

Skilts School

Gorcott Hill, Redditch, B98 9ET

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good. Most pupils make at least good progress and many make outstanding progress in mathematics.
- Less-able pupils do exceptionally well in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall and sometimes it is outstanding. Pupils are keen to learn and try hard because teachers have high expectations, manage their behaviour well and create a positive climate for learning.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. They have good attitudes to learning and make good gains in managing their own behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe around the school and in the residential units.
- The headteacher and senior leaders enjoy the confidence of parents. They provide excellent leadership and have ensured that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have improved since the previous inspection. Staff morale is high.
- Governors make a good contribution to school improvement, especially to teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding. Leaders have maintained these high standards since the previous social care inspection. All the national minimum standards for residential special schools are met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in other subjects. Marking in topic work does not always show pupils how to improve their writing.
- A few of the most able pupils occasionally find learning too easy because their work is not hard enough.
- Subject leaders are not checking how well pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are taught and promoted in all subjects across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed ten lessons and saw nine teachers. Seven of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work with senior leaders and the leader responsible for managing literacy.
- Aspects of social care were looked at in the residential provision.
- Meetings were held with different groups of pupils in school, with senior leaders including the head of care, subject leaders, three members of the governing body and a local authority representative. Discussions also took place with pupils in the residential units.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views about the school and the residential experience. Telephone discussions took place with six parents. The 47 responses to the school's recent questionnaire were also carefully considered as there were too few responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors considered 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding policies, attendance figures, records of behavioural incidents and the use of physical restraint, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's summary of its self-evaluation.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rosemary Barnfield

Additional Inspector

Andrew Hewston

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Skilts provides day education and part-time weekly residential care and education during term-time for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most pupils are referred to the school by Birmingham and others come from surrounding local authorities such as Solihull and Worcestershire.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A significant number have additional difficulties, such as autistic spectrum disorders or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and only a few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is high. This is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from a family with a parent in the armed forces.
- A high proportion of pupils join the school other than at the usual times of admission.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly and there is a new Chair of the Governing Body. The residential accommodation and some classrooms have been refurbished, an additional outdoor activity space has been established and new resources, such as computers and furniture for the residential accommodation, have been purchased.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - the most able pupils are always given difficult enough work to extend their learning
 - the marking of topic work makes clear to pupils what they could do to improve their writing, especially their use of English grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - subject leaders regularly check how well numeracy and literacy skills are taught and promoted in all subjects across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in relation to their low starting points on entry to the school and significant numbers make outstanding progress, especially in mathematics. Observations of pupils' learning in lessons, the scrutiny of their work books and the school's records of progress over time clearly demonstrate this.
- In 2013, the school's results for pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check were well below average (this check is a national assessment of pupils' knowledge of spelling and the sounds that letters make). These pupils were not admitted to the school until the end of January and prior to that, they had histories of poor attendance. Nevertheless, they are now making good progress in reading and they link letters to the sounds they make when reading unfamiliar words and in their writing.
- At Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They build on this good progress as they move through the school. In 2013, the seven pupils who had been assessed at the end of Year 2 and who completed the whole of Key Stage 2 in the school made outstanding progress. Most of the other boys in this Year 6 group made good progress from the different times they joined the school.
- Less-able pupils, including those with additional difficulties such as autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, make outstanding progress in English and mathematics because they receive consistently good support. Teaching assistants break tasks down into smaller steps, carefully explain the meaning of unfamiliar words or instructions, and provide encouragement and good feedback on their learning in lessons.
- Pupils who are admitted to school other than at the usual times are well supported by staff in settling into school routines, gaining confidence and making up lost ground. As a result, they make good progress.
- Progress in reading is good because the school has ensured that all staff are well trained in the methods and resources used to support pupils' learning. They use effective techniques and manage resources well to ensure that pupils acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding quickly.
- Pupils are well prepared for secondary school because the school works closely with parents and secondary schools to ensure a smooth transfer.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make similarly good progress to their classmates in English and mathematics. They catch up quickly with their learning because they receive good additional support from skilled teaching assistants.
- Those who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress in communication and similar progress as their classmates.
- Pupils greatly enjoy sports and continually strive to keep fit and stay healthy. Good use is made of the primary school sport funding to increase opportunities for pupils to be involved in competitive games and to provide extra teaching for non-swimmers in Key Stage 2. This is having a positive effect on their confidence, enjoyment and physical fitness.

- Pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in other subjects because they do not always know how to improve their writing, especially grammar, punctuation and spelling in different subjects.
- A few of the most able pupils are not always given hard enough work. This was seen in their books where they were doing the same work as less-able pupils and they were not given more difficult work to extend their thinking. In discussion, a few of these pupils said they sometimes find work too easy.

The quality of teaching is good

- Throughout the school, teaching over time is typically good and some is outstanding. As a result, pupils arrive punctually to lessons ready for learning to start. They know immediately what is expected of them because teachers manage their behaviour consistently well. Teachers remind pupils of their five targets for good behaviour during lessons and then systematically apply rewards and encouragement for good behaviour.
- Pupils nearly always find learning interesting and engaging because teachers establish clear routines and expectations, and use different approaches and resources. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teaching assistant used card games involving sequencing, estimating and counting numbers which stimulated pupils' interest and enjoyment.
- Pupils respond well to the staff. They listen carefully and follow instructions in lessons because staff have excellent relationships with their pupils. For example, in an English lesson, pupils were trying hard to translate a novel into a play script. They went the extra mile because the teacher and teaching assistant worked consistently well to reward and praise their efforts and clarify any misconceptions. This is also reflected in the quality of their work from the beginning of the academic year.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils' learning, particularly for those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, those with additional special educational needs and those who enter the school at other than the usual times. By breaking tasks down into smaller steps, they enable these pupils to catch up quickly and tackle new work with greater confidence.
- Teachers set regular homework that makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils who are resident take advantage of the good opportunities to complete their homework. The outstanding support, care and guidance that pupils receive in the residential provision strongly underpin their learning in school.
- The school's data are robust and accurate. The progress every pupil makes is checked every half term by the whole staff. Following this, staff from other schools look at these records and confirm that they are accurate. The school's data show that in most cases there is a close match between teacher assessments and national tests.
- Pupils usually know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve in lessons. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to point out spelling and punctuation errors or provide pupils with feedback on how well they are writing in topic work or in subjects other than English. Similarly, where pupils are applying their mathematical skills and knowledge in practical subjects, such as science, and then recording it in their books, they are not always given sufficient feedback on how well or accurately they are recording measurements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of the pupils is good. They respond well to the consistently good management of their behaviour. As a result, they make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress in managing their behaviour, especially in the residential provision where good liaison with teaching staff promotes high quality support. Pupils value the school's system of targets and rewards which help them re-engage quickly with learning and make good progress.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning, reflected in their good behaviour in lessons where they usually try their best and remain focused and interested. This was confirmed by those parents who said how much their children enjoy coming to school and how much their child's attendance has improved. The school's attendance figures show that most pupils attend regularly and that the attendance rate is broadly average.
- The schools' work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. High levels of staff supervision ensure that pupils enter the school in a safe and orderly manner. They play safely at breaktimes and lunchtimes and know how to stay safe in the residential units. Occasionally, a few pupils do not move safely enough from one area of the school to another, although the staff work well with other agencies to improve behaviour and ensure pupils' safety at all times.
- Parents notice big improvements in their children's behaviour. They confirm that behaviour in school is good and that their children are kept safe. Records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour and exclusions have declined rapidly over time. Equally, over time there is a marked decrease in the use of physical restraint when pupils lose control.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors. Different pupils know why good behaviour is important in school and at home. They say there is very little bullying and that whenever it happens staff deal with it really well. They know about different types of bullying. More-able pupils were able to give very clear examples of how people may feel through racist name calling. Pupils know about the potential dangers of social networking sites and how to use the internet safely.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide excellent leadership and direction in moving the school forward. This is reflected in staff questionnaire returns which were all very positive and demonstrate that staff morale is high. Leaders have ensured that the outstanding residential experience of pupils since the previous social care inspection has been maintained.
- Strong leadership of teaching and learning, through regular and robust monitoring, has led to continuous improvements in the quality of teaching so that an increasing amount of teaching is good or outstanding. The outcomes of monitoring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning are used well to ensure teachers' performance continually improves. The management of staff performance includes good support through well-chosen training opportunities to overcome any weaknesses. Senior leaders ensure that increases in salary are only awarded for the best teaching.
- Leaders continuously improve the learning opportunities available to pupils. The strong emphasis on developing reading and mathematics has been the whole-school priority for development in recent years. This has led to good and some outstanding progress in these areas. Priorities have now been established to improve writing across the school but these have yet to be implemented fully by subject leaders. The 24-hour curriculum provides good opportunities for

pupils to consolidate learning through, for example, planned homework time and a range of leisure and sporting activities that stimulate enjoyment and healthy lifestyles.

- There are good opportunities to enrich learning through the visitors that come to the school, such as street dance, African drumming and a local poet. Trips outside school include bush craft, mountain biking and working in the school garden. These, together with other opportunities to learn about different world religions and listen to different types of music, promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Leaders make good use of pupil premium funding to provide additional small group and individual support in literacy and numeracy to enable these pupils to catch up. This funding is also used to subsidise trips and provide extra resources for eligible pupils and this enhances their emotional and social development so that all pupils can benefit from these extra learning experiences.
- Good use is also made of the primary school sport funding to provide additional coaching and training for staff, as well as funding resources and extra sports activities for pupils. Leaders have developed a detailed spending plan and already seen the positive impact of its implementation on pupils’ health and physical fitness.
- Subject leaders are fulfilling their management roles well in checking the impact of teaching on pupils’ learning and progress through looking at their books and observing lessons. However, they are not checking how well literacy and numeracy skills are taught or promoted in all subjects across the school.
- The local authority is providing appropriate support for this good school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have carried out an audit of their effectiveness and regularly check the impact of the school’s work on pupils’ learning and well-being. They ensure legal requirements for safeguarding are met, for example, in reviewing policies and checking that the school is complying with the correct procedures for ensuring pupils’ welfare and safety. They have a realistic view of teaching through regular visits, and ensure that procedures for managing the headteacher’s and staff performance are effective in raising achievement and improving teaching. They use the information about the progress of pupils to challenge the work of the school and influence priorities for further development. They use this to hold the school to account for its spending of the pupil premium and the primary school sport funding.

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

- Children make significant improvements within the residential provision in their awareness of their own behaviour and how to respond to this. The behaviour management system is robust in

both the recording and analysis of events. Highly effective links are in place between the school and the residence to ensure that there is a consistent approach to children's behaviour across the site.

- Relationships between children and all staff are strong and of a consistently high quality. Children state that they are happy to be in residence.
- Children's views are consistently sought throughout their time within residence through daily meetings, residential forums and within reviews. Children state that, 'It is a great place to be, you get to play with your mates and the staff have helped me to be able to calm down quicker.' Activities are thoroughly enjoyed and the residential units are well resourced. Children are excited with the new outdoor activity area.
- Care planning for all children in residence is detailed and highly personalised. Developmental objectives are set and well known by both the child and the staff team. This further supports children's development and plans are reviewed on a regular basis.
- A healthy lifestyle is promoted throughout children's residential experience. Meals are nutritionally balanced and enjoyed, with a choice of foods and the views of children helping to develop the menu. Health professionals visit the school on a regular basis to support differing aspects of children's well-being.
- Parents state that residence has been a positive experience. One said, 'He has really grown up here, he's learnt how to control his behaviour.' Another commented, 'Home life is now a lot calmer as he now can talk about why he gets into trouble.' Effective structures are in place to support parents with caring for their children.
- Highly effective liaison between residential care staff and school staff is in place. Children are able to keep in touch with members of their family and important adults. Parents state that information is constantly shared between the school and residence, and that staff have a high awareness of the needs of the children and how these are to be met.
- Robust and effective safeguarding processes are in place to support the safety of children. Where concerns are raised, the school responds swiftly with a clearly recorded chronology showing how it works well with a range of child protection agencies. Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding procedures and robust recruitment checks are completed to ensure the suitability of adults to work with children.
- Residential staff are well supported through regular supervision arrangements and annual appraisals. This has led to increased communication across the school site and staff developing additional responsibilities. All staff are appropriately trained and experienced in their residential role.
- Effective transition arrangements are in place to support children moving into senior schools.
- Strong management structures ensure that the residential provision is regarded as a significant aspect of life within the school. Monitoring systems for residential processes are strong, including external visits and internal examination of practice.

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

Unique reference number	103617
Social care unique reference number	SCO33753
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	431112

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	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Number of boarders on roll	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amy Wolston
Headteacher	Charles Herriotts
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2011
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