments.
- Very effective leadership of the specialist unit for pupils with autism ensures that the quality of provision is outstanding and pupils maximise their progress during the time they spend there.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Many members of the governing body are new in post, but they have been inducted well to take up their role. The governing body is effective in its ability to challenge and support the school. Its members know what the school is doing well and where it could do better because they are involved in the school's self-evaluation activities. They have a good understanding of information on pupils' progress, and use it to make comparisons with national performance at Key Stage 2 and, where possible, with middle schools locally and nationally. For example, they are well aware that pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 is below that in Key Stage 3 and are pressing leaders to make achievement more even across the school. Governors check the use of the pupil premium funding, to narrow the gap in attainment between eligible pupils and others, and their action is having a strong impact on this group's achievement in the current year. They pay close attention to leaders' evaluation of teaching and make sure staff performance is linked to pay progression. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that equal opportunity is promoted well. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and applied consistently well across the school. A named governor holds responsibility for reporting on safeguarding to the full governing body.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136829
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	413080

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	540
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Owen Flack
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Kelly
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 616400
<b>Fax number</b>	01582 616401
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@arnold.beds.sch.uk">admin@arnold.beds.sch.uk</a>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

