

Archers Brook SEMH Residential School

Chester Road, Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 2NA

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Archers Brook School provides a safe and caring learning environment for all pupils. During their time in the school, pupils grow in confidence and develop key life skills which help them to achieve outstanding outcomes.
- Pupils achieve outstanding outcomes because of the school's focus on their personal development and welfare. The vast majority of pupils progress into further education, employment or training when they leave school. All pupils are currently on track to meet or exceed their targets.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. They have positive attitudes to learning and say that the school 'helps you with any problems'. Parents and carers report that their children enjoy coming to school and are progressing well.
- Leaders have established a strong ethos of care and respect for the pupils in the school. This ethos pervades all practice and is the foundation of all approaches in the school.
- Teachers and support staff are very skilled in supporting positive behaviour. They are subtle in their interventions, consistent in their approaches and maintain the dignity of pupils at all times.
- The school's curriculum offers a broad range of learning experiences for pupils. This enables pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve qualifications that allow them to progress into adult life.
- Teaching is typically good in the school. Relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils are strong. Respect and friendliness characterise all interactions between pupils and adults.
- Teachers take time to ensure that pupils know what is required of them and use questioning well to help develop pupils' understanding. In the best examples of teaching, pupils' learning is highly individualised and pupils are fully challenged to achieve their potential.
- Some teaching needs to improve because it does not challenge the most able pupils to achieve their very best.
- Teachers and support staff are motivated and dedicated to improving the lives of their pupils. They are well trained, knowledgeable and valued by school leaders and governors. They say they are well led and supported in their professional development.
- Governors recognise the need to further improve governance in the school. Governor responsibilities rest on too few members and the records of their meetings are not always accurate.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further by ensuring that all pupils, particularly the most able pupils, are fully challenged across all subjects.
- Strengthen the composition of the governing body and the accuracy with which their meetings are recorded.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have successfully nurtured a strong ethos of care and respect for the pupils in the school. This ethos pervades all practice and is the foundation of all approaches in the school. Pupils are at the heart of all aspects of school life and are profoundly respected and valued.
- School leaders have ensured that a holistic approach to the pupils' learning has led to the development of a curriculum that is broad and balanced and meets the specific needs of the pupils in the school. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of subjects and includes a vocational element, in order to help pupils acquire the necessary skills for further education and training. This ensures that the curriculum is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school's curriculum at key stage 4 offers qualifications in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), a vocational qualification and personal and social development. Most students gain further qualifications in sport and recreation, horticulture, construction, science, art and catering. This rich and varied curriculum offer enables pupils to move successfully into further education, employment or training when they leave school.
- The key stage 3 curriculum offers core and foundation subjects and largely replicates the curriculum found in most mainstream schools. This enables pupils to learn a range of subjects and supports transition to mainstream settings whenever that is appropriate.
- The curriculum at key stage 2 prepares pupils well for the transition into the secondary phase of their education. The curriculum is predominantly delivered by the key stage 2 teacher, but pupils also have access to specialist teachers for certain subjects such as Spanish.
- School leaders have used additional funding well to support the range of therapies and the counselling service offered by the school. There is an effective system of referral, based on pupils' needs, that allows pupils to access art therapy, holistic therapies and counselling. These approaches have a direct impact on enabling pupils to better understand their feelings and regulate their emotions.
- The headteacher led the development of the nurture base and has continued to support its development in the school. This important element of the school's offer to pupils has achieved national recognition.
- The school does not use all of the available information in order to focus self-evaluation. As a consequence, some of the statements made within the school's self-evaluation are not sufficiently well triangulated by a range of perspectives and evidence.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers and support staff say they are well led and encouraged in their professional development. They feel valued by school leaders and are motivated. Members of staff collaborate well and contribute to the development of the school via the recently established teaching and learning communities. Members of

staff are welcoming to new colleagues and share advice and practice readily.

- School leaders judged the quality of teaching accurately during joint lesson observations conducted with inspectors. School leaders shared the inspectors' view of the strengths and areas for improvement of lessons and gave constructive feedback to teachers to support their development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is woven into the curriculum and everyday activity of the school. Displays provide a broad range of information for pupils on topics including autism, gender equality, sexuality, British values, emotional regulation and legal advice. Pupils experience a range of off-site activities that encourage their participation in their local community and their region.
- School leaders have taken the initiative to help develop practice in other local settings for post-16 students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. This project is designed to enable students with these difficulties to sustain their placements in post-16 settings and make successful transitions into adult life. Therefore, the school is not only preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, it is preparing modern Britain for the specific needs of these students.

Governance of the school

- Governors report that they find it very difficult to recruit members to the governing body and therefore the burden of responsibility falls on a small group of people. Nonetheless, they have carried out their statutory duties as well as possible.
- Governors challenge school leaders and hold them to account during meetings but this is not accurately recorded in the governing body minutes, which they have approved and ratified.
- Governors receive reports including information about the use of the pupil premium funding and its impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Governors recognise the need to improve the governance of the school and those governors who met with inspectors expressed a commitment to the school. They have demonstrated this via recent visits to several lessons in the school and in meetings with school leaders. They engaged positively in discussions about how an external review of governance would help improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding systems are robust, well organised and closely monitored. Strong relationships with other agencies, including social care and the police, allow the school to develop an informed and comprehensive view of pupils.
- Members of staff have a well-developed and deeply embedded awareness of how to keep pupils safe and are knowledgeable about current national and local issues in relation to keeping pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is typically good in the school. Pupils' conduct in lessons is excellent and they are fully engaged in their learning. Relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils are strong. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons and pupils work hard.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and are enthusiastic in lessons. They are able to explain what they are doing and understand what is expected of them in lessons. Pupils take pride in their work and most try hard to present their work well.
- Teachers take time to ensure that pupils know what is required of them and use questioning well to help develop pupils' understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to express their views and explicitly value their contribution to lessons. Teachers and support staff consistently challenge inappropriate language on the few occasions when it is heard. Pupils quickly apologise and correct themselves, before continuing with their learning.
- In the best examples of teaching, pupils' learning is highly individualised and pupils are fully challenged to achieve their potential. Pupils are asked to attempt new learning and are encouraged to try things that they have not done before.
- Teaching does not always challenge the most able pupils. In some lessons, pupils with significantly different levels of ability were completing the same work. This resulted in most-able pupils not achieving their very best.
- On a few occasions, teachers missed opportunities to extend pupils' thinking and understanding by not pursuing a comment or idea from pupils. This meant that a higher level of learning was not opened up for pupils.
- There are rigorous systems for assessing, monitoring and evaluating pupil progress. This enables the school to report effectively on how well pupils are learning, and whether they are on track to meet their targets. As a consequence of this, the school is able to intervene effectively in order to ensure that pupils meet their targets and prevent pupils from falling behind.
- The effective assessment systems underpin the school's robust processes for setting targets for pupils. Teachers set targets using a range of pertinent data and these are then scrutinised by school leaders. All pupils across the school are currently on track to meet or exceed their targets in English, mathematics and science.
- Support staff are well deployed throughout the school. They are skilled and knowledgeable and provide support to teachers in an unobtrusive and effective way. Support staff have a deep understanding of pupils' needs and are able to support, not only pupils' academic progress, but also their social and emotional needs. They intervene subtly and thoughtfully and enable pupils to achieve positive outcomes in all areas.
- Parents report that they have up-to-date and good-quality information about what their children are learning and how well they are progressing. Parents receive information via phone calls, texts and both formal and informal meetings. Parents say that they feel that their children are making good progress and enjoy school because teachers 'put time into the pupils'.
- The school undertakes baseline assessments of all pupils in key stage 2. This assessment provides a starting point from which to assess, monitor and evaluate pupils'

progress. Pupils in key stage 2 enjoy their lessons and are making good progress. All pupils in key stage 2 are on track to meet or exceed their targets.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is a strength of the school and much of the success which the school enjoys is rooted in this area.
- The strong, positive relationship between pupils and adults in the school ensures that pupils feel safe and cared for. From this, trust grows between adults and pupils and from this trust, pupils' confidence grows and their self-esteem develops.
- The powerful ethos of nurturing and caring for pupils is the foundation of all teaching in the school and enables the pupils to learn well. Individual pupils are respected and celebrated for being who they are and the deep understanding adults have of each pupil enables them thrive.
- Leaders directly address the social, emotional and mental health needs of the pupils and provide an array of therapeutic approaches that allows pupils to learn about themselves. As a result, pupils develop resilience, self-awareness and respect for others. This has nurtured a happy and optimistic school community in which young people grow towards adult life as increasingly confident young people.
- The school's focus on the personal development and welfare of pupils enables them to regulate their emotions; improve their attendance and engagement; and identify realistic and ambitious aspirations for their futures. Consequently, from very low starting points, pupils secure outstanding outcomes and move successfully into adult life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Conduct in lessons is consistently exemplary and pupils are skilfully supported by adults to maintain this high standard.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and they are respectful towards one another, adults and the school environment. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere in lessons, at transition times and during breaktimes.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. They welcome visitors and engage in discussions about their work and they show interest in other people in an appropriate and curious way. They are humorous and kind and a pleasure to be among.
- Attendance is showing sustained improvement over time and a detailed analysis of attendance data demonstrates that the actions school leaders are taking to improve attendance are effective.
- Last year's data for persistent absence was above national average. However, there is an improving trend over time and leaders are able to demonstrate that for this current year, persistent absence is below the national average. Case studies showed dramatic

improvements in pupils' attendance since they had joined the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Because of the school's focus on the personal development of each individual, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain after they leave school. Their aspirations are encouraged and the school's attention to nurturing pupils' self-esteem provides them with the confidence to believe they can achieve. Pupils have realistic ambitions about careers and the vast majority of pupils progress into further education, employment or training.
- The school's adoption of the foundation learning curriculum ensures that all pupils leave Archers Brook with a qualification. Many pupils leave with a range of qualifications including Entry Level Awards, BTECs and GCSEs in a broad range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, ICT, construction and horticulture.
- The school's monitoring of progress data indicates that the vast majority of pupils are on track to meet or exceed their targets in English and mathematics. There is no difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in key stage 2 and key stage 4. Where there is a difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others in key stage 3, the school is working effectively to diminish that difference.
- The school regularly monitors pupil progress in order to identify any pupils who might be falling behind. Leaders then take effective measures to enable those pupils to rapidly catch up through targeted interventions with specialist teachers. As a consequence, no pupils in the school fall too far behind at any point in their learning.
- Last year, outcomes for pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium funding were broadly in line with other pupils in the school at key stage 2 and key stage 4. However, pupils in key stage 3 who were eligible for the pupil premium funding did not do as well as other pupils in English and mathematics. The school has identified targeted interventions to address this difference. Current data indicates that the gap has diminished during this academic year so that there are no significant differences at the current time.
- The school monitors pupil progress across academic, social and emotional areas using a range of measures. From their starting points, pupils achieve outstanding outcomes in each of these areas and develop excellent habits for life. Pupils achieve qualifications that allow them to progress in their learning and develop key social and emotional skills which enable them to sustain their placements after they leave school.

School details

Unique reference number	111517
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10048996

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Crompton
Headteacher	Samantha Myers-Whittaker
Telephone number	01513 382141
Website	www.archersbrook.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	admin@archersbrook.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 January 2012

Information about this school

- Every pupil who attends Archers Brook School has an education, health and care plan designating social, emotional and mental health as their primary need.
- The school offers residential provision to a number of pupils on a flexible basis. This provision is inspected separately by Ofsted.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected under its previous name as Capenhurst Grange Special School where it was judged as good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all key stages and a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, Spanish, art, ICT, PE and construction.
- Inspectors undertook joint lesson observations with school leaders and observed the feedback school leaders gave to teachers.
- One inspector met with the school council to obtain their views and another inspector met with two parents and had a telephone conversation with another parent. A meeting was held with three members of staff and another meeting was held with the school's associate school improvement adviser.
- A meeting was held with two members of the governing body and telephone conversations were held with a local partner school and a local college.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work and examined a range of policies and protocols created by the school including the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Martin Hanbury, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nell Banfield

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