

Arc Oakbridge School

Buckingham Street, Birmingham B19 3HU

Inspection dates

29–31 January 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors are aspirational for all pupils. In a short space of time, they have created a climate where pupils are nurtured, through positive, caring relationships. This has a strong impact on their well-being.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are appropriately trained and highly vigilant. Pupils learn how to keep safe. Pupils say they feel safe.
- The personal, social health and economic (PSHE) curriculum helps pupils to build appropriate relationships and learn important social skills. Pupils say that the school helps them to make friends.
- The vast majority of teachers successfully re-engage pupils. They reignite a love for learning through exciting tasks based on pupils' individual needs. On rare occasions, teaching does not provide sufficient challenge. This results in missed opportunities to expand on pupils' curiosity.
- Parents and carers are delighted with the school. They say that staff go 'above and beyond' to meet the needs of their pupils. Pupils who have not attended school for a long time say they enjoy coming to the school.
- The school creates many opportunities to help pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils learn about the wider world. They show a genuine interest in and respect for differences.
- Leaders and the proprietor have ensured that the independent school standards are met in full.
- The curriculum is carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils. There are currently no key stage 4 pupils on roll. However, plans show a range of broad and balanced experiences.
- Systems for assessing pupils' progress are not yet fully established in all subject areas. On rare occasions, this results in limited challenge, as teachers do not base learning on pupils' capabilities.

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?

- Continue to focus on the development of the key stage 4 curriculum by making sure that learning opportunities:
 - build on what pupils already know and can do
 - are mapped to likely destinations
 - prepare pupils fully for their next steps in education or employment and training.
- Further develop teaching to ensure that the needs of all pupils are consistently met through:
 - the development of systems to track and monitor pupils' progress effectively
 - making sure all staff use available information on pupils to ensure that learning is sufficiently challenging
 - grasping opportunities to expand on pupils' curiosity.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- In a short space of time, the headteacher has created a vision for the school that is shared by all members of the school's community. The school is warm and welcoming. The environment has been carefully adapted to meet a range of sensory needs, including coloured lighting, textures, specialist resources and furniture. As a result, pupils who have previously missed a lot of school settle quickly into a calm, nurturing environment. All staff want the very best for their pupils. Academic successes and social and emotional progress are equally celebrated. Pupils are proud of their achievements.
- Leaders have recruited intelligently to meet the needs of the growing cohort. The dedicated staff team has both personal and professional experiences of autism and complex needs. As a result, all staff fully understand their pupils. They are resilient. Staff do not give up and told the inspector: 'We try anything to find strategies that work for the pupils.' Staff work effectively together to meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders and governors are aspirational for all pupils. The curriculum has been carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders have considered what they want their pupils to be able to know and do and how to prepare them for future success. Learning is personalised, with lots of opportunities to meet sensory needs. Leaders have deliberately focused on the development of core literacy and numeracy skills and reading, due to gaps in attainment. Pupils also access science, music, humanities, physical education (PE) and cookery. Consequently, most pupils engage well in a wide range of learning experiences that meet their needs.
- Leaders have created rich, purposeful opportunities to develop their pupils spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Many pupils access external visits to climbing centres and sports venues. Pupils learn about different countries, religions and Chinese New Year. The school held a Remembrance service for pupils who had previously been unable to attend services due to behaviour difficulties. Pupils develop an appreciation of different cultures. They learn about historical events and they grow in confidence.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching. They know the school's strengths and where further development is needed. Plans are appropriate and linked securely to teachers' performance targets.
- Parents cannot speak highly enough of the school. They say it has had a positive impact on family life. Words such as 'life-changing' were used to describe the school. Through carefully planned transition programmes, pupils quickly enjoy coming to the school. Parents told the inspector that the school had, 'gone beyond their expectations'. Through daily communication, they feel fully involved in their children's education. As a result, all parents said they would recommend the school to others.
- At the point of the pre-registration inspection, the standards in relation to pupils being able to participate in outdoor physical education and access shower facilities were unmet. Leaders have since established links with a local leisure centre, to enable pupils to access PE off-site. Pupils participate in team games and competitive sports every week. Pupils also have access to showering facilities. As a result, the standard is now met. Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards are met.

- There are currently no key stage 4 pupils on roll. It is not possible, therefore, to evaluate fully the impact of the provision for 14 to 16-year olds. The plans, however, outline a range of opportunities including GCSE routes and vocational courses.

Governance

- The arrangements for governance are effective. The Kedleston Group has sharp oversight of the school's performance, through regular scrutiny. Governors complete termly audits on all aspects of the school's work, including teaching and learning and safeguarding. They are frequently in the school, visiting lessons and meeting with pupils. Therefore, governors have an accurate measure of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve further.
- Governors are aspirational for all pupils. Meetings are frequent. Leaders are challenged and supported to ensure that pupils have the best possible experiences. The school development plan is accurate and focuses on further development of teaching and learning and the curriculum. As a result, the plans in place are appropriate to secure improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and reflects current government guidance. It makes clear the processes to follow in the event of concerns about a child. It is published on the school's website and paper copies are available upon request.
- There are three designated safeguarding leads, including the headteacher. They are appropriately trained and aware of their responsibilities. Safeguarding is part of everyday practice. Staff meet daily and discuss anything that may pose a risk to their pupils. Nothing is left to chance when it comes to the safety of pupils.
- All staff are appropriately trained in recognising the signs of abuse and neglect. They know about the risks of child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Staff also receive 'Prevent' duty training. They know their local areas and the risks in the locality. They make sure pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know about online safety and 'stranger danger'. Younger pupils learned about road safety by building a road in art lessons.
- The single central record meets requirements. Leaders have carried out appropriate checks on all adults who work with their children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers build positive relationships with pupils. They take time to learn about their pupils' likes and dislikes and special interests. They understand their fears and barriers to learning. They use this knowledge well and make appropriate adaptations to their environment and learning. Although some pupils have only joined the school recently, they have settled in quickly and enjoy learning.
- Teachers have ignited pupils' love of reading. Across key stage 2 and key stage 3, pupils engage enthusiastically. They read fluently, with confidence and expression, across a range of genres. In key stage 2, pupils use phonetic recall well to sound out trickier

words. Teachers take time to ensure that pupils fully understand the meaning of the words before they move on. Pupils use predictions well and cannot wait to hear the endings of stories. As a result, their appreciation of books extends beyond school to home.

- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They all have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Many pupils have previously missed much schooling and have gaps in their knowledge. Teachers quickly identify where pupils may need additional support and ensure that appropriate intervention is provided. Through targeted additional support, pupils can access learning across the curriculum and make good progress.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is effective. Pupils read aloud with confidence. Pupils' writing develops over time. They use a range of grammatical techniques to make their work more interesting and sophisticated. In mathematics, work is appropriately challenging. Pupils learn how to solve problems that increase in difficulty. They perform complex reverse operations to check their work. As a result, pupils are secure in their basic skills. They practise and apply these skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy science. They learn scientific terminology and complete fun experiments. For example, in key stage 2, pupils were asked, 'What would happen if you put a coat on a snowman?' to learn about temperature. Pupils interpret data well and produce answers, using graphs and charts to show their understanding. As a result, they grasp scientific concepts well.
- Teachers use praise well. They use careful, considerate feedback to encourage and support pupils gently. As a result, pupils engage fully in making improvements to their work.
- The vast majority of teachers use questioning well. Questions are carefully pitched to develop pupils' wider thinking skills. Pupils expand on their answers and are secure in their learning. Where questioning is not as effective, it limits pupils' ability to extend their responses. As a result, the level of challenge for a few pupils is not matched to their ability.
- Teachers typically use previous information available to them to plan learning that engages and meets the needs of pupils. Occasionally, teachers do not plan tasks that provide enough challenge for a small number of pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school environment is safe and nurturing. All aspects of pupils' welfare are considered. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place that identify risks, and staff take appropriate measures to reduce them. High levels of supervision ensure that pupils are looked after throughout the school day and during unstructured times. Staff carefully support social interactions, as many of the pupils have been taught in isolation prior to joining the school.
- The curriculum promotes all aspects of welfare. Through PSHE, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They know about different types of bullying and learn about appropriate

relationships. They explore their worries and fears with their teachers, who help to reassure them. As a result, pupils' self-confidence and resilience to failure increase over time.

- Children learn about their emotions using the animated series of 'Angry Birds'. They participate in discussions about handling situations differently and whether they could make positive changes. Pupils demonstrate that they are considerate of the feelings of others and reflective of their own actions.
- Careers education plans are detailed. Some pupils in key stage 3 already have an idea of their chosen career. They say the school helps them to learn about jobs available to them. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. There are no key stage 4 pupils; however, the plans are appropriate to support them when they arrive.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There are high expectations for positive behaviour. The behaviour policy is comprehensive and applied consistently by most staff. The school rules are simple and understood by all. Pupils respond well to the rewards scheme, which helps them to improve their behaviour. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them.
- All of the pupils have experienced disruption to their learning, before joining the school. For many, attendance was low. Through carefully planned transitions and successful engagement with parents, pupils' attendance has significantly improved from previous placements. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoyed coming to the school.
- The monitoring of pupils' behaviour is a strength. Leaders routinely analyse incidents and make appropriate adaptations, with the full involvement of pupils. This, for some, has resulted in a reduction in incidents and a decrease in the severity of incidents. Leaders are realistic and know this approach is in the formation stage and may change, as and when more pupils join the school.
- Parents have no concerns about behaviour at the school. Parents who spoke with the inspector said the behaviour of their children had improved since joining the school.
- Pupils say the school has helped them to make friends. They say there is no bullying. They told the inspector there is always someone to talk to, if they have any problems.
- Most pupils try hard to engage and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and to others. There are rare occasions where a few pupils struggle to self-regulate their behaviour. However, staff ensure that incidents are swiftly managed, and that calm is quickly restored.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The vast majority of pupils have not attended school for a considerable time, prior to joining the school. All pupils have experienced disruption and many have experienced multiple placement breakdowns. This impacts largely on their ability to build trusting relationships. The majority of pupils are not emotionally ready to access learning when they arrive. Leaders take this into consideration. They know it is important for pupils to feel safe. Transition into the school is carefully planned, to help pupils get to know staff

and gradually build up their learning experiences.

- The school completes baseline assessments, when pupils arrive. The information shows that staff must cater for a wide range of abilities. Some pupils are operating at age-related expectations; others are below. The work in their books shows that, from their individual starting points, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. The school's information shows that pupils make strong progress in reading. This is reflected in increased reading ages.
- Pupils make strong social and emotional progress. The school completes a baseline assessment upon entry. Staff carefully introduce social situations to help pupils to develop their skills. Targets are appropriate and realistic. For example, pupils are encouraged to show visitors around the school or to meet new people. The school's information shows that this work has impacted positively on pupils' personal development and self-confidence.
- The school's system for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress is newly introduced. Assessment information is not available for all areas of the curriculum.

School details

Unique reference number	145859
DfE registration number	330/6041
Inspection number	10083994

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	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Phil Petch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,000
Telephone number	0121 222 5201
Website	https://kedlestongroup.com/oakbridge
Email address	s.bhatti@kedlestonschools.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Arc Oakbridge school is an independent day school near to the centre of Birmingham. The school is part of the Kedleston Group Ltd. The school offers places for up to 40 pupils aged 7 to 16 who have an autistic spectrum condition. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- There are currently six pupils on roll, three in key stage 2 and three in key stage 3. There are currently no key stage 4 pupils. Pupils are referred from a range of local authorities, including Birmingham and Solihull.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education and opened in September 2018. This is the school's first standard inspection. At the point of the pre-registration

inspection, the standards in relation to pupils being able to participate in outdoor physical education and access shower facilities were unmet. Leaders have taken appropriate action to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards.

- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Meetings were held with several key staff, including the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, governors and the proprietor, who is also the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke with pupils across current year groups and met with parents. Five responses to the parent questionnaire Parent View, were also considered. The inspector also considered 10 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector toured the premises and outdoor areas accompanied by the headteacher.
- Lessons were observed across all year groups in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, PSHE and religious education. The inspector also reviewed work in pupils' books across all areas of the curriculum and reviewed the school's baseline assessment information.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed during lesson times and throughout unstructured times of the day.
- Several key policies were examined, including on safeguarding, behaviour, curriculum, attendance and anti-bullying.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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