

# Matthew Arnold School

Arnolds Way, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX2 9JE

## Inspection dates

13–14 November 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, is determined and passionate about providing a high-quality education for every pupil. This is at the heart of the school's inclusive ethos.
- Strong teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in almost all subjects. However, most-able pupils are not consistently challenged well enough.
- Governors have a broad range of expertise. They use this to support and challenge leaders.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are generally well mannered and polite.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe in school and are looked after well.
- The curriculum is varied and broad. It offers a wide range of opportunities in academic subjects and some in vocational qualifications. Consequently, the curriculum fits the needs of pupils.
- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils. However, there are a small proportion of lessons where pupils do not concentrate as well as they should.
- Matthew Arnold School founded the Acer Trust in 2017 along with three other schools. The trust is beginning to benefit the school by providing opportunities for collaboration between the member schools.
- The sixth form is a vibrant part of the school. Good teaching challenges students. Well-planned pastoral provision ensures that students are well prepared for their next steps. Students provide positive role models to younger pupils and enjoy the opportunities to develop their leadership skills.
- Pupils' attendance declined in 2018, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, the attendance of current pupils is improving.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teachers set work that challenges the most able pupils
  - teachers consistently have high expectations of pupils so that all pupils concentrate well in lessons
- Continue to improve attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils and of those pupils with SEND.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and senior leaders are ambitious and passionate about providing every pupil with a high-quality education. Leaders know pupils well and have worked hard to build the school's inclusive nature. This is built on the needs of pupils and takes into account the views of pupils and staff.
- Leaders and governors founded the Acer Trust in 2017. The headteacher, as CEO of the trust, has spread her beliefs in distributed leadership and collaboration throughout the trust. As a result, leaders work well with staff from the other three schools in the trust so that they can share their expertise and learn from others.
- Subject leaders value the headteacher's distributed leadership strategy. This strategy means that subject leaders make decisions about teaching and the curriculum in their departments. For example, subject leaders choose how teachers of their subjects assess learning.
- Leaders understand the details of the plans for school improvement. Consequently, they work together towards important priorities. For example, leaders and staff know who the school's 'priority pupils' are. These are pupils who need extra help to catch up. All staff are committed to prioritising support for these pupils and they know what they need to do to help them.
- Staff morale is high. They feel well supported by leaders and believe that leaders think carefully about how changes affect their workload.
- Leaders regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of current pupils. As a result, the curriculum is broad and challenging. In Year 9, pupils choose from a variety of GCSE examination options including, mostly, academic qualifications but also some vocational courses. Pupils who need it, receive more support in English and mathematics. Consequently, pupils make strong progress in the subjects that they choose, particularly pupils who need extra support.
- Pupils have a deep understanding of fundamental British values, such as tolerance and democracy. This is because personal, social, health and economic lessons and assemblies are interesting and thought-provoking. Pupils value this part of the curriculum.
- A wide range of lunchtime clubs are well attended by pupils. In some cases, activities are led by sixth-form students. This enables them to develop their leadership skills. For example, a lunchtime wind orchestra and band practice are led by staff and sixth-formers. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities to develop their musical talents.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, believe that the school is well led and managed. Almost all parents would recommend the school to others. One parent wrote, 'The school provides a sophisticated mix of academic rigour and personal attention to individual needs.'
- Additional funding for pupils who need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy is used effectively so that these pupils quickly improve their reading skills.

## Governance of the school

- Governors challenge leaders well. They hold leaders to account by asking well-informed questions. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's plans for improvement. They use this to inform their discussions in governors' meetings so that they concentrate on the right things.
- Governors understand their role well. They use their varied expertise to monitor the effectiveness of leaders' actions. This ensures that leaders feel well supported and challenged.
- Governors are very committed and knowledgeable. They prioritise the safety of pupils and monitor safeguarding procedures regularly.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Procedures and processes meet statutory requirements and ensure that the suitability of staff is appropriately checked.
- Staff understand how to spot signs of abuse or neglect. Staff are well trained, and they know pupils well. Because of this, staff are able to provide the right help for pupils, particularly vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe whilst online. Pupils described to inspectors the things that they should and should not do when on the internet. For example, the importance of keeping personal information private online and the dangers of posting photographs on the internet. One pupil commented, 'It's a really serious issue.'
- Partnerships with outside agencies work well in ensuring that pupils, and particularly vulnerable pupils, receive appropriate support when they need it.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers generally provide challenging activities for pupils. Consequently, pupils do well in almost all subjects. However, sometimes, most-able pupils are not given challenging enough tasks. Because of this, they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teacher's well-developed questioning means that misconceptions in lessons are addressed and pupils learn from their mistakes. As a result, pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects. They also build resilience so that they can keep trying when tasks are difficult. For example, in a Year 10 philosophy, religion and ethics lesson, pupils discussed complex concepts. Aply supported by the teacher, pupils discussed the meaning of 'atonement and 'salvation' until everyone understood clearly.
- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils. As a result, pupils make strong progress. However, in a small number of lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough. Because of this, some pupils lose focus and do not concentrate on their work

well enough.

- Pupils review their own work and the work of others so that they can identify where they have made mistakes. They learn from this and it supports them in developing their understanding.
- Literacy across the curriculum is well embedded. Subject leaders ensure that developing reading skills is a part of their lessons. For example, in geography, each lesson begins with opportunities to read.
- Support for pupils with SEND is increasingly effective. Teaching assistants ensure that they ably explain tasks to pupils who need extra help so that they understand what to do. As a result, these pupils make increasingly strong progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Through various leadership opportunities, pupils develop their self-confidence. For example, the school council is well led by sixth-form students. Pupils discuss a range of matters in a mature and respectful way.
- Dedicated pastoral staff provide high-quality support for pupils who need it. Pupils appreciate this. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for. Parents appreciate the care provided. One parent who responded to Parent View wrote, 'I have been particularly impressed with the pastoral care at the school. The teachers take time to really understand the emotional needs of each child.'
- Pupils make informed choices about the next stage of their education. They are well supported in this by impartial careers advice. This ensures that they choose the most appropriate pathways. Pupils benefit from a range of activities involving visitors from different employment and educational institutions.
- The small proportion of pupils who attend appropriate, off-site alternative provision are well looked after. Leaders keep in regular contact with staff at the alternative provider. This means that leaders are able to closely monitor their personal development and welfare.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They listen to teachers' instructions and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. As a result, lessons are purposeful.
- Overall, pupils conduct themselves well around the school site. They socialise well in the dinner hall and other areas during social times. A small proportion of pupils, however, occasionally act boisterously. Leaders' actions are increasingly effective in addressing this.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare. If it does occur, then staff tackle it very well

so that issues are quickly resolved.

- Attendance declined in 2018, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and for those with SEND. Leaders have been steadfast in improving attendance by using a range of increasingly effective strategies. Attendance for current pupils is improving, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Provisional published outcomes for 2018 show that pupils who left Year 11 made progress that was well above average in a range of subjects, particularly in English and mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils achieved, on average, one grade less across a range of subjects than other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Leaders ensure that all staff focus on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving so that they are catching up with other pupils nationally from similar starting points, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils start school with attainment that is higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. From these starting points, current pupils across year groups make strong progress in a range of subjects, particularly in English, mathematics, science, French and Spanish.
- Teachers talk to pupils about their progress in lessons and in 'one to one' sessions. Pupils decide on targets that they think they should aim for after discussions with teachers about national trends in progress. This results in pupils choosing suitably aspirational targets for themselves.
- Pupils with SEND receive effective support. Teaching assistants provide well-planned help so that these pupils build their resilience and can tackle challenging tasks. Because of this, pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils read frequently across subjects. Additional funding is used well to develop the reading of the small proportion of Year 7 pupils who enter the school with below-average reading ages. As a result, these pupils catch up well.
- The small number of pupils who attend appropriate, off-site alternative provision make good progress because of a well-tailored curriculum that fits their needs.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leaders manage the sixth form well. Programmes of study meet the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme. Students study a range of predominantly academic qualifications, including employment and enterprise education.
- Across a wide range of subjects, teachers provide challenging activities that encourage students to think hard, work independently and enjoy their studies. Consequently, students make strong progress.
- In 2016 and 2017, students leaving Year 13 made above-average progress. In 2018, this dipped, and students made average progress. Leaders have reviewed the courses on offer and concentrated on improving sixth-form teaching. Consequently, current

students make good progress across a range of subjects, and particularly in English, mathematics and physics.

- Sixth-form students' personal development, behaviour and welfare is good. Staff provide well-tailored support for students, and particularly for students with SEND. Students thrive on this. They feel safe, behave well and enjoy being part of the resulting caring community. Consequently, the retention rate of students continuing to study from Year 12 to Year 13 is very high. One student enthusiastically told inspectors, 'I want to be here every day.'
- Students' attendance has fluctuated over the past three years. However, leaders' actions in promoting regular attendance have meant that this is improving, and current students attend regularly.
- When they leave the sixth form, students are well prepared for their next steps. Most students enrol on courses at university and a smaller proportion go on to high-quality apprenticeships. They are supported in this by a good-quality careers provision and because they make good progress.

## School details

Unique reference number	142104
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10054151

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,122
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Cottee
Headteacher	Katherine Ryan
Telephone number	01865 862232
Website	<a href="http://www.maschool.org.uk">www.maschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@maschool.org.uk">office@maschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018

## Information about this school

- Matthew Arnold School is an above-average-sized secondary school. The school opened as an academy in September 2015.
- In January 2017, Matthew Arnold School established the Acer Trust and the headteacher became the CEO of the trust. Three other schools are members of the trust. The trust delegates aspects of governance to the local governing bodies. The board of trustees is the accountable body for all schools in the Acer Trust.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average for



secondary schools.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is similar to the national average for secondary schools.
- A very small number of pupils attend an alternative provider, Meadowbrook College.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 71 lessons. In several observations, senior leaders joined inspectors.
- Inspectors visited nine tutor-group sessions and one assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the headteacher, and governors.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5. Pupils' views from questionnaire surveys were considered. Inspectors also spoke to pupils during social times and lessons.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 54 staff who responded to the confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 285 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire, including 135 written responses.
- Documentation scrutinised by inspectors included the school's plans for improvement, the self-evaluation, reports on attendance and behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, minutes of governors' meetings, and information on pupils' outcomes.

## Inspection team

Harry Ingham, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sharon Cromie	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Rodin	Ofsted Inspector
John Burridge	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Strowger	Ofsted Inspector

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