

Wigston Birkett House Community Special School

Launceston Road, Wigston, LE18 2FZ

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Leaders and managers do not have a thorough grasp of the national minimum standards and have not used these to inform some of the decisions they have taken.
- Monitoring of the quality of the residential provision by leaders and the governing body has not been rigorous enough.
- The school does not use a wide enough variety of methods of communicating with parents. Parents are not always given early enough notice of activities such as trips.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make excellent progress because what pupils are taught is very closely matched to their individual needs.
- Teaching is outstanding. Activities are carefully planned to link to pupils' targets so pupils can take the next small steps in their learning and development.
- Senior leaders use systems for monitoring pupils' achievement well to drive school improvement and improve teaching.
- The outstanding sixth form prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their lives,
- Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively, supporting their learning and fostering their social skills. A keen focus on developing pupils' communication skills contributes significantly to this.
- The school provides a rich variety of opportunities and experiences, including local visits and trips further afield, to help pupils learn about life in their own community and beyond.
- The residential provision contributes well to the personal development of those pupils who use it because of the sustained emphasis on developing their independence.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons. Seven of these were observed jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Lessons were seen on all of the school’s sites. Inspectors listened to several pupils reading and talked to them about the books they had chosen.
- Inspectors visited the residential provision, observed school life at break and lunchtimes and talked to some pupils about their experiences of school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the head of care, groups of teachers and learning assistants, and care staff. Inspectors had a discussion with a group of governors including the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- Documents were scrutinised, including information about pupils’ achievement, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also took account of the school’s improvement plan and the minutes of governing body meetings. Safeguarding policies, procedures and records were evaluated, including those relating to recruitment. Care plans, child protection records, risk assessments, records of interventions, staff supervision records and administration of medication records were examined.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also spoke to nine parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jane Austin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Christine Fraser

Additional Inspector

Martha Nethaway

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school educates pupils with severe and moderate learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities, autism and sensory impairment. All have statements of special educational needs.
- The school operates on four sites, three of which are in mainstream schools. There is a residential facility offering eight overnight places at any one time. These are used by approximately 70 pupils part-time, with a further 12 pupils using the residential facilities for an extended day.
- Most pupils are White British and English is their first language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium is allocated is broadly average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those with a parent serving in the armed forces.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school gained academy status in November 2012. When its predecessor school, Birkett House Special School, was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2010, it was judged to be good. When the residential provision was last inspected in February 2012, it was judged to be outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school complies fully with the national minimum standards for residential special schools
 - making sure that leaders, including the governing body, have a thorough understanding of the national minimum standards and monitor rigorously the school's compliance with these
 - developing a wider range of methods for communicating in timely and effective ways with all parents.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.
 - No school restricts the liberty of any child as a matter of routine or provides any form of secure accommodation (NMS 12.7)
 - Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)
 - The headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once a year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its Statement of Purpose, its staffing policy, the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these Standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school. (NMS 20.4)

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils make much better than expected progress given their starting points.
- There are no marked differences between the progress made in English and mathematics. The recent introduction of a whole-school approach to teaching phonics (the link between letters and sounds) has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in English this year.
- The school has high expectations and sets challenging targets for every pupil, taking account of their individual needs. Progress towards these is measured termly, with any shortfall prompting a review and action if necessary. Teachers are held to account for the performance of their pupils.
- The school's analysis shows that there are no differences between the achievement of groups of pupils regardless of their particular needs. This is also true of the achievement of those known to be eligible for free school meals and those for whom the school is allocated pupil premium funding. Some of this funding has been used to particularly good effect in providing training and support to ensure a consistent approach to teaching phonics (the links between sounds and letters).
- Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage also make outstanding progress because teaching and the curriculum are closely matched to their needs.
- Pupils at Key Stages 4 and post-16 have the opportunity to gain accreditation at levels appropriate to them. This includes GCSE as well as entry-level and vocational qualifications. Post-16 pupils follow GCSE courses alongside mainstream students. Some gain qualifications in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.
- All students move on to college courses or other appropriate provision when they leave the school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching meets pupils' needs very closely and, consequently, leads to outstanding learning. Lessons are planned well so that activities are carefully tailored to pupils' abilities and to their individual targets.
- Highly-skilled teaching assistants have a marked impact on pupils' learning because they know pupils' targets and support pupils very well to meet them.
- Lessons seen during the inspection were characterised by very good relationships between adults and pupils. There is a relentless and very successful focus on developing pupils' communication skills, using a wide range of methods.
- Encouraging independence is also a consistently strong feature of lessons; for instance, through presenting pupils with choices. An example of this was seen in a Key Stage 1 lesson where pupils were invited to select a leaf or a flower, something large or small, green or orange when they were creating imprints on the sourdough they had enjoyed making.

- The teaching of phonics has been adapted well to match pupils' needs. In a Key Stage 1 lesson where a sensory approach was appropriate, an initial letter sound was linked well to finding different soft toys.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively to extend pupils' learning and identify misconceptions. For example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, careful questioning showed that, although pupils could double the number on a playing card, they could not reverse the operation.
- Imaginative resources make a significant contribution to learning in some lessons. Key Stage 3 pupils gained a much better understanding of the dangers of smoking when they tried to blow air through treacle and compared this to the damage caused to lungs by tar.
- Well-designed activities help to capture pupils' interest. Key Stage 3 pupils made rapid progress in understanding rationing during the Second World War by participating in a shopping role-play using a ration book. They soon discovered that their favourite foods were not available.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning. They receive immediate verbal feedback and have opportunities to think about what they have achieved during a day. Where appropriate, older pupils review regularly their progress towards meeting their targets.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Staff know pupils well and tailor sensitively the strategies used to manage pupils' behaviour to their individual needs. This makes a good contribution to their learning and personal development. All staff are trained to implement a whole-school system for managing behaviour and this is very effective in ensuring a consistent approach.
- Careful monitoring of patterns of behaviour informs the individual plans for pupils who have particular difficulties in this area. Altogether, this is just over a third of the pupils. Staff, including residential care staff, and parents follow agreed strategies consistently. Evaluations of these plans show a positive impact over time.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and are encouraged to persevere. When pupils are struggling to manage their behaviour, staff use brisk time-out breaks effectively so that there is minimal impact on the learning of both the group and the individual.
- Leaders are confident that high staffing levels prevent bullying. Staff deal promptly with any friendship issues which arise. Older pupils spoken to were clear about how to deal with bullying, and how get help for themselves and others.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. The school follows up absences promptly and arranges home tuition where appropriate to support the learning of pupils who are unable to attend for a period.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not recognised the implications and consequences of failure to comply fully with the national minimum standards for residential provision.
- Decisions about safeguarding the welfare of residential pupils have been made without taking

these standards fully into account and this has resulted in some unacceptable practice. The school does not have a robust enough system for monitoring the quality of the residential provision or for auditing its compliance with the national minimum standards. Termly visits by governors are not systematic and findings are not reported consistently to enable comparisons to be made. Consequently, the leadership and management of the residential provision are inadequate.

- During the inspection, senior leaders took immediate, appropriate action to remedy the specific concern raised about the safety of pupils in the residential provision. In other regards, such as ensuring that staff recruited are suitable to work with children, the school's procedures are good. All staff are regularly trained in child protection, safeguarding and anti-bullying strategies.
- In areas other than the residential provision, the leadership has considerable strengths and the school's evaluation of its performance is largely accurate. Senior leaders analyse a pertinent range of information to identify strengths and areas for development, and set new priorities for the school's improvement.
- The system for setting pupils challenging targets and tracking their progress towards them is very effective in highlighting successes and areas for improvement. Senior leaders use the information to good effect. For example, last year, phonics was identified as an area for development. Whole-school training was provided to support the introduction of a new system for teaching phonics. This was followed up by regular monitoring and support for staff. The school can demonstrate that this initiative has had a positive impact on pupils' literacy skills.
- The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and detailed analyses are carried out of stronger and weaker areas of practice. As a result, training, coaching and support for staff are all carefully targeted. The school draws effectively on its own best practice as well as providing opportunities for staff to visit mainstream schools. This has ensured that the impact of teaching on pupils' learning is outstanding.
- Since the school's change of status, a new performance management system, based on the *Teachers' Standards*, has been introduced. Although still in its first year of operation, it is evident that targets are appropriate for driving further improvement. Teachers are keen to receive feedback and act on it. The work of teams is reviewed regularly and areas for development identified. Care staff receive regular, consistent supervision and appraisals of their performance.
- A strength of the school's leadership is the way in which responsibilities are distributed and staff know what they are accountable for. This is essential given the school's various sites. Leaders maintain close links with partner schools through regular meetings both about day-to-day issues and strategic matters.
- The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' achievement because it is planned to meet the needs of each pupil. Communication, physical and personal development are central for all pupils, with the promotion of independence running through all interactions. The residential provision contributes well to this. Provision based in partner schools broadens pupils' opportunities to follow aspects of a mainstream curriculum and learn alongside a wider group of young people.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school's work. A wealth of experiences and visits, such as those linked to themes on world faiths and cultures, enrich pupils' learning.
- The large majority of parents who spoke to inspectors and responded to Parent View are

positive about the school. The comment by one parent that, 'I can't imagine where I would be without this place' was echoed by a number. The very effective use of diaries to communicate the day's activities, successes and issues was highlighted. The recent development of the school's website has improved parents' access to information about the school's activities. Nonetheless, the school only uses a limited number of methods for communicating with parents and information is not always shared as promptly and effectively as it could be.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- In almost all areas, the governing body is well informed about the school's performance and offers appropriate challenge to its leadership. Detailed analyses of the school's work are provided by the headteacher and senior staff, and governors bring a range of relevant expertise to interrogating them. However, the governing body was not fully briefed on the application of the national minimum standards for the residential provision.
- The governing body audited its operation quite recently. As a result, sub-committees were restructured to match the school's needs even more closely and the focus of governors' visits to the school was sharpened. Governors are clear that this has increased the level of challenge they provide to leaders and enabled a more thorough interrogation of the school's performance. They drill down the data presented; for example, to ensure that pupil premium funding is having the desired impact on pupils' achievement.
- Governors understand where the strengths and comparative weaknesses in teaching are. They have approved the new performance management policy and check on how it is working. However, although governors visit the residential provision regularly, monitoring has not been systematic enough or identified lack of compliance with the national minimum standards.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are good
Quality of residential provision and care	is good
Residential pupils' safety	is inadequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is inadequate

-
- Leaders and managers have not applied the national minimum standards in full and, consequently, have not met all the requirements for safeguarding pupils. Inadequate practice in relation to restricting pupils' liberty was identified. There has not been rigorous enough scrutiny by leaders, managers and governors of procedures in the residential provision.
- Other aspects of safeguarding pupils are good. Comprehensive procedures for risk management underpin the management of health and safety. Leaders and managers cooperate effectively with external agencies to promote pupils' welfare and safety.
- The impact of the residential experience on pupils' personal development and wellbeing is good. This is because the school has clear aims for its residential provision, which forms an integral part of pupils' school life. There is a seamless transition between the residential provision and the school day.
- Good systems are in place to gain a comprehensive picture of pupils' needs, forming the firm foundation for good individual care plans. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets. Staff work hard to help them achieve them through, for instance, promoting their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Staff care well for pupils and are well trained to meet their needs.

- A key strength of the residential provision is the sharp focus on developing the skills for independent living. The good-quality accommodation and relaxed meal times provide helpful aids and situations to promote these skills.

- Pupils participate and engage well in an extensive range of recreational activities, including swimming and soft play. These enrich their lives and extend their experiences. Pupils enjoyed the recent 'Chance to Shine' cricket workshops, which helped them to develop skills in communication and physical control. Such opportunities have a positive impact on their self-esteem and confidence.

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>

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

Unique reference number	138935
Social care unique reference number	SC001835
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	424467

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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.

Type of school	Academy special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	35
Number of boarders on roll	70
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Rosemary Lowe
Headteacher	Sue Horn
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0116 2885802
Fax number	0116 2571932
Email address	office@birketthouse.leics.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

