

# Arbour Vale School

Farnham Road, Farnham Royal, Slough, SL2 3AE

## Inspection dates

14–15 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience/Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress from low starting points, from their earliest days at this school. By the time they are ready to leave, they are well prepared for the next phase of their education and lives.
- Teaching is typically good and has improved over time. Teachers have high expectations and in almost all lessons, they plan well for each individual to make good progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They say that they enjoy lessons and they behave well in class. They feel safe at school and they know who to turn to when they need help.
- Courses and learning activities available in the good-quality, well-organised sixth form provide many opportunities for students to improve their life skills and to gain a wide range of qualifications.
- School leaders and managers know their school well because their systems for self-evaluation have improved. As a result, they know the school's strengths and also the areas that need to be developed.
- Members of the governing body challenge and support school leaders effectively. They ask testing questions based on their own monitoring and persist until they receive answers which satisfy them entirely.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not yet work consistently as independent learners in all lessons.
- There is some variation among staff in their use of alternative communication systems, such as signing or the use of symbols.
- In a few lessons, teachers' expectations are not so well focused on each individual making the best possible progress.
- The new record-keeping system for the administration of medication has not been fully consolidated but is nevertheless effective.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons taught by 28 teachers. In all, this amounted to almost 12 hours spent in classrooms. Inspectors met pupils and sixth-form students at lunchtimes to discuss their progress and behaviour.
- One inspector held a meeting with pupils to review work in their files and to talk about their achievements.
- The views of 46 parents and carers who completed the online Parent View survey were taken into account, as were the views of staff who returned their questionnaires. Inspectors met a group of parents and carers who were attending a training programme at the school. They also heard from one former student who currently works as a volunteer on the days she is not at a local college.
- A number of school documents and policies were scrutinised including those for safeguarding, behaviour and communication.
- Meetings were held with members of the school leadership team and with one representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated the work of the governing body by meeting governors and by scrutinising their minutes.
- In conversations with teachers, inspectors reviewed the school's programmes for professional development and performance management.

## Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jo Curd	Additional inspector
Jennifer Taylor	Additional inspector
Barbara Davies	Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Arbour Vale School provides for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. A growing number have autistic spectrum conditions. All of the school's provision is located on the main site.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Eleven pupils reside at the school as weekly boarders. Many others attend breakfast- and after-school clubs.
- The majority of pupils come from Slough. A very few travel to school from a neighbouring authority.
- A much higher proportion of pupils than the national average live in homes where English is not the first language.
- Approximately half of those on the school's roll (a much higher proportion than the national average) are eligible to receive the pupil premium, which provides additional support for children of service families, children looked after by the local authority (of which there are very few) or pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. The school was awarded specialist status for physical education some years ago.
- School staff and therapists provide training for parents and carers whose children have complex needs, including those who have autism.

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

- Drive up the standard of teaching even further so that all matches the very best by:
  - ensuring that all staff use every opportunity to teach excellent communication skills in class and elsewhere, including signing and the use of symbols
  - allowing more time for pupils to learn independently in all lessons by challenging them to do as much as possible for themselves before staff offer help
  - scrutinising regularly the plans of all teachers to ensure that they always expect the very best from all pupils and use all resources available to the fullest extent possible.
- Consolidate the new record-keeping system for the administration of medication so that it is fully embedded in practice in the school's residences.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils first come to the school, their attainment is low because of their special educational needs. By the time they leave, many have gained good qualifications including GCSE A\*–G passes. BTEC and ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) programmes provide older students with further accreditation for work completed.
- They make good progress with physical skills. For example, a pupil who has limited mobility has been so motivated to gain strength on the trampoline that he now sits unsupported in a variety of settings.
- Because pupils learn well and make good progress, especially in the important skills of literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education, they are well prepared for the next phases of their lives.
- Almost all pupils move successfully from school to further education colleges, including those with more complex needs. They continue to do well and gain further qualifications at college.
- Pupils who stay in the school's residence have numerous opportunities to practise skills learned in the classroom, including using money in shops, preparing meals, and personal-care routines.
- Pupils make the most of the many opportunities made available for improving their reading in all lessons as well as in the school's well-stocked library. For example, in an outstanding numeracy lesson, one pupil with complex needs enthusiastically took up the offer of a chance to read from his book as a reward for finishing a piece of mathematics work.
- Some pupils who achieve well in physical education take up roles as sports ambassadors to other schools. An older student was delighted with the skills learned in dance which have enabled him to participate in shows and festivals.
- Rates of progress made by pupils in different groups are broadly similar. Those entitled to receive the pupil premium do as well as others. The school takes care to ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support to develop effective communication skills.
- In a few lessons, pupils do not make good progress because the use of signing is inconsistent and symbols are not well used.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good at this school because nearly all teachers have high expectations that their pupils will work hard and make good progress.
- Teachers regularly check on pupils' progress in lessons, which helps them to design the next steps for learning. In the best lessons, pupils respond enthusiastically when they are encouraged to discuss their work with others and to comment on their achievements.
- Good support is almost always available for those who are struggling, while questioning is used very effectively to challenge more-able pupils to think for themselves and learn more.
- In lessons where pupils are organised into small groups, they are well supported by specialist assistants. This was seen in a good mathematics lesson where pupils who were learning how to gather data were provided with high-quality follow-up activities by an assistant who questioned them well about their research on birthdays. They then transferred their findings to the months of the year.
- Therapists strengthen learning for many pupils by designing highly personalised programmes in communication and movement.
- Teachers make great efforts to help pupils learn useful words and phrases. For example, in a strong sixth-form business studies lesson, students talked confidently about 'researching their business plan', while in an effective food technology lesson, pupils were encouraged to learn the sign for their ingredients as well as the word.

- However, systems to support the development of good communication for all pupils are not used as well in every lesson. Sometimes, signing is used by just one member of staff in a lesson, or too much verbal information is provided without a supporting symbol to aid meaning.
- Pupils respond well when teachers challenge them to think about what they need to achieve and to organise their resources efficiently. A good example of this was seen in a sixth-form art lesson where students examined the techniques of different artists before choosing a style and selecting the tools necessary for completing their own work.
- In a very few lessons, staff were too quick to provide support. On these occasions, pupils do not have enough time to think about the answer for themselves.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- In class, pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Behaviour is good at all times, including in other areas of the school. It is not yet outstanding because in a few lessons, where the pace of teaching slows, pupils are more distracted and do not fully concentrate on their work. Their attendance at school has improved over time.
- Pupils settle quickly when they arrive in the morning, and lessons begin promptly. There are very few disruptions to learning, and any low-level disruption is dealt with swiftly by well-trained staff.
- A small minority of staff and a few parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour, but these were not endorsed by inspection evidence.
- The school has linked teaching about behaviour well with its sports specialism, by developing a set of Olympic and Paralympic values which are on prominent display. Pupils talk confidently about the need to live up to these values of fair play and hard work.
- A recent theme week helped pupils and their families to understand how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils created posters which contain good written advice and pictures, and displayed them around the corridors.
- Well-thought-out systems are used to help pupils stay in a positive frame of mind. A fine example of this was the use of symbols by a specialist assistant when a pupil sat on the floor in the corridor and refused to move. Good pictorial advice was given about how the pupil should behave.
- Bullying of any kind is rare. When it does occur, school leaders report fully to the local authority. The perpetrators and victims are given sound advice and effective support.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and they know who to turn to for help or if they are worried. One pupil told an inspector that he was proud that he had learned to manage his own behaviour during his time at this school.
- Outstanding efforts are made in the school's residence to help pupils to build friendships with each other. As a result, pupils get along very well together with few problems or disputes.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- School leaders have worked hard to drive up standards. Teaching has improved over time and pupils make faster progress because systems for self-evaluation are strong and provide clear information about strengths and weaknesses. This demonstrates the school's clear capacity for further improvement.
- The development of strong, well-led departments means that leaders know their pupils well. Teacher performance management is regularly carried out and closely linked with governors' priorities for improvement.
- New staff, and those who have been at the school longer, describe useful training opportunities which have helped them to boost standards.

- The school works well with parents and carers. They are invited in regularly to review their child’s progress. Well-regarded training is offered to help parents and carers develop skills which will enable their child achieve more.
- Pupils have many different opportunities to learn well in all of the activities organised during the school day and in the many clubs which take place before and after school. The pupil premium is used efficiently so that everyone has the opportunity to take part and learn well in music clubs, activities such as trampolining, and drama.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particular strength. In a very effective history lesson about the Second World War, pupils were asked to think about what they would say to a family member who was about to join the army. Their responses illustrated the extent to which careful teaching had helped them to understand important features about other people’s lives.
- School leaders have ensured that all national requirements for safeguarding and for recruiting staff are in place, and that staff are well trained.
- Leadership and management of the school’s residence are outstanding. Pupils and their families are very well prepared for moving into the residence, and training and supervision offered to staff is of the highest quality.
- The local authority has provided effective support for this school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body ask school leaders testing questions about its performance. They have made the most of opportunities for developing their leadership skills by taking on appropriate training. As a result, they challenge the school to do even better. Performance management systems have been implemented effectively which mean that governors have a good understanding of the standard of teaching and pupils’ achievement. The improvement partner helps governors to link rewards for the headteacher and other staff to the achievement of agreed targets. Governors manage the budget well, and have made good decisions about spending all resources, including those made available by the pupil premium.

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is outstanding</b>
<b>Residential pupils’ safety</b>	<b>is outstanding</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>is outstanding</b>

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding. It is an area of excellence in the school because of highly effective leadership and management in every aspect of its practice. Parents and carers say their children enjoy the welfare experience and would recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. They learn tolerance and respect for each other through the role-modelling of staff. They make great strides in their personal development by successfully working towards joint targets agreed between residential and education staff. As a result, residential pupils become more independent, and their behaviour and communication skills improve.
- Parents and carers comment that residential pupils attain practical skills and reach milestones that were not anticipated as being possible, such as dressing independently. A parent commented, ‘I have only taken my child shopping and on holiday because of the work that staff have undertaken.’
- Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy the residential experience and participate enthusiastically in a diverse range of extra-curricular activities, such as rebound therapy, archery and soft play.
- The quality of residential care is outstanding. Staff deliver high-quality care as a result of the

extensive training they receive. A sensitive induction process helps residential pupils settle quickly. Introductory visits familiarise them with routines, reduce their anxiety and reassure parents and carers of their well-being. They receive highly personalised care through the rigorous and consistent implementation of well-focused and detailed care plans.

- A well-thought-out activity programme and an excellent quality of on-site provision provide varied, stimulating and challenging recreational opportunities. Residential pupils develop a sense of their wider community through trips to theme parks, by taking part in shopping trips, and by contributing to fund-raising events. They develop responsibility and independence by completing tasks, such as washing their own supper dishes.
  - Health needs are extremely well met. Residential pupils keep fit and healthy through the provision of well-balanced meals and regular exercise. Medication is well managed, and errors do not occur. However, up until now, controlled medication has been the only medication that is recorded in both a central record of medication as well as on children's files. Residential pupils have not been affected by the former absence of a central record due to the diligence of staff in administering medication and the regular monitoring of children's files. A central record is now in place.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110185
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC370928
<b>Local authority</b>	Slough
<b>Inspection number</b>	401104

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	255
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	41
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	11
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Zoe Varzi
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Richards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11–12 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 515560
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