

Wings School

Whassett, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7DN

Inspection dates	6–8 May 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Students make good progress from their starting points in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). This ensures that students are well prepared for the future.
- Students achieve extremely well in developing their reading skills and develop a very keen interest in different subjects including art, photography and physical education.
- Students can gain a wide range of qualifications and nearly all leavers gain at least a few external accreditations to support their future economic well-being.
- The quality of teaching is good because individual learning plans are implemented and many real-life-based experiences are offered to students.
- Excellent day-to-day care and support ensure that students develop ways to manage their emotions and channel their energies positively towards learning. Consequently, behaviour is outstanding. Students say that they feel safe in school because of the school's outstanding arrangements to ensure their well-being.
- The new Principal has 'added value' to the very positive atmosphere established by other leaders since the previous inspection. This has maintained the good quality of teaching and ensured that students continue to achieve well. Furthermore, leaders have made several significant improvements, most notably to the number and quality of learning activities offered by the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure that students make outstanding progress.
- Teachers' comments in students' workbooks do not always tell students what they must do in order to make their work outstanding.
- The school is not getting the best out of its good middle managers and enabling them to contribute even more to school improvement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with no notice.
- The inspector observed eight lessons taught by eight members of staff and scrutinised samples of students' work in many subjects.
- Discussions took place with senior leaders including company directors, the Principal, the deputy headteacher, middle managers, the school's educational psychologist, members of the teaching and support staff, residential staff and students.
- There were no responses to the online Parent View survey but parents' and carers' views expressed through the school's own questionnaires were considered. On-line survey responses from five local authorities and 39 students were analysed. Questionnaire responses from 28 members of staff were also considered.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised, including policies and procedures, school development plans, records of students' progress and correspondence from the wider community.

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wings School is a small, residential, co-educational special school which opened in April 2003. It is owned by Kedlestons Schools Limited. The school is located on a spacious site of 24 acres. The school has been developed to include residential units, bungalows and houses, arranged around a new indoor sports hall and a courtyard with classrooms and offices.
- The school provides residential and day provision for boys and girls aged between 11 and 17 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most have been excluded from their previous schools or have experienced significant disruption in their previous education.
- The severity of students' behavioural, emotional and social difficulties has increased since the previous inspection.
- The school is registered to admit up to 60 students.
- Currently, there 34 students on roll. Nearly all students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school currently provides full-time, 52-week residential placements for most of its students and 38 week placements for a few.
- The school uses two alternative educational sites. Some students attend Lakes School for food technology taught by Wings School staff and some attend Lancaster and Morecombe College for vocational skills training provided by college staff.
- The school aims to create a centre of excellence for the education, care and personal development of young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school's previous inspection of education took place in January 2012.
- The school has experienced a considerable turnover of staff since the previous inspection. A new Principal took up post in January 2014 following a period where the school was without a Principal.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by spreading more widely the excellent teaching practices already present in the school in order for students to make outstanding progress.
- Ensure that the comments in teachers' marking of students' workbooks always tell students what they must do in order to make their work outstanding.
- Develop middle managers' roles to get the best out of them so that they contribute even more to school improvement.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Good

- Achievement is good because teaching is strong. Students enjoy access to an extensive range of imaginative learning opportunities which capture and sustain their interest.
- The great majority start school with standards of attainment which are mainly below what is expected for their age. Many students told the inspector that they felt disillusioned with education until they started at this school but are now making up lost ground because of the care and support they receive. They say that staff foster excellent relationships with them and want all students to achieve well.
- All groups of students, including those with a statement of special educational needs and the most able, make good gains in their knowledge and understanding in most subjects over their time in school. This is evident in students' workbooks, including those belonging to the most able students, where it is clear that everyone is given suitably challenging work and makes progress in line with their capability.
- Progress across year groups in English, mathematics and ICT is consistently good because basic skills in these subjects are taught well. Based on their starting points, the majority of students have made rapid progress with reading, writing and mathematics. In some cases their rates of progress exceed the national average.
- Students are often asked to read aloud in English and in other subjects such as science. This gives everyone the confidence to develop their skills including fluency in reading and using expression to convey meaning. Consequently, the vast majority of students achieve extremely well in developing their reading ability.
- In mathematics, activities are often based on real-life experiences such as budgeting or planning journeys so that students develop their basic number skills well and consider real-life problems involving calculations.
- Work seen in art and photography was excellent.
- School records provide evidence that students attending each of the two alternative educational establishments make good progress in their learning.
- School records indicate that students are being well prepared for the future by gaining externally accredited qualifications while at school. Almost all leavers gain good pass grades in relation to their capabilities in GCSE subjects such as English, mathematics, ICT and art.

Quality of teaching

Good

- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is usually good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, all groups of students mostly learn well.
- When students join the school their basic skills in key areas of learning are assessed using all the available information, including that from previous schools. Individual learning plans are then developed in close partnership with an educational psychologist. Teachers make good use of information to develop suitable targets and challenging objectives for lessons and other learning activities.
- The school has maintained the good quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Improvement can be seen in teachers' better use of assessment information to plan learning activities for each student. Furthermore, there are now more opportunities for students, for example, to use their initiative and to work collaboratively as they learn. As a result, in design and technology students worked effectively as one group to patiently and skilfully construct a bridge using sticks, without using glue. Students rightly took pride in their achievement as the middle of the bridge they made was capable of supporting a relatively heavy object.
- Teachers have high expectations of students. They often speak with students at different

times of the school day to ensure that they stay focused on learning and take advantage of all that the school has to offer.

- There is a good level of subject expertise among teachers and this is well used to pose questions and shape tasks so that students learn well.
- Students like learning through real-life-based experiences. For example, in an ICT lesson students enjoyed the work around the use of ICT for business purposes. They made good use of the school's computers to learn about updating customer records and databases.
- Role-plays are often a part of English lessons and other learning activities. This helps students to practise their reading, speaking and listening skills. There are many opportunities to develop writing skills. For example, in a science lesson, students had to write about the advantages and disadvantages of cloning as part of their work about fertilisation.
- Pupils enjoy good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Again, they are well motivated by the practical activities provided and demonstrate a good knowledge of their developing vocabulary in this subject.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning. Teachers work closely and effectively with their assistants to ensure that students of different capabilities learn equally well.
- Leaders acknowledge that there is not enough consistently outstanding teaching across the school to ensure that students make outstanding progress. Also, teachers' comments in students' workbooks do not always tell students what they must do in order to make their work outstanding. As a result, a valuable opportunity to raise standards is missed.
- Leaders' records of students' activities and achievement at the alternative provisions used by the school show that students are taught well, leading to good progress in their vocational courses.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

- The behaviour, attitudes and safety of students are outstanding. These factors make a highly significant contribution to learning and progress.
- Overall rates of attendance compare very favourably with national averages. Students take great pride in wearing the school uniform, in their work and the standards they reach due to their perseverance.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is almost always outstanding. Excellent improvements in behaviour have taken place over the course of students' time in school. This is evident in the remarkable reduction in the number of incidents since the previous inspection. School records indicate that attitudes and behaviour at both alternative education sites used by the school are very positive.
- Although students have much difficulty in managing their emotions and frustrations when they first start school, the high expectations of staff, very skilful and sensitive management of problems and a very effective rewards and sanctions policy ensure that students settle into the learning routines very quickly.
- The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students extremely well. Vehicles for this include assemblies, tutorial periods, personal and social development lessons and opportunities in many different learning activities for students to consider important issues.
- Raising students' self-confidence and aspirations lies at the heart of the school's success and in this regard the new Principal has made an enormous difference to assemblies. The start and end-of-day assemblies now enable students, school and residential staff to come together and celebrate students' every success from the evening before or the day just gone, as the case may be. Applause from everyone during these events is both natural and spontaneous.
- Moral development is extremely good. Several instances of offering an apology were observed where students, unprompted by adults, expressed regret to their peers or adults

about momentary lapses in their conduct. In discussions for example, around the rights of Muslim women to wear religious clothing, or on capital punishment and domestic violence, students were able to give well-thought-out and laudable opinions.

- Social development is excellent. Many good-quality responsibilities are on offer including membership of a school council which enables students to bring their ideas for school improvement to the table. Students make an excellent contribution to the wider community by raising funds for charities through activities such as selling their photographs of life in Cumbria.
- The school provides valuable opportunities for students to learn about their own and other cultures. Visits include art galleries, theatres and museums. There are good opportunities to learn about cultural diversity. Students learn well about equality and demonstrate a strong commitment towards racial and cultural harmony in society.
- The school pays excellent attention to all aspects of the safety of students. Arrangements for the recruitment of staff and for staff training in all aspects of safeguarding are rigorous. Supervision in school is excellent.
- Very good attention is given to all required aspects of health and safety including child protection, first aid and fire safety.
- The school's anti-bullying and cyber-safety policies are very effective. Students report that they feel safe from bullying of any description and know that they can approach staff if they experience difficulties.

Leadership and management

Good

- The effectiveness of leaders and managers can be seen in the improvements made since the previous inspection, especially regarding the number and quality of learning activities offered by the school. It can also be seen in the school's continued success in promoting outstanding behaviour and students' personal development.
- The new Principal has made an enormous contribution to the school's work in a relatively short period of time, particularly in relation to promoting his vision of unity of purpose and values around establishing a family ethos throughout the school.
- The proprietors manage financial resources effectively and see to it that students benefit positively from their educational experiences.
- Leaders, especially the new Principal, deserve much credit for establishing a strong learning environment where students achieve well in many key areas of learning and are able to gain a wide variety of external accreditations including GCSE, vocational and other qualifications. They ensure that students are happy, safe and benefit positively from the many vibrant learning activities on offer during and after school which support academic and personal development.
- The proprietors and other leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses including the quality of teaching, actions to improve its quality and how well students are doing. There are appropriate systems for the appraisal and training of teachers. Leaders recognise that achievement is good rather than outstanding and are now reviewing the arrangements to develop and spread outstanding teaching practices across the school. They also appreciate that although middle managers are skilled and effective, opportunities for them to contribute more to school improvement have been slightly limited, for example, in relation to checking and improving the quality of teaching.
- The school has developed strong relationships with placing local authorities and works closely with them to ensure that students receive a good education. Similarly, the school has developed effective working relationships with other external agencies to ensure students' well-being is safeguarded.
- In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, staff expressed overwhelming support for the leadership of the school and the quality of what it provides for students. Responses to the school's own questionnaire to parents and carers indicate that they are pleased with the

school's work. Students have very largely positive views. Representative views included, 'In the past I was a terror and couldn't see the point of learning. Everyone has made me realise I can do well and make a future for myself'.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	134191
Inspection number	446423
DfE registration number	909/6053

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Secondary special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Schools Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Principal	Mr Donagh McKillop
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 January 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,050
Telephone number	01539 562006
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