

Burton ARC Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134880
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	360649
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Gareth Caldwell
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who visited all four sites. They observed 11 lessons and carried out short visits to two others. Altogether, they spent just over six hours observing teaching and saw 10 different teachers.

Meetings were held with members of staff, students, the local authority, and representatives of the management committee. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the development plan, records of checks carried out on staff, data showing students' attainment and progress and samples of students' work. Questionnaires from 10 parents and carers, students and staff were scrutinised.

Information about the school

Burton Alternative Route Centre (ARC) Sports College serves the district of East Staffordshire. There are four sites, three of which are in Burton-on-Trent and one in Uttoxeter. Currently, the centre provides for 24 secondary-aged students who have been excluded from schools and are registered only at the centre. A small number of these students are in alternative provision either at a local college or with a private provider. The centre also caters for 31 students who are at risk of exclusion and these are dual registered with mainstream schools. Occasionally, primary-aged pupils who have been permanently excluded are provided with tuition at home for a short time until a school place is found for them. Most students are of White British heritage. A very small number have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. Since the last inspection, the centre has become a Specialist Sports College. It also has an Eco Silver Award and National Healthy Schools status. During the inspection, the school was led by a consultant headteacher.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

The centre provides a good quality of education and so students who attend regularly make good progress and achieve well. Students' attainment and examination results have improved well since the last inspection. Teaching has also improved and there is a growing proportion that is outstanding.

The working relationships that staff forge with the students are outstanding and create an exceptionally harmonious learning environment for a setting of this type. A few inconsistencies in practice separate the good from the outstanding teaching. Regular tracking of students' progress has been developed but does not include those students who are in the alternative provision.

Students feel very safe. Their behaviour improves dramatically once they join the centre. It is at least good and often outstanding in lessons. Improvements in attendance have not been sustained and this is below average. As a result, behaviour and safety are good rather than outstanding.

The headteacher and staff are a united team who work well together towards common goals. There is an outstanding drive and ambition to make Burton ARC Sports College a centre of excellence. This vision and challenging performance targets set by the local authority are the main influences on improvement planning. The centre's evaluation of how well it is doing has less influence on plans for development, and some opportunities to evaluate its effectiveness are missed.

The skills of staff are developed very well and this is at the root of improvements in teaching. Staff are enthusiastic, committed to providing the best for students and confident in their roles. A culture of sharing successful practice is a strong feature and is used well to develop the provision. Qualified and unqualified teaching staff are

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equally valued and roles and responsibilities shared well amongst them.

Parents and partner schools value the work done by the centre. Staff work well with schools in the area to reduce permanent exclusions: these have fallen significantly over the last three years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - students are productive and challenged throughout each lesson
 - teachers always clarify misunderstandings.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing successful strategies for sustaining improvements in attendance
 - including in termly monitoring of progress those students who are in alternative provision
 - making use of all accurate available data to evaluate students' progress and using national data to compare this with the performance of all students nationally
 - widening the use of self-evaluation to determine strengths and weaknesses of current provision and using this to inform improvement planning.

Main report

Burton ARC Sports College is a good pupil referral unit. It is effective in helping students to close gaps in their education caused by previous weak attendance and behavioural difficulties that have resulted in exclusion. It is equally effective in preventing exclusions. The fact that all students in the past two years have left either to take up employment, continue education or training is a notable achievement. There are several particularly strong features of the centre. It is a calm and productive environment, where students feel very safe and parents have high levels of confidence that students are safe too. Students say that there is no bullying or racism, and records confirm this. The centre's procedures for preventing bullying are very effective and so is the behaviour policy and its procedures. Although a few students do not agree that behaviour around the centre is good, until recently, there had been no exclusions for two years, and behavioural incidents rarely occur.

Parental and student confidence in the centre is high. In their written comments added to questionnaires, parents and carers wrote of 'immense improvement' in students' behaviour and education. One noted, 'This is the only positive educational experience my son has ever had'. Students are equally positive. Although they do not all enjoy coming to the centre, one noted, 'I wouldn't be happier at any other school'. In discussions, students said that they have learned more here than in their

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previous settings, particularly about the risks associated with drugs, sex and relationships and smoking. Several are proud and pleased with what they have achieved academically, as well as their improved attendance. The staff come in for particular praise, for instance, 'They are so nice, not just teaching you, so you don't want to misbehave'.

The collective efforts of staff successfully drove up attendance, which was at the expected level by the end of the last academic year. This year it has slipped down so that even when the persistent absentees are discounted, it is still below average. The centre attributes this setback to an influx of individuals from local schools where they have had a history of non-attendance. The centre's existing strategies for supporting increased attendance are clearly not quite effective enough.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is reflected well in the way in which they express themselves through art and music, challenge themselves during outdoor activities, and grow in confidence and self-worth. They develop clear values when they consider issues such as homelessness and abortion, and contribute well to the centre and the wider communities. A notable effort was the trip several made to Albania, to take much needed resources to an orphanage there. Students' knowledge of cultural diversity is promoted effectively so that they are tolerant and respectful of differences.

A strategic approach to developing teaching and the curriculum has been effective in securing higher standards. There are clear curriculum pathways for students of all abilities, leading to external accreditation. Academic courses are complemented effectively by 'learning beyond the classroom' which adds personal challenge, interest and enjoyment. In lessons, the great majority of students are working at levels expected for their age. Attainment by Year 11 has risen well, and an increasing number of students are successful in achieving grades equivalent to those expected nationally. A few exceed the national average as they have made exceptional progress. These are the students who have been at the centre for the greatest length of time and who attend well. Students' positive attitudes to learning and often excellent behaviour in lessons contribute to their good learning and progress, and ultimately their good achievement. For a very small number whose attendance is patchy, progress is limited. Nonetheless, they make good progress when they are present. There are no significant differences between the attainment or progress of any other groups.

In most lessons, learning and progress are good; occasionally they are outstanding. The mutual respect, trust and outstanding working relationships that staff build with students underpin successful learning. Students are punctual to classes, they rise to the high expectations of staff, engage immediately and remain productive throughout lessons. They are clear about what they are learning, including their personal targets, because teachers share this with them in a way that they understand. They concentrate on tasks and work collaboratively or independently when asked to do so, successfully building on what they have previously produced or learned. For instance, in an art lesson, masks previously made were photographed

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using a webcam and software used to experiment with special effects. The results were evaluated and a favourite selected. This exercise was carried out independently and with little supervision. In a personal and social education session, a group of students worked well together, making use of what they had learned previously, to devise a good set of questions to ask an imaginary applicant for a job.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress. This is because their needs are well known to staff, who have all been suitably trained in overcoming barriers to learning, particularly those associated with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or autism. In lessons, these students are well supported by structured approaches, such as clear expectations of 'behaviour for learning', including rewards and sanctions. They respond well to the centre's systems. They maintain their motivation through a series of increasingly difficult tasks, such as in mathematics when learning the correct sequence of operations to follow in solving equations.

Students in independent study sessions apply themselves well and are self-reliant. In lessons, they ask as well as answer questions, and have the confidence to say if they do not understand. Occasionally, misunderstandings are not clarified by staff, such as pointing out why a particular answer is wrong. Otherwise, staff use assessment well to tailor the provision to meet students' needs. Tasks are invariably pitched so that they provide a suitable challenge, but occasionally students wait for others to complete an exercise, when more difficult tasks are not immediately presented. Students take part well in reviewing learning at the end of each session, and identify clearly what they have learned. They listen carefully to instructions about homework and show a willingness to carry out revision. Marking and feedback to students are good. Students' folders show clearly how a focus on this by senior leaders has led to noticeable improvements, such as in levelling of work and written indications of how to move to the next level. Occasionally, students respond in writing to recommendations made.

The centre measures all students' attainment at both key stages. However, in tracking students' progress, the centre does not include all students who are on alternative provision pathways and this reduces the ability of leaders to hold these providers to account. Students' starting points on entry are identified by examining formal assessments and teacher assessment, with the higher one used as a baseline. This strategy is adopted because the centre finds that formal assessment is not always reliable. Teachers' assessments are not moderated, although inspectors found no inaccuracies. Although the centre's approach is sensible, it means that staff cannot be certain that they have students' precise starting points when evaluating progress. Similarly, the centre does not make use of available national data to see how well students perform compared with all students nationally.

The centre has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. Issues for improvement identified in 2009 have been addressed well, apart from the fact that tracking of progress does not include all students. Innovation and development are a way of life at the centre. A constant drive to

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improve and achieve recognition for this is a strong feature. Staff relish the opportunities they have to develop their skills. Morale and confidence in what they are doing is high. The internal environment celebrates the successes of the centre as well as the students, adding to the positive ethos.

Success in achieving specialist status has brought additional funding, which has been used wisely, including to extend opportunities for sporting activities in the community. However, this is at an early stage and has not yet been formally evaluated. Similarly, although the centre is fully committed to ensuring that all students do equally well, their ability to evaluate the academic performance of different groups is hampered by changing cohorts of students and small numbers. For instance, students from minority ethnic groups were in the majority last year but there are very few currently. Nonetheless, the centre is collecting data each year to build up a reliable set of information it can use.

The local authority sets challenging indicators for success, such as for attendance and students' progress, and holds the centre to account for meeting these. Several members of the management committee are particularly supportive to the centre and the committee fulfils its delegated responsibilities satisfactorily. The improvement plan reflects ambitious developments that are rooted in the centre's vision as well as local authority targets. All staff contribute to improvement planning. However, there is little evidence that weaknesses diagnosed through rigorous self-evaluation are feeding into plans. The most recent review shows that the centre is set to achieve many of the outcomes by the time specified.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Burton ARC to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 10 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	2	20	6	60	2	20	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	6	60	3	30	1	10	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	4	40	5	50	1	10	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	4	40	6	60	0	0	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	5	50	4	40	0	0	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	6	60	3	30	1	10	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Burton ARC Sports College, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 0HT

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited the four sites that make up the centre a while ago. We enjoyed our visit very much, and are grateful to all those of you who spoke to us about life at the centre, your views of it and the work you do.

We found that yours is a good pupil referral unit. We were particularly impressed with the behaviour in lessons, as you were all very focused and made outstanding progress in some of the lessons that we observed. Those who spoke to us said that bullying does not occur at the centre, and the records confirm this. There are also few incidents and hardly any students are excluded. The high standard of behaviour, absence of bullying and excellent relationships you have with staff give the centre an ideal atmosphere for learning. Because the teaching is good and you have positive attitudes, you are learning effectively, making good progress and achieving well.

Some of the other strengths of the centre are the quality of leadership and the way that staff work successfully together to develop the provision for you and increase their skills by learning from one another. They all pull together in the same direction with your best interests at heart. They are improving the centre at a good rate.

We have identified some areas that need further improvement. Staff are already working at improving teaching to make more of it outstanding. We have asked them to improve aspects of the way they measure the centre's effectiveness and to do further work on encouraging attendance. It is clear that those of you who attend regularly make the best progress. A few do not attend regularly, and this affects their progress and chances of success in the future.

We wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge
Lead inspector

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