

Arc School Church End

C/O Kedleston Schools, G20 Lakeside House, Stockley Park, UB11 1BD

Inspection dates 20–22 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- School leaders and the proprietors are determined that students will achieve as much as they can. They are highly focused on improving the school and have ensured that students' progress and teaching are good, despite some turbulence in staffing.
- The proprietors and headteacher keep a careful watch on the progress of students and the quality of teaching, holding staff appropriately to account for this.
- Whatever their disability or needs, students achieve well. Small group work and individual attention help them to keep highly focused on what they are learning.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics. Staff are very clear as to what students need to learn next and students have many opportunities to apply their skills in other subjects. Work is usually well pitched to challenge students to achieve even more.
- The behaviour and attendance of almost all students improve rapidly on entering the school. Staff are quick to establish very strong trusting relationships with them. They build well on students' interests to excite them to learn.
- Systems for keeping students safe are effective. Staff are well trained and meticulous in recording incidents or assessing risk. An emphasis on helping students to think about personal safety in a variety of situations ensures students feel very safe.
- An excellent range of sporting and cultural activities develop students' social skills, physical education skills, and well-being and understanding of the world very well indeed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The range of qualifications and courses that students will take at the end of Year 11 is still being developed. This means a few higher achieving students are not always stretched by the work they do.
- Occasionally, teachers confuse students because their explanations are not clear. Sometimes their marking does not help students to understand how to improve their work.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed learning in lessons jointly with the headteacher. Students' work was examined during lessons. A more detailed scrutiny of the work of all students and teacher planning was also undertaken to explore students' achievement since entry, the breadth of work covered and aspects of teaching.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, the school's safeguarding lead, representatives of the company and the proprietorial board.
- The inspector also held meetings with groups of students, as well as talking informally with them during lessons and leisure times.
- The inspector looked at a range of school documentation including the data the school collects about students' learning and behaviour; policies and records as to how the school keeps students' safe; attendance and admissions records; and the school's evaluation of its strengths and priorities for improvement.
- The inspector checked that all the required information for parents, carers and others, including a compliant safeguarding policy, was available on the school's website.
- There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, for these to be considered. The Department for Education census and 'point in time' surveys were analysed, as well as 20 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Arc School (Church End) is located on the outskirts of the village of Ansley, near to Nuneaton in Warwickshire. It was originally registered in 1987.
- At its last inspection in January 2012, the school provided education on three different sites for pupils aged seven to sixteen years. Since then it has registered its provision on sites other than Church End as separate schools. This means that Arc School (Church End) itself now provides education for 39 boys and girls aged eleven to sixteen years.
- Until 2014, no Key Stage 4 students were educated onsite at Church End. These had previously transferred to other sites. When the other sites registered as separate schools, The Arc School (Church End) extended its age range to include Key Stage 4 students. In July 2015, the first group of Year 11 students will leave the school.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Almost all have histories of severely challenging behaviour. Many have not attended school regularly for some time. Their behavioural needs are often linked to a range of social, emotional and mental health needs, autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.
- Almost all students are White British and none have English as an additional language. A very small number are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not use alternative provision. It uses external facilities, such as local sports and leisure facilities, but all teaching is undertaken by school staff in conjunction, sometimes with the venue's staff.
- In September 2015, the school is due to move into larger premises, a converted school about two miles away, which will have its own sporting and physical education facilities, and more specialist teaching rooms.
- The school is owned by Kedleston Schools Limited. Kedleston Schools own nine other similar schools throughout England. The company employs a number of company heads of department for different aspects of the school's work, such as for health and safety, safeguarding and education. They employ a 'cultural curator' to help plan and organise a range of cultural and community experiences, as well as an educational psychologist and therapists to support the school's work.
- The governing body includes representatives of the proprietor, company employees and a small number of other governors recruited for their expertise in education, social care and business.
- The school had a number of staff changes in 2014, including several subject leaders and support staff. A new deputy headteacher took up post in April 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of students and the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers' explanations always help students to deepen their understanding
 - all teachers check on whether students have fully understood what they are learning, and dispel any misconceptions quickly
 - the range of qualifications available to students is extended, so that more-able students in particular have challenging work consistently set for them
 - feedback to students, including marking, makes clear to them how well they are doing and how they can improve their work
 - teachers consistently model good presentation skills to students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and her leadership team have been very well supported by the company, its heads of departments and the governors. This has enabled them to continue to improve the school during a period of change. They have ensured that all the independent school's standards are met and that the quality of education, including teaching and progress, is good, despite staff changes. This is because systems for checking on the school's work have been strengthened.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to establish an atmosphere that inspires students to learn and to engage with their learning. Effective performance management procedures and improved assessment procedures mean that staff are clear about how to improve their teaching. Assessment has improved considerably since the last inspection so that staff are now much better informed as to students' levels and needs. As a result, work is generally well matched to students' needs and students begin to catch up on others of their age.
- The curriculum is good. Students have good access to all the required areas of learning. Staff are supported by a good range of resources that promote good teaching and achievement in each subject. Community resources and visits are used very well to bring learning to life and to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as their more academic learning. Such experiences strongly motivate students, as well as helping them to become much more aware of how to manage their behaviour and make positive contributions to the world at large.
- Although some staff are very new, leaders have recruited people who have strong expertise in the subjects they are responsible for, or in how to support the learning and emotional development of students with social, emotional and mental health needs. Progress meetings and daily and weekly briefings ensure everyone is well informed about priorities for individual students and the school. As a result, the school is highly responsive to students' individual needs and quick to act should an individual student's progress slow.
- The school collects a good range of information about students' achievements on entry to the school. Staff set challenging targets linked to this information and students' levels when they were in Year 6, if such information is available. A series of standardised tests, such as reading and spelling tests, are also carried out regularly. These are used very well to identify which students need additional support for their literacy and numeracy skills. School data, together with inspector observations and discussions, confirm that many students make good and often outstanding progress in their reading as a result.
- Leaders are further developing the assessments and checks they carry out on students' progress. They are strengthening links with local schools both to learn from best practice elsewhere and to help confirm the accuracy of the information they collect. Work with other company schools has already helped to identify further courses students might take in a range of subjects.
- Opportunities for students to take courses in other schools or colleges, as well as more practical courses with local businesses and community groups, strengthen the range of qualifications available to students, but not all of the higher-level courses that more-able students might take are in place yet. This occasionally means that such students are not always challenged sufficiently in subjects where they might have a particular talent, such as mathematics. Leaders have already identified this and are acting swiftly to extend the range of qualifications available.
- The school is particularly active in promoting students' community awareness and understanding of British traditions and values. Students are involved in many community, art, sporting and cultural projects as well as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. These all help them to be much more socially aware and understanding of the needs of others, as well as building tolerance and respect for those from different backgrounds and faiths. Themes within these subjects are chosen to excite students' interest and debate.
- The school promotes equality and diversity very well because it is so well focused on each individual's

needs. It works very well with other agencies, such as therapists and social care staff, to ensure that students have access to the resources, support and advice they need, including the good quality and independent careers advice. The school fulfils its duties under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. All this and students' good progress mean the school prepares students well for their next steps in education.

- The school is very successful in promoting the attendance and improving the behaviour of students. However, fixed-term exclusions increased at a time when staffing was unstable. Leaders have acted quickly to reduce incidents and ensure staff are skilled at managing and learning from student behaviour. The current building has limitations for enabling students to have personal space when they are not coping or need to be supported individually, because space is of a premium. The much larger and specially adapted premises available from September reflect the school's determination to offer students the most therapeutic and nurturing environment that they can.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governance is good and has some very strong features because the proprietors, governors and company heads of departments have been very successful in ensuring that students' learning remains good, despite changes in staffing and as the school extends its age range into Key Stage 4.

The governing body know the school extremely well and ensure that all regulations are met. They ask probing questions as to students' progress and the school's development, and hold the senior leadership team to account very well.

All the required information is made available to parents and placing authorities to ensure they are well informed about students' progress. The complaints policy meets requirements.

Governors are clear about how well the school is doing and hold staff to account for students' progress and well-being effectively through the performance management system. They provide good support for staff development through this and through training opportunities within the company and outside. Several staff, for example, are supported to take further qualifications relevant to the school's work.

Governors have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are met and are rigorously implemented. Company heads of safeguarding and of health and safety regularly audit practice and consider if improvements are needed. This means that health and safety and fire safety checks are meticulously carried out and comply with requirements, and that safe recruitment practices are robust. The school's safeguarding policy is available to parents and others on its website and includes everything that it should.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students make considerable strides in their attitudes to learning and in their personal development. This is because of the consistent approach to managing their behaviour and the ways in which they are inspired to learn. The school's focus on building resilience is evidenced in the ways in which they persevere for longer, even when tasks are difficult as they proceed through the school.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, although attendance increases and behavioural incidents reduce in severity and number as students settle into the school, a few students still struggle in these areas. The large majority of students make remarkable turnarounds in their behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning over time because staff manage students' behaviour so well and establish strong, trusting relationships with them. Students find the subjects they study and the school's rewards system motivating.
- Students settle to work quickly and well. In 2014, the number of fixed-term exclusions increased. Instability in staffing, together with an increase in student numbers and age range, meant that a few students became unsettled or their challenging needs were not so swiftly addressed. However, this has now improved markedly. Behavioural incidents and exclusions have reduced considerably and the use of the school's 'reflection rooms' has been reviewed and adapted appropriately for when students do feel unsettled.
- Improvement has been effective because staff have established clear routines and expectations about

work attitudes and behaviour. They implement students' good quality behaviour and learning plans well. A key worker system also ensures that students feel they always have someone to talk with, should they need to. Students say that they attend so well because teachers prepare work that they know they will be able to do and will interest them. They are rightly proud of their achievements and ambitious to achieve even more.

- Students are remarkably tolerant and understanding of the needs of others. They feel that there is little bullying, although there are times when they might not 'get on' with each other. They have a good understanding of what constitutes discrimination, and are clear that such discriminatory behaviour will not and should not be tolerated. They value the many ways that the school helps them to keep healthy and to learn outdoors, particularly through sporting activities, residential opportunities and visits to museums and exhibitions. They are proud of their improved ability to work in a team and to 'stick at things'.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. It is not outstanding because there have been too many incidents previously which upset students and led to a few not improving their behaviour. The school has reacted swiftly and effectively to deal with this so that staffing and systems are now secure. All staff are very well trained in keeping students safe and promoting their emotional well-being. All the required checks on the suitability of staff are in place and meticulously carried out. There are a good number of first aiders available at all times, both in school and on visits.
- A very strong taught programme is in place that helps students to identify for themselves where they might be at risk and how to recognise this, including how they might recognise extremist views. Students are very aware of how to keep themselves safe as a result. They demonstrate respect and tolerance for different ways of living. They understand what constitutes racist language and discrimination, for example discussing why sexist language and sexism is inappropriate.
- Students take part in a range of off-site activities, including Duke of Edinburgh Awards and residential visits, as well as numerous sporting activities and cultural visits. There are detailed and robust risk assessments and procedures around these activities.
- Students have good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using social media or the internet and how others might abuse such media. They have many opportunities to research topics and to use the internet productively for learning. The school is ever vigilant for signs that students are keeping themselves safe both within school and at home. Excellent relations between staff and students mean that students feel that, if they did ever have worries or concerns, they can rely on staff to listen and to help them resolve these.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers plan work carefully so that it both interests students and helps them to improve their skills. This is particularly so for English and mathematics where students have often lost considerable ground since their Year 6 tests because of poor attendance or disruption to their education. Careful identification of students' current skills on entry, for example in reading, is followed up well with targeted, specialist support. This means many students then make rapid progress in reading, often much more than a year's progress in a few months.
- Teachers in all subjects build on students' improving English and mathematics skills well. Students have many practical opportunities to apply their skills, whether in budgeting for a meal or designing an object in design and technology. They keep logs of their visits or their Duke of Edinburgh work, which all help to develop their writing skills further.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is good because teachers generally have high expectations of students in these subjects and set challenging targets for them each year. Students' progress towards these is discussed often by all teachers, and targets and work revised accordingly.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and most check regularly on students' understanding. A strength

of teaching is the high quality questioning that of many teachers use to help students make links with previous learning and develop their understanding further. Occasionally, when this reveals weaknesses in a few students' understanding, not all teachers' explanations are clear enough to correct these misunderstandings effectively. This limits learning and occasionally confuses students.

- Teachers use verbal praise and marking to help students to improve their work. The best examples of this help students to understand what is good about their work and what would improve it. Sometimes, marking and feedback are perfunctory and give little information to students to help them to improve. Occasionally, teachers' own writing is too untidy to read. This means that good presentation skills are not always modelled by teachers. In such circumstances, the presentation of students' work does not improve as rapidly as it could.
- Key workers and teachers work well together to ensure that students have work generally at the right level of difficulty and that they are able to stay on task for longer periods. Good staff training and close working with the different therapists and advisers who come into the school mean that there is careful consideration of each student's learning needs. This includes their special educational needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit and hyperactive disorder. Students are very aware of their own personal needs and the strategies that help them to learn. This all prepares them very well for the future.
- Teaching is at least good in all other subjects. This is reflected in the good progress the school's careful tracking reveals and the work in books. It is a strength in art, music, physical education and food technology. This is because teachers are so skilled at incorporating students' broader targets, such as those in literacy and numeracy or in their personal development, into the activities that students do. Students are very proud of their achievement in these subjects and say it is because their teachers help them to improve their knowledge and skills and to get on with each other. Good teaching in science is reflected in the ways students' progress accelerates and their strong environmental awareness and interest.
- The courses and programmes that students take have been carefully identified to both challenge them and make them feel secure in their learning. However, as some start to make up ground lost previously in subjects, not all teachers are as swift to recognise this. This means that the tasks set and the courses followed do not always support these students achieving the best they can.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good because, from their different starting points on entry, students make good progress in all subjects including English, mathematics and science. Some make remarkable progress in reading from very low starting points and now have a much stronger base for their next steps in education and life. They make good progress in writing because of the many opportunities provided to practise this in other subjects, as well as the varied ways in which they write in English. Careful tracking of students' spelling skills further supports writing and ensures that any who need extra help receive it.
- Achievement is not outstanding because a few more-able students who were higher achievers at the end of Year 6 are not yet following courses at the level they could do. Their progress is good because they make accelerated progress from their starting points overall and make up lost ground. However, the occasional lack of challenge stops them from making even better progress, particularly in mathematics. The headteacher is aware of this and is urgently pursuing links with mainstream schools, as well as identifying how to broaden the range of qualifications students take.
- The few students who are currently in Year 11 have made good progress in all of the subjects they have taken. Progress in computer studies slowed for a while, owing to staffing issues, but is now accelerating. Students will take a range of Foundation Level GCSEs and Entry Level qualifications, including English and mathematics. Their projected grades reflect good progress from entry. Individual students are on track to achieve higher levels, particularly in subjects such as art. The school does not make use of early entry to GCSE, although it uses the unit award system and Entry Level qualifications to help students to build confidence in Years 9 and 10 so they are better prepared for examination work.

- Students who have been in the school for longer periods of time particularly benefit from the school's approach. They say that the extension of the school's age range has really helped them to learn more, because they do not have to worry about changing schools. The school's data and the records and work available for Year 10, for example, show this group to have made good progress since entry and to be achieving much closer to others of their age. Some are already on track for the higher levels in their GCSE subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- Students across the school achieve well because of the improvements in their attitudes to learning, their attendance and the good teaching they experience over time. Students in Year 7, for example, say that the work 'makes sense' to them now and so they try harder.
- Work-related studies, community work and work experience are used effectively to prepare students for the world of work. Students value these opportunities and the opportunity to work with their teachers and others at off-site venues in more practical situations, such as courses linked to construction.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	125790
Inspection number	462915
DfE registration number	937/6092

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	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Number of part time pupils	n/a
Proprietor	Kedleston Schools Limited
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Wendy Sanders
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,160 to £55,875
Telephone number	024 7639 4801
Fax number	n/a
Email address	churchend@arcschool.co.uk

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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
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