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26 November 2013

Sue Horn  
Wigston Birkett House Community Special School  
Launceston Road  
Wigston  
Leicestershire  
LE18 2 FZ

Dear Mrs Horn

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wigston Birkett House Community Special School**

Following my visit to your school with Martha Nethaway, social care regulatory inspector, on 20 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of the visit. Thank you for the help you gave us and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 and boarding inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 and boarding inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, deputy head of care and members of the Governing Body. Inspectors also spoke with two parents and a representative of the local authority. A range of information was reviewed, including the school's development plan and its action plan and audit record for meeting the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

#### **Context**

There have been no significant changes to the school since the inspection in June 2013.

## **Main findings**

The school has taken immediate and effective action to address the areas of concern regarding meeting the national minimum standards identified at the inspection in June. There is a comprehensive action plan for the changes that have been required and a detailed audit trail to show their implementation.

Following the inspection the school immediately ceased locking the bedroom door to prevent children from leaving. In addition, and following the monitoring by governors, the use of double handled doors was similarly discontinued. The school has supported these changes by clarifying its admissions policy for the use of the boarding facility to ensure it can meet resident children's needs safely.

The majority of visits by governors to the boarding accommodation are now undertaken unannounced. Governors gain a representative view of the arrangements by visiting at varying times in the evening and at weekends, and by speaking with children of different ages and special educational needs, and members of staff. This monitoring includes checking on required aspects of the provision, including children's attendance, behaviour management, risk assessment, individual care planning and the physical condition of the premises. The visiting governor completes a comprehensive summary report to provide a record of the monitoring and to support feedback to the governing body.

The governors have undertaken additional training to strengthen their understanding of the standards and their role and responsibilities regarding the boarding provision concerning. They have also formed a 'mini-committee' within the full governing body to ensure an effective focus on this aspect of their work. This increased understanding has informed staff performance management to further improve scrutiny and accountability.

The headteacher has increased her monitoring of the boarding and has undertaken a thorough baseline evaluation against all of the required national minimum standards so that any shortfalls will be readily identified. Changes that have been made have followed consultation with staff. Regular meetings with the head of care contribute on-going checking that the required standards are being met.

The school has increased the range of its communication with parents. Additional coffee mornings have been introduced, the school's website now contains more information and the use of texting to inform parents of events and changes is being developed. Parents who spoke to inspectors during the monitoring inspection explained how they were pleased to receive telephone calls when their child had done particularly well at school and that the teachers and headteacher were always very available if they wanted to speak to them. The school is looking to extend further this range of communication by using the annual review meetings to consult with parents about school developments, and to put on meeting for parents of pupils in the different classes. An increased promotion of the online Parent View

survey has been successful, with significantly more parents recording their views about the schools. These views are overwhelmingly positive.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 and boarding inspections. They are making good progress towards meeting the required national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Ofsted will carry out further monitoring of the school until its next section 5 and boarding inspections.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided appropriate support to the school since the inspection in June 2013.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely

Charlie Henry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**