

The Amicus School

The Coach House, Arundel Road, Fontwell, Arundel, West Sussex BN18 0SX

Inspection dates

8–10 May 2018

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 headteacher and proprietor work together well. They are driven by the determination to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to be successful and fully integrated members of society.
- Leaders have successfully embedded a nurturing and safe environment across the school. As a result, all independent school standards are met.
- Leaders ensure that there are a vast range of opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of the world around them. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The quality of teaching across the school is good. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils to plan activities that help pupils to make progress. However, they do not always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in mathematics. In turn, some pupils do not consistently make the progress they are capable of in this subject.
- Strong systems in school, and effective links with external agencies and other professionals, ensure that pupils feel safe and are safe.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is typically good. When it does occur, any challenging behaviour is managed well and staff maintain pupils' dignity.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Leaders' strategies for managing individual pupils' absence are highly effective.
- Therapeutic education workers receive a range of high-quality training. This helps them to understand and manage pupils' behaviour. As a result, they are very skilled in supporting pupils' positive behaviour. Conversely, this is not consistently mirrored in the support they provide for pupils' learning.
- The introduction of the school's advisory board has improved the rigour of governance arrangements. However, board members do not consistently challenge leaders for all aspects of the school's work effectively.

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?

- Ensure that therapeutic education workers are consistently deployed effectively to support pupils' learning as well as their behaviour.
- Make certain that all staff consistently challenge pupils in their learning and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in mathematics.
- Continue to progress the role of the school's advisory board so that leaders are held consistently to account for pupils' academic outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher has been instrumental in moving the school forward since its previous inspection. He has developed a school with a renewed focus on pupils' learning as well as their social and emotional development.
- Leaders have embedded a nurturing ethos across the school that has pupils' well-being and safety at its core. Leaders have achieved their aims of creating a safe and supportive environment where pupils can develop, grow and change. As a result, all of the independent school standards are met.
- Staff enjoy working at the school. They display a total commitment to the well-being and safety of all pupils at the school. All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they are proud to work at the school. Staff appreciate the continuing professional development opportunities that they receive from leaders and feel that this enables them to perform their roles well.
- Pupils join the school with negative attitudes to learning as a result of their previous experiences of school. Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils' needs and their resulting behaviours are fully understood by staff and planned for accordingly. The school's integrated therapeutic approach to education enables pupils to feel safe at school, improves their confidence and increases their ability to engage in learning. As a result, pupils are able to access the curriculum and make progress.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum to meet better the needs of pupils. Pupils now follow a suitably modified national curriculum that is underpinned by a therapeutic approach to understanding pupils' behaviour. A particular effective aspect of the curriculum is the focus on pupils' readiness to learn, which facilitates their access to learning. Recognising the need to provide further challenge to pupils, leaders are beginning to evaluate how well mathematics is taught and embedded across the school.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities for extra-curricular trips and pursuits. The school makes effective use of the local community to increase the chances pupils have to participate in sporting and social events. Pupils appreciate this and enjoy taking part in these activities.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Through the curriculum, pupils explore a range of moral and cultural issues, such as the importance of showing respect and tolerance for people whose views may differ from their own. Similarly, the school's approach to behaviour management promotes pupils' understanding of what is right and wrong and encourages them to begin to understand how their behaviour may impact on others.
- Parents and carers are positive about the work of the school. They wholeheartedly feel that the school has transformed their children's experiences of school for the better. Parents spoken to by the inspector commented on the 'amazing progress' that their children have made since starting at Amicus and how much they now 'value their education'.
- Leaders have applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a material change to its registration by increasing the school's capacity from 12 to 16 pupils. The school is likely to meet the independent standards if this change is implemented.

Governance

- The proprietor makes a strong contribution to the work of the school. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and use this information to inform plans for the future development of the school.
- The proprietor is aware of their statutory duties to ensure that pupils are kept safe at school. Regular meetings between directors, the headteacher and the Amicus Community designated safeguarding lead are held to discuss the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures. Any actions identified from these meetings are carried out in a timely manner.
- The recent introduction of the school's advisory board has increased the level of support and challenge that school leaders receive for their work across the school. Board members successfully hold leaders to account for several aspects of the school's performance. However, it is too soon to see the impact that the advisory board has had on improving pupils' academic outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school complies with all elements of the independent school standards regarding the safety of pupils, including publishing a suitable safeguarding policy on its website.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive thorough safeguarding training that is in line with statutory legislation. This enables staff to carry out their responsibilities to keep children safe and protect them from harm effectively.
- Risk assessments for all aspects of the school's work are completed to a high standard. They identify any potential hazards to pupils, staff and members of the community, along with appropriate measures to limit and control these risks. As a result, pupils' and staff's safety is upheld.
- Leaders work well with external agencies and other professionals to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. The Amicus Community designated safeguarding lead has an in-depth knowledge of any current safeguarding referrals to social care. They are tenacious in their approach to following up any potential concerns that suggest a pupil may be at risk of harm. This ensures that pupils are receiving the right support in a timely manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is good. Teachers use information about pupils' prior learning to plan a range of activities that meet most pupils' needs.
- Teachers question pupils effectively, encouraging them to reflect on their learning and probing their thinking. Most pupils respond well to this challenge. Consequently, pupils' learning is consolidated, and any gaps in their knowledge are identified and addressed swiftly by staff.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are high. Staff apply the school's behaviour policy effectively during lessons. As a result, most pupils remain focused on the activities

teachers set and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

- Teachers promote learning in the school through the positive relationships they have with pupils. Pupils are provided with opportunities to work both collaboratively with their peers and independently. Pupils respond well to this and both their social and independence skills develop as a result.
- Highly effective teaching in expressive art ensures that pupils achieve well in this subject. The many opportunities that pupils have to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings through their work develop their emotional literacy.
- Parents are complimentary about the progress that their children make at the school and the information they receive from teachers. One parent stated that they are 'absolutely over the moon' with the progress their child has made since starting at Amicus.
- Therapeutic education workers provide valuable assistance to pupils because of the high-quality training they receive. The most effective therapeutic education workers encourage pupils to remain on task, while reinforcing their learning. However, this level of support is not consistent across the school. As a result, the support they provide to move pupils' learning on is not as effective as it could be.
- Teachers do not consistently provide all pupils with sufficiently challenging work. For example, pupils who are capable of using reasoning and proof in their mathematics work have limited opportunities to do so. This slows pupils' progress and sometimes prevents them from being able to reach the standards they are capable of attaining.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is because the extremely positive relationships between pupils and staff are underpinned by the nurturing ethos of the school.
- Transition plans for pupils are well thought through by leaders. Highly individualised plans enable pupils to transition into and out of the school successfully. The school continues to provide effective support for pupils beyond their time at Amicus, should they require it.
- Staff prepare pupils well for their next steps in education. They work closely with local colleges to extend the curriculum offer that pupils receive. Helpfully, pupils receive impartial careers guidance to support them in making informed decisions about their future.
- Diversity is celebrated across the school. Staff and pupils are rightly proud of achieving the first stage of the rainbow flag award for their commitment to inclusion and the prevention of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.
- The school's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender union ambassador provides pupils with useful information and points of contact should they have any concerns or worries about their sexuality and/or gender identity. Pupils appreciate this support and feel it contributes positively to their emotional well-being.
- The curriculum supports pupils to stay safe. Community visits develop pupils' awareness of the world around them, including the identification of potential risks and dangers.

Consequently, pupils' knowledge of how to keep safe outside of school is strong.

- Pupils state that they feel safe in the school. While they acknowledge that sometimes unkind behaviour does occur, they are confident that adults will act promptly to resolve any issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Despite the complex social and emotional needs of pupils, most pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school.
- High levels of staffing ensure that pupils are supervised throughout the day. Specialised training enables staff to employ successful strategies to manage any incidents of challenging behaviour in a safe and respectful way. Consequently, pupils' behaviour improves over time and is fundamental to the success of the school.
- Pupils make strong progress towards improving and managing their own behaviour from the moment they join Amicus School. The integrated therapeutic approach to supporting pupils enables pupils to understand, reflect on, and begin to manage, their own behaviour over time. This contributes positively to their chances of becoming successful learners.
- Almost all pupils attend school regularly. Leaders understand the importance of ensuring that pupils attend school, and work hard to support pupils when their individual circumstances lead to their attendance not being as good as it could be.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with attainment well below that found nationally. All pupils have considerable gaps in their basic numeracy and literacy skills, knowledge and understanding due to extended periods out of education. Over time, good-quality teaching ensures that most pupils begin to fill these gaps, particularly in writing and reading.
- The school's progress data indicates that almost all pupils are on track to meet or exceed their targets in English and mathematics. Where pupils are at risk of falling behind, leaders take effective action to ensure that targeted interventions are implemented quickly to support pupils to remain on track.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress in their social and emotional development through a range of measures. From their starting points, pupils make rapid progress in these areas.
- Teachers promote literacy well across the curriculum. The school's topic-based curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to write and read outside of English lessons. Consequently, pupils embed their literacy skills and make strong progress in this area.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education. Impartial careers guidance enables pupils to make informed choices about their futures. Links with local colleges provide pupils with the opportunity to continue their education, while still receiving support for their social and emotional well-being from the school. Because of this, almost all pupils who leave the school go on to further education, training and/or employment.
- Pupils' outcomes in mathematics are not as strong as those found in English. Leaders recognise that they need to develop numeracy further across the curriculum so that pupils

consolidate and embed their numeracy skills.

School details

Unique reference number	131504
DfE registration number	938/6265
Inspection number	10008597

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Rebecca Newton
Chair	Rebecca Newton
Headteacher	Tom Milson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,300
Telephone number	01243 544107
Website	www.theamicuscommunity.com
Email address	info@theamicuscommunity.com
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- The Amicus School is an independent special school for pupils who have complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of pupils have suffered severe emotional trauma at some point in their lives. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proprietor is the strategic and clinical director of The Amicus Community, an independent children's therapeutic community accredited by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The core aim of the proprietor is to provide an education programme that is integrated with a 24-hour therapeutic care plan.

- The school caters for a maximum of 12 pupils aged five to 16 years. There are currently nine pupils on roll aged between nine and 15 years. Almost all pupils are children looked after and live in one of the Amicus children's homes local to the school.
- The majority of staff joined the school after the previous inspection in February 2013. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2017. An advisory board responsible for the governance of the school was formed in November 2017.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to consider the school's application to make a material change to its registration during the course of this standard independent school inspection. The school has applied to increase its capacity from 12 to 16 pupils.
- Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) observed seven lessons or parts of lessons across all classes, all jointly with the headteacher. Pupils' behaviour during lessons, lunch and breaktimes was observed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the director of therapeutic services, the school's external improvement adviser, those who have responsibility for safeguarding, staff at the school and groups of pupils. A discussion was held with the strategic and clinical director on the telephone.
- HMI analysed school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, reports provided by the school's external improvement adviser, pupils' therapeutic placement plans, annual review information, risk assessments, and tracking information about pupils' achievement, attendance, behaviour and exclusions.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures were scrutinised, including correspondence between the school and the designated officer. Records linked to work with other agencies were also reviewed.
- There were a small number of responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. HMI considered nine responses to the staff questionnaire and spoke to two parents on the telephone.

Inspection team

Emma Sanderson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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