

Wigston Birkett House Community Special School

Launceston Road, Wigston, LE18 2FZ

Inspection dates 13 –14 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school has continued to improve since its last inspection. Governors, senior leaders and all of the staff share the highest expectations for pupils.
- Governors have a thorough understanding of the school and hold leaders to account in all aspects of its work.
- Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points in all areas of learning. Pupils’ progress in developing communication skills and levels of independence is a high priority and is achieved extremely effectively.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in this school. Any difficulties with behaviour are managed with proficiency by the staff team. Staff help pupils to develop positive responses to challenging situations.
- The quality of teaching is at least consistently good and a significant proportion is outstanding.
- Teachers and support staff plan highly individual work for each pupil so that they make excellent progress.
- The Early Years provision is outstanding. Children respond fully to high expectations and stimulating activities.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Independence, choice and self-management are strongly prioritised, improving students’ confidence in many areas of learning. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their life in modern Britain.
- The residential provision is outstanding. Whilst in residence leaders ensure that pupils learn new skills and are exceptionally well cared for.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first integrated inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in June 2013.
- The school received a monitoring visit from one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors in November 2013. At this point school leaders and governors were judged to be taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement from the previous inspection.
- Inspectors observed twenty lessons and many of these were conducted jointly with senior staff. All of the school sites were visited by inspectors.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the senior leadership team.
- The lead inspector and social care inspector met with members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors.
- Inspectors talked with pupils throughout the inspection in lessons, during social times and in residence.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the teaching staff, teaching assistant staff and residential care staff.
- Inspectors considered 13 responses from parents and carers on Parent View (the Ofsted online questionnaire) alongside information from a recent parental survey undertaken by the school.
- Inspectors considered 71 staff questionnaires which were completed during the inspection.
- The social care inspector had meetings with the site manager and the school nurse.

Inspection team

Phil Harrison, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Caroline Brailsford

Social Care Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Lynn Stanbridge

Additional 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 or Education, Health and Care plans.
- The school operates on four sites, three of which are in mainstream schools. Pupils access the Wigston Birkett House site, Thythorn Fields Primary School, The Centre at Thomas Estley and Countesthorpe Community College.
- 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.
- The residential provision was last inspected in June 2014 and was judged to be outstanding in all aspects.
- Most pupils are White British and English is their first language. Just over half the pupils are boys.
- The proportion of pupils for whom 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 classes are grouped largely according to age and learning needs.
- The school receives primary sports funding and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Ensure that there is a rigorous approach to recording all information required by the national minimum care standards for residential special schools.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leaders promote a constant drive for improvement in all aspects of the school's work. Leaders and staff at all levels are highly committed to providing an excellent school experience for the pupils.
- School leaders know the school very well. Self-evaluation is detailed and appropriate priorities are identified for improvement. Teachers from across the four sites collaborate in highly effective school improvement groups to develop areas of the school's work. Recently, one group has improved approaches to the teaching of literacy. This has led to even better levels of achievement for many pupils.
- Robust performance management processes are in place for all staff. The introduction of group appraisal for both day-school and residential care staff has helped to develop effective teams who are clear about how to promote the learning of pupils. Very effective management of teachers' performance has been a long-standing feature of the school. Teachers are clear about how to develop their knowledge and understanding of how to meet the pupils' individual and complex needs.
- Pupil attainment, progress and behaviour are rigorously monitored by school leaders. Underachievement or concerns about pupils are quickly identified and a wide range of support is put in place. The school has a wealth of expertise to utilise but staff also work in partnership with the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance and other local schools to ensure they continue to learn and develop their practice. Attendance is rigorously monitored and effective action is taken in order to follow-up any persistent absence, which includes home visits.
- The curriculum on offer to pupils at all ages is well thought through and constantly evolving to meet the individual needs of pupils. The school has designed 'The Birkett House curriculum' model which reflects a broad coverage of subjects through topic-based, subject-based and individualised programmes of study. School leaders ensure the staff are adept at providing a curriculum which is tailored to individual pupils. At the end of Key Stage 4, some pupils are challenged to attain a creative arts award and a life and living skills award. The curriculum in the sixth form allows opportunity for pupils to attain several qualifications which prepare them well for the next stages of their education or care.
- British values are strongly promoted through the school's own values and a rich array of assemblies and special events. Teachers plan opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development during their lessons. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures through visits to places of interest. Consequently, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. School leaders do not tolerate discrimination in any form.
- School leaders have ensured that there is independent advice and guidance available to pupils and their families about the next stage of their education or care. This work, combined with an effective curriculum and strong links with colleges and post school providers, ensures that pupils are given every opportunity to succeed after they have left school. Pupils successfully access a range of placements including mainstream colleges and independent specialist provisions.
- Pupils have equal opportunity to succeed because school leaders and the staff team are passionate about pupils fulfilling their potential. The two deputy headteachers act as the designated teachers for children looked after by the local authority. Good processes are in place to monitor the progress and well-being of these pupils. The school provides significant support for the emotional health of these young people.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a thorough understanding of the work of the school, based on comprehensive reports from the headteacher and senior leaders, from visits to the school and discussions with staff and parents. They carry out checks regarding the safeguarding of pupils and this work meets statutory requirements. During the inspection governors immediately acted upon a query raised by inspectors about staff recruitment in order to be satisfied that pupils were safe. They receive detailed information about the quality of teaching and pupil achievement from across the school. Governors use this analysis

to challenge the headteacher to constantly improve outcomes for the pupils.

- The governing body is well organised so that every aspect of the school's work is scrutinised. They keep a close check on the school's finances. This ensures that the pupil premium funding, primary sports funding and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding are spent in a way which promotes the learning of pupils. The primary sports funding has led to a wider range of sporting activities for the pupils and improved the quality of teaching in physical education.
- The governing body has ensured that effective staff performance management is in place and leads appropriately to salary progression. The performance management of the headteacher is expertly managed by the governing body.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils respond well to the school's positive climate for learning at all of the sites and while in residence. Pupils in the early years have excellent older role models in their class, which helps them to develop positive behaviours. Pupils try their best in lessons and behave well whilst participating in a wide range of activities at social times.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They enjoy coming to school and demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm in many of their lessons. During a music lesson, inspectors observed pupils showing delight in the experiences being offered to them. Over time, pupils' belief and confidence in their abilities increase considerably. Pupils in the sixth form become great ambassadors for their school.
- During break and lunchtimes appropriate activities are provided for the pupils, such as organised use of playground equipment and games. High staffing ratios and considerate support ensures that pupils' behaviour at these times is positive.
- Several pupils have individualised behaviour management programmes which contain clear strategies so that staff can manage and support these pupils during times of difficulty. Inspectors observed a number of occasions in lessons where staff used the agreed strategies to enable pupils to quickly return to their learning.
- Almost all parents, carers and staff are highly positive about the behaviour in school and how well it is managed. The incidence of bullying and the use of exclusion are very rare.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school is successful in creating an environment at each site and within residence in which pupils feel safe to learn. This is due to the exceptionally positive relationships that staff develop with the pupils. Parents express confidence in their child being safe at school.
- Pupil's views about safety and care are always central to the work of the school. Pupils report that they feel safe and are safe. They are listened to whatever their needs or abilities. Staff consistently react to pupils' concerns because they are highly alert to safeguarding matters. Records of any information pertaining to safety are used effectively to build up a picture about emerging safety issues. Working with other professionals is highly effective and ensures that important decisions about safety can be made at the earliest opportunity.
- Governors and school leaders ensure that the school buildings are well maintained and safe. Safety equipment, such as hoists are provided to protect pupils from injury. Trained staff oversee the use of the school's swimming pool. Highly effective teaching and a well-judged curriculum ensures pupils learn about safe access to the internet, how to keep themselves safe in the community and the harmful effects of illegal drugs.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The outstanding progress made by pupils of all abilities and all age groups shows that the quality of teaching over time is outstanding. Leaders' rigorous checks on teaching and how well pupils achieve demonstrate that the impact of teaching on learning is most often outstanding and at least consistently good. Inspectors observed teaching which was exciting and memorable for pupils, such as the use of specialist pieces of technology which allows pupils to control computers with their eyes.
- Teacher's use of assessment information to inform the next steps of learning for pupils is an exceptional strength of the school. Planning is thorough and takes into account the individual needs of pupils alongside the school curriculum requirements. Teaching in the early years takes a full account of the age of pupils and their individual level of development.
- The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is a strength. The staff teams work together extremely well to meet the individual needs of the pupils in their classes. They share information about pupils' progress in a highly effective way. Inspectors observed a number of highly effective endings to lessons where pupils and staff were able to verbally share precisely the learning gained from that session.
- The notes and recording in pupils' books and work files are of the highest quality. Rarely is a piece of work unmarked or an activity undertaken without some form of assessment having taken place. This ensures the next steps of learning are clear for both pupils and staff. In the sixth form assessment information is used well to inform the future placements of the pupils.
- Links with health services are positive and ensure pupils receive the necessary support to lead a healthy lifestyle. Where necessary, staff have been very well trained to ensure pupils are positioned correctly in their wheelchairs or postural equipment. This preparation maximises pupils' time for learning new skills and knowledge in their lessons.
- The use of pupils' individual communication systems is a very strong feature of the school's work. Teachers, teaching assistants and residential care staff are all competent users of strategies such as: signing, augmentative and alternative communication systems, picture exchange communication systems, the use of symbols, pictures and objects of reference. The comprehensive skills of the staff team allow pupils the opportunity to communicate highly effectively with them.
- Teachers are very skilful at engaging pupils in their learning. Inspectors observed the effective use of role play to engage and enthuse a group of older pupils in a discussion topic. Where appropriate, the staff team use rewards to promote excellent work. Pupils reported that rewards such as stickers and treats motivate them to try their best.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- From their different starting points, pupils make excellent progress and achieve well. The school has detailed systems to check that the progress of pupils is good enough. Leaders utilise the national progression guidance and two commercial systems to measure and compare the progress of pupils over time. Where gaps in pupil progress are identified, staff are quick to intervene and put additional support or teaching programmes in place. There is no significant difference in the achievement of any group of pupils.
- Pupils who access the pupil premium funding achieve as well as others. The school has in place successful methods to support these pupils to make progress. These include: reading booster sessions; enhanced personal, social, health and citizenship opportunities; targeted behaviour support and communication development sessions.
- The school uses a system of individual education plan targets to promote the holistic achievement of the pupils. These targets include aspects of communication and behaviour. Staff are adept at identifying the right time to develop certain skills because they make every effort to know the pupils well. This system works well and pupils make rapid progress from their starting points. Notable successes include the

development of pupils' physical abilities and personal hygiene skills.

- Pupils are able to access accredited courses in both Key Stage 4 and within the sixth form. The success rate of pupils completing these courses is high because teaching is of high quality and tailored to individual needs. The school does not enter pupils early for GCSE.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The leadership and management of early years education is strong due to the specialist knowledge key staff have about this phase of education. Governors and leaders ensure that the statutory requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.
- The progress of children in the early years is outstanding as demonstrated through comprehensive learning journey documents, work files and the school's progress information. The quality of teaching for early year's pupils is outstanding. There is an effective balance of taught sessions and carefully planned opportunities for children to play and explore. The environment provided for children is very safe and allows for easy access to outdoor areas in which children can continue their learning.
- On entry children are assessed accurately by the staff team. This system includes effective liaison with the previous setting and parents or carers. The comprehensive assessment process enables staff to plan activities which result in children making rapid progress. Teachers and teaching assistants prepare children extremely well so that they are ready for their work in Year 1.
- The positive whole school systems for behaviour management and safety apply equally as well to children in the early years as they do throughout the school. Clear rewards and boundaries allow children to make the best possible start to their school life. Inspectors observed children being thrilled that they had been rewarded with the opportunity to wear a superhero cape for doing good work.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- All aspects of the sixth form, including leadership and management, are outstanding. The curriculum provides an appropriate choice of courses, which lead to accreditations or qualifications. Pupils all continue to make progress in their functional literacy and numeracy skills throughout their time in the sixth form due to well targeted work in these areas. Pupils' achievement in the sixth form is outstanding because they usually reach the challenging targets set for them by staff in their courses of study.
- Pupils sample taster courses prior to joining the sixth form which allows them to make informed decisions about future pathways of learning. Teaching in the sixth form is at least good and often outstanding, therefore leading to high levels of engagement and attendance in this area of school.
- A key feature of the sixth form curriculum is developing pupils' ability to do things for themselves. Courses reflect the development of skills in areas such as cooking, cleaning and meal preparation. Work experience is utilised to enhance the sixth form curriculum offered to pupils. Staff locate suitable placements, for example, coffee shops, garden centres and nurseries. Therefore pupils improve their self-confidence and knowledge of the world of work. Where appropriate, well thought-out strategies are in place for improving pupils' independent travel skills.
- Pupils are well prepared for life after Birkett House because staff enable opportunities for transition over periods of time prior to leaving school. Positive links are in place with future providers. Birkett House staff have a good understanding of how to prepare pupils for this significant next step in their lives. This means that the provision enables pupils to be successful in the next stage of education or care.

The quality of care and support**is outstanding****How well children and young people are protected****is outstanding****The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers****are outstanding**

- Parents' views are unanimous in that pupils make excellent progress. Comments include 'staff are amazing' and that progress has been 'absolutely brilliant'.
- Pupils have new experiences because of exceptionally high staffing ratios. This allows them to explore and learn about what they enjoy and teaches them about how to keep themselves safe in the community.
- Effective risk assessments allow pupils to take proportionate risks in a very safe environment, both inside and outside of residence. This impacts very positively on pupils, equipping them effectively with many new skills to use now and in their adult life.
- Very positive relationships allow pupils to feel extremely relaxed and very happy in the company of staff. All pupils' qualities and personalities are highly respected and celebrated by staff, positively impacting on self-esteem.
- Pupils' complex health care needs are met extremely well and the care consistently exceeds the standard of good. Staff are highly trained and deliver the care with the utmost of competency, respect and dignity. They consistently seek to ensure that each pupil is comfortable and exceptionally well cared for. This puts pupils in a better position to learn and enjoy residence. Staff regularly find new initiatives and ways of working and are able to share these with teachers, teaching assistants and parents to further maximise progress.
- Each pupil's communication method is highly respected and a top priority. Residential staff listen and watch pupils with a high degree of skill, this enables pupils to express their wishes, views and feelings and ultimately become safer now and in the future.
- Leaders keep abreast of new initiatives and developments in areas such as disability and safeguarding. Current government and local guidance is available in the school and staff are very knowledgeable about a wide range of issues. The leadership team acknowledge that safeguarding issues are constantly emerging and therefore continually revisit practices and policies in order that they reflect these changes.
- The building is well suited to the young people's needs and enables a high level of staff supervision. There are excellent systems in place for the monitoring of health and safety, specialised equipment and arrangements for fire protection.
- The senior leadership team monitor all aspects of residence highly effectively, although occasionally some aspects of record keeping could be improved. Leaders think carefully about the priorities and issues for disabled young people in residential care and acknowledge that they are particularly vulnerable.
- Governors ensure an extremely robust approach to monitoring. Their priority for residence has been to get to know pupils to ensure that meeting pupils' needs is always at the centre of the work they do. Governors visit at different times of the day and engage in various activities to cover a wide breadth of practice. This helps them to form a clear opinion about the standard of care.

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	Requires improvement	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	462005

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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
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	172
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	42
Number of boarders on roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Lowe
Headteacher	Sue Horn
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2013
Telephone number	0116 2885802
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