

Inspection of Arc School Old Arley

Ansley Lane, Old Arley, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV7 8NU

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

At Arc School Old Arley pupils have not received the education that they should in recent years. The curriculum is in a muddle. Behaviour has got worse. Staff have spent so much time managing behaviour they have not been able to focus on teaching. Pupils who need help to learn to read do not get the support they need.

Bullying and poor behaviour happen regularly. Pupils are not taught or supported to understand and manage their own behaviour. There is frequent disruption in lessons and much learning time is lost as a result. The way the school manages behaviour is beginning to become more effective. New leaders have introduced firmer and higher expectations. However, too often pupils' behaviour is disrespectful. At times, it is unsafe.

Despite these serious issues, many staff and pupils say they feel encouraged by recent changes for the better. For instance, communication between home and school has improved. This, in turn, is helping parents understand expectations and the importance of partnership working. However, there is much more to do to win back hearts and minds and get the school back on track. Kedleston Group recognises this.

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

The school has been through a period of decline. Staff have not had sufficient guidance, support and training to manage pupils' needs. The curriculum has become fragmented and pupils have not been receiving a proper education. Assessment is weak, so staff do not know where to pitch learning. The previous recommendation from Ofsted to establish an effective approach to early reading has not been actioned. Currently, there is no phonics teaching and staff do not have the expertise to provide it. The reading curriculum for older pupils who can already read is more organised. For example, the use of poetry and prose with older pupils is done well and develops pupils' knowledge of literary techniques. Even so, there is still more to do to establish an effective reading culture across the school.

New leadership has made some immediate changes to curriculum design. Subject expectations are now aligned with the national curriculum. Lessons in a broad range of subjects take place regularly. Some of these lessons work well, and pupils engage and learn. However, a legacy of low expectation remains and a significant proportion of pupils are finding it hard to adjust to higher expectations. Pupils frequently leave lessons or refuse to accept directions or support from staff. This disrupts learning and staff are not always sure of the best way to respond to pupils' behaviour. A lack of attention to developing staff curriculum expertise also hampers learning in several subjects. On the other hand, there are some early successes. For instance, some pupils are responding positively to clearer expectations and firmer boundaries. They like to know that their efforts have been noticed and praised.

Staff views and morale are mixed, but a significant number feel optimistic about the future. They have confidence in the current leadership and recognise the need for major improvements at the school. All acknowledge that there has been a lack of support and training, and staff turnover has been high. Most current staff welcome the increased opportunities to access relevant professional development. Many report that leaders consider their workload and well-being when making decisions. Others feel let down and exhausted.

Inspection evidence shows that current leaders are making informed and ambitious decisions. Kedleston Group has appointed leaders with proven track records of success in similar settings. These leaders show that they have the capacity and commitment to drive forward necessary school improvement. They recognise that it has not been easy for staff. They value everyone's hard work while also expecting everyone to rise to the challenge of the urgent priorities for improvement.

The school has an established commitment to outdoor education. It has taken part in the Duke of Edinburgh programme for many years. Beyond this, the school's attention to pupils' wider development is underdeveloped. The school has recently introduced a new, and improved, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. Fresh leadership is bringing higher aspirations for careers guidance, links with employers and vocational studies. Nevertheless, the most pressing need is to establish a more respectful culture, where pupils learn the difference between right and wrong.

The school's buildings and grounds provide plenty of space. Classrooms are fit for purpose and the school provides the required minimum facilities. That said, the building is shabby and would benefit from refurbishment and investment in resources. Various subjects, including music, design technology and computing have suffered from underinvestment in equipment. This, together with a lack of staff training, have restricted the curriculum offer over time. Kedleston Group recognises this.

Risk assessments for the dangers posed by pupils' behaviour and site security measures are not sufficiently robust. This means some pupils get scared or put at risk of harm. Some pupils have been moved to remote education programmes because of their difficulties in engaging positively at school. The way this is recorded on attendance registers is not always clear.

In the recent past, the school has received several complaints about its work. The school's procedures for handling such complaints operate as they should. Similarly, the school meets the requirements for publishing information about its work. It also complies with section 10 of the Equality Act 2010. However, Kedleston Group has not ensured that a significant number of independent school standards relating to education, behaviour and safety are met.

Parents who spoke with inspectors said they were reassured by recent changes. They feel that the school is now 'turning a corner'.

Kedleston Group accepts that several factors have conspired to hinder necessary school improvement. They also accept that central oversight in recent times should have been better.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school's written safeguarding policies are informed by statutory guidance and have been adapted to the school's context. These written policies meet requirements and are published on the school's website. However, the school's implementation of them is not reliable or consistent. This puts pupils at risk of getting hurt. Some pupils repeatedly climb over the school's boundary fence and put themselves in harm's way. Not all of these incidents are recorded. Furthermore, when staff do record behaviour incidents they are not sure how to categorise them. This makes it hard for leaders to spot patterns, harmful behaviours or learn from events. Consequently, they have not taken the necessary action to reduce risks.

Some of the poor behaviour that happens in school each day puts pupils and staff at risk of harm. Bullying, swearing and rough behaviour happen. Staff do not always know how to deal with this.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's safeguarding policies have not been implemented with consistency. This means some significant risks persist or go unrecorded. The school should ensure all safeguarding requirements are implemented without fail.
- Pupils' behaviour is often poor and sometimes unsafe. In recent times, staff have not had the support, training or guidance to help them manage this. Consequently, pupils and staff have not known what is expected from them and pupils' behaviour has deteriorated. Working with the proprietor, the school should establish a robust, consistent and sustainable approach to supporting staff with managing behaviour.
- The school has not supported pupils to understand their own potential and responsibilities. This has resulted in low self-esteem; low aspirations and some pupils make poor choices. The school should support pupils to know the difference between right and wrong, to take responsibility and to learn how they can make a positive contribution to the school and wider society.
- The curriculum in recent times has not been well organised or suitably ambitious. This means it has not met pupils' needs and they have not received the education that they should. The school should continue to implement plans for establishing a more ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum in order to raise expectations and achievement for all.

- The school does not have an operational phonics programme and staff do not have the expertise to teach phonics. The current approach to teaching early reading is haphazard. This means pupils do not get the right support to help them learn to read. The school should implement, with urgency, a systematic and effective approach to teaching early reading, supported with staff training.
- Leadership has been erratic and has taken the school in some unsustainable directions. This has confused staff and pupils and led to a decline in standards and high levels of dissatisfaction. The school should build on the positive direction now being set by the current leadership. The proprietor should draw up and implement plans to strengthen leadership capacity at all levels.

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	125790
DfE registration number	937/6092
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10284423
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	63
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Phil Petch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£53,808
Telephone number	01676 543200
Website	www.arcschoololdarley.co.uk
Email address	arcoldarley@kedlestongroup.com
Dates of previous inspection	12 to 14 July 2022

Information about this school

- The school was first registered by the Department for Education (DfE) in October 1989. The school's last full standard inspection was in July 2022. A progress monitoring inspection took place in February 2023.
- A new headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher took up their posts in January 2024.
- Since the previous standard inspection in 2022, there have been several changes of senior leadership and staff.
- The school caters for pupils who have been excluded from another school or have been at risk of exclusion. Pupils have social, emotional and mental health difficulties or autism spectrum disorder. All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chief operating officer and the regional director for Kedleston Group, the headteacher, other senior leaders and school staff. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to three parents.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English and reading, mathematics and PSHE education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other subjects in less depth.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed staff interactions and pupils' behaviour in class, outside, in the school hall and when moving about the school.

- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted’s surveys of staff, pupils’ and parents’ views.
- Alongside inspection evidence, inspectors considered concerns that had been raised with the DfE and shared with Ofsted.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation to check the school’s compliance with the independent school standards. An inspector checked the premises.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Edgerton

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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