

Inspection of Arc Oakbridge School

Buckingham Street, Birmingham B19 3HU

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 January 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel successful at Arc Oakbridge School. Adults take time to get to know them and find out about their interests. If anyone is upset or angry, then staff respond calmly and fairly.

Adults keep a close watch on pupils. This means that bullying of any sort rarely happens. Even so, staff teach pupils how to spot it and how to stop it. Some pupils act as behaviour ambassadors or school councillors. This gives them a voice in managing school life. They take their roles seriously and help others.

All staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attendance. They listen to pupils and find ways to get the best from them. Staff explain why certain rules or expectations are important so that pupils understand. However, staff are also willing to be flexible and change what they do if something is not working very well. Pupils like this. They feel supported and safe. Parents also praise the school. They say the school helps their children to succeed in education and has a positive impact on their home life.

Pupils study all the subjects of the national curriculum and gain useful qualifications.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the previous inspection, leaders have further improved the school's provision. They have expanded the premises and more pupils have joined. Classrooms are well organised with specialist rooms and furniture to facilitate teaching in some subjects, such as food technology. There is plenty of space for pupils to play outside. Indoor areas are kept secure. The school is an orderly, well-managed place in which to work and learn.

Pupils are looked after very well. There is always an adult on hand to check how they are feeling and to support them in class. If anyone needs some time out, the school has quiet, safe spaces for them to use. Consequently, lessons run smoothly. Behaviour in lessons and at informal times is very calm because staff support pupils to cope in different situations. Any incidents are managed exceptionally well.

Pupils read every day and have a variety of books to choose from. Most read fluently. However, staff use a structured phonics scheme to teach those who are still learning. The school's current phonics programme is quite new but is working with increasing efficiency as more staff complete training.

When pupils first join the school, staff check what they know and adapt their delivery of the curriculum to meet individual needs. Nevertheless, leaders ensure that the content of different subjects remains based on the national curriculum. All pupils work towards worthwhile qualifications.

Curriculum design and guidance are well organised in most subjects. Leaders have identified what pupils need to know and the order in which to teach it. This means that for the most part, new learning builds logically on what has gone before. In science, for instance, lessons about separating materials clearly build upon previous learning. Similarly, in art and design, pupils use what they know about the elements of art to refine their own work and evaluate that of others. Because they have the right knowledge, pupils make meaningful progress and are keen to engage and learn.

Curriculum design in some areas is not so well developed. For instance, the key stage 2 curriculum sometimes covers general topics rather than identifying the crucial knowledge that pupils should learn. Similarly, in a few subjects across the school, such as English, staff do not have enough guidance about the content to be taught. Instead, they use what they know about pupils to pick content that interests them. While pupils like this and generally respond well, it limits the scope and ambition of learning at times.

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is well developed. Staff teach pupils about the protected characteristics and how to respect themselves and others. The school's relationships and sex education policy is informed by statutory guidance, and staff implement it well. Leaders have ensured that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

One afternoon each week, pupils can take part in enrichment activities such as cookery or first aid. Pupils also work towards qualifications in independent living and life skills. Pupils learn how to carry out various household tasks from clearing a gutter to reading an electricity meter. These practical programmes of study, together with the academic qualifications they gain, set them up well for their next steps after leaving the school. Leaders also arrange careers guidance in a planned way. Leaders now intend to increase the school's links with community groups and local employers.

Staff say that leaders support them in their work and with their careers. They work hard but say that workload is realistic and fair. Parents express positive views about the school. They say that they trust leaders and staff to do their best for their children.

Kedleston Group has robust systems in place for checking on and steering the school's work. This oversight, and the committed, sincere leadership of the headteacher and senior team, have ensured that the independent school standards continue to be met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have effective systems for keeping up to date with safeguarding

requirements. They have daily meetings with staff to check on pupils' welfare and safety. When concerns arise, staff and leaders act quickly and make sure they do the right things. All concerns are recorded and reported to the right people.

Staff teach pupils about important matters such as consent and the features of safe and healthy relationships. They prepare them well to manage everyday risks and support them to make responsible choices.

All the required checks on adults who work in school are completed and recorded correctly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Overall, the key stage 2 curriculum is not as well designed as the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4. This means that in a few subjects, primary-aged pupils cover different topics but do not necessarily learn and remember important knowledge that will help them with future learning. Leaders should strengthen curriculum design in key stage 2 so that pupils learn all that they should.
- Some aspects of the English curriculum are not as well organised and sequenced as they could be. In some instances, staff select content that is not carefully matched to what pupils need to know or practise. This means that at times, the curriculum is not ambitious enough. Leaders should revisit curriculum design in English to make sure that staff select content that is more carefully matched to what pupils need to know.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	145859
DfE registration number	330/6041
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10254692
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	43
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Kedleston (OS Education) Limited
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Phil Petch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,701
Telephone number	0121 222 5201
Website	www.kedlestongroup.com/arcoakbridge
Email address	arcoakbridge@kedlestongroup.com
Date of previous inspection	29 to 31 January 2019

Information about this school

- Arc Oakbridge School is an independent special school near the centre of Birmingham. It opened in September 2018 and is part of the Kedleston Group Ltd.
- The school is registered to admit up to 65 pupils between the ages of seven and 16 years old. It caters for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Leaders do not use alternative provisions.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in January 2019. In September 2022, Ofsted carried out a material change inspection to approve the proprietor's request to increase the school's admission limit.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. In these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects in less detail to check how they were organised and taught.
- The inspectors asked school leaders, pupils and parents about safeguarding arrangements and safety routines. The lead inspector examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records.
- Inspectors talked with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff, pupils and parents. The lead inspector met with two parents and spoke with a parent on the telephone.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class, at lunchtime, on the playground and when moving around the school.
- As part of their work to check compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors had formal meetings with staff. These included: the headteacher, other

leaders, teaching staff, pupils and Kedleston Group's chief executive officer and regional director.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

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