

# Fred Nicholson School

Westfield Road, Dereham, NR19 1JB

**Inspection dates** 10–11 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		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 and it is improving. This is because all groups of pupils, including those supported by pupil premium funding make good progress in developing key skills.
- The most able pupils achieve well and some gain GCSEs in mathematics, art and science as well as higher-level Functional Skills qualifications in reading, writing, communication and language.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they become thoughtful young people who get on well together. This is because of the excellent care, guidance and support which staff offer them.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and they learn how to keep themselves safe in various situations including when they are using the internet and crossing a road.
- The residential provision is outstanding and so pupils very much enjoy staying over and socialising with others after school has finished. All national minimum standards for care are met.
- Teaching is good because teachers and support staff expect a lot from pupils and they use questions well to check on pupils' understanding. This is because leaders and governors keep a close eye on teaching and its impact.
- Leadership is good and so governors, senior and subject leaders watch pupils' progress carefully and act swiftly to give pupils extra help if their achievement slows down a little.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have quickly formed a strong team who are improving the school successfully. Pupils' attendance has risen again this year and is above average.
- Parents, staff and senior leaders form a valuable partnership. The parents value the termly reports and regular updates they receive about their children's progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking and feedback given to pupils is not always specific and so they are not totally clear about how to improve their work.
- Pupils' individual targets for literacy and numeracy are not always shared effectively with all staff and so a few pupils do not fully understand how to reach higher levels of skill.
- Staff do not effectively help leaders to collect evidence that they have met their personal targets to improve their teaching skills.
- The range of qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT) which pupils can gain is rather narrow.
- A few care plans do not explain in detail what pupils' needs are in the residential provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 14 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leader of Orchard House. As well as observing lessons, inspectors also studied pupils' records of progress and books in many year groups. They heard some pupils read and attended some tutor group sessions in classrooms.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, the leader of the residential provision and Orchard House, other staff with responsibility for areas of the school's work and with pupils. The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- Not enough responses were added to the Ofsted Parent View survey but 25 responses to the school's recent parent questionnaire were taken into consideration.
- Inspectors took into account 38 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including records of pupils' behaviour, and learning plans for individual pupils. They looked at leaders' records which show the impact of teaching, governors' meetings and at documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Debra McCarthy	Additional Inspector
Gwen Buckley	Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a school for pupils with complex needs including moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, speech language and communication difficulties, physical disability, sensory needs (visual impairment and hearing impairment) and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school operates on one site in three main buildings. The school also manages a specialist resource provision, Orchard House. This caters for pupils with the autism spectrum disorder. Pupils aged between seven and 16 attend this provision and the school. The school is registered to take pupils from aged three to 19. It has not expanded to take the full age range because the accommodation has not been adapted, therefore provisions for early years and sixth form are not reported on in this report.
- Alternative provision is used to educate some older pupils who attend Eastern and City Colleges for part of the week. They also study music at JDT Music Academy in Dereham.
- Residential provision is provided for 26 pupils at the school and it was inspected as part of this inspection.
- Over half of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is above average. This is government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are White British. A few are from minority ethnic groups.
- Outreach to other schools is a well-established service and supports pupils' communication skills and behaviour management.
- The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement and the impact of teaching by ensuring all staff use:
  - marking and feedback effectively so that pupils understand how to improve their work
  - pupils' individual literacy and numeracy targets more successfully to deepen pupils' understanding of how to reach higher levels of skill.
- Develop leadership and management by making sure:
  - all staff help to collect evidence to show leaders that they have met their personal targets to improve their teaching skills
  - the school expands its range of ICT qualifications.
- Develop residential provision by ensuring that care plans always record the needs of pupils in detail.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors and staff work together successfully to improve the school. Since the last inspection many aspects have improved including the use of support staff. This is because training is used astutely to develop their skills in asking questions and helping pupils to concentrate on the most important things which they are learning each day.
- Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are welcomed into the school from the minute they arrive. All groups of pupils make good progress including those who are more able. This is because systems to track pupils' progress are used well by senior and middle leaders. The school treats all pupils equally fairly and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Middle leaders watch over their subjects well. They regularly meet with senior leaders to share their thoughts. This ensures that ideas about how to improve pupils' attainment in their subject are effectively acted upon. They make sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate by checking their judgements against the assessment criteria.
- The quality of the curriculum is good. The school is a place where pupils flourish because the headteacher, leaders and staff provide outstandingly well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This means pupils learn to treat each other and those from different cultures with respect and tolerance. Pupils study projects and go on trips to different parts of the United Kingdom and abroad. This means they learn about the lives of other people and their cultures. They find out about the legal system. Pupils learn about how to vote for things they care about because the school council collects views. All these activities prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used effectively and so virtually all Key Stage 2 pupils take part in after-school clubs and competitive sporting activities. All pupils in this key stage learn to swim every year. Staff expertise has been strengthened and so pupils enjoy lessons which develop their skills in ball games, dance, gymnastics and athletics. Older pupils also enjoy sporting activities and the school recently won the Boccia competition and an under 14 basketball competition for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The pupil premium funding is used wisely. This means the school offers disadvantaged pupils who are supported by this extra funding a wide range of additional tuition. The school checks on pupils' attainment before a programme starts and then compares their attainment at the end. In a three-month programme some of these pupils improved their reading and writing ages by eight months.
- Leaders are always looking for ways to improve the school. In partnership with other special schools, they have begun to explore ways to assess pupils without using National Curriculum levels. The leadership of teaching is strong. Teaching is watched carefully by leaders and targets are set for staff. However, occasionally teachers do not help leaders to collect evidence that targets have been met and that their teaching is having a greater impact on pupils' achievement.
- Careers advice is thoughtfully used and so virtually all pupils go on to further education or employment. A wide range of subjects are taught at the school. Pupils study design and technology working with wood and also with food to make fascinating products. They gain a variety of qualifications in this area of learning.
- The leader of Orchard House works successfully with staff to help pupils enjoy learning again. The progress of pupils who attend this provision compares well with those in the main school. This is because leaders watch the impact of teaching well. Attendance and behaviour are monitored carefully and effective plans are used to ensure that pupils understand the impact of their actions.
- Leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. There are clear aims for the residential provision that are translated into practice by the highly skilled and motivated staff team. Care plans are reviewed regularly but a few do not reflect the needs of all pupils in detail. Effective staffing

arrangements ensure well-trained and experienced staff are on duty to meet the needs of the residential pupils. Staff feel well supported by others and the senior leaders. This ensures there is a highly individualised approach to care. As a result, routines run smoothly and residential pupils are fully supported by staff who know them well.

- Outreach work is a well-established part of school's work. This means that school staff support local schools to develop their skills in managing pupils' challenging behaviour, learning and communication.
- Safeguarding is a key priority for leaders and governors and is highly effective. All the statutory checks are carried out on staff when they are recruited or become volunteers at the school. Accident logs are kept rigorously and many staff have first aid qualifications. Pupils who attend alternative provision are kept safe and achieve well because leaders monitor the pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour and safety rigorously.
- The local authority works effectively with the school. This has enabled the school to refine the ways it tracks pupils' progress and ensure that senior leaders and governors are trained in safeguarding matters.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is good. Governors are clear about the strengths and areas for development for the school. They use data about pupils' progress and results to keep a close eye on the school's performance. This includes the impact of teaching in the main school, on pupils who use the residential provision as well as Orchard House. The governors know how underperformance is tackled with staff. They are clear that staff are promoted or appointed to their posts of responsibility because of a good track record. Governors check the performance of the headteacher and all targets were met this year.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils become extremely polite and thoughtful young people. This is because very dedicated staff spend time finding out what triggers inappropriate behaviour and find ways to help pupils control themselves and sort things out calmly. The school employs a counsellor who uses various therapies to help pupils understand their feelings and manage them productively.
- Pupils settle very quickly at the start of the day and when they join the school. They quickly become keen to learn new skills. The school recently came second in a national competition where they created a wonderful booklet for new pupils which help them to settle in. It told them all about their new school, the reward system and what extra activities were open to them. Pupils take great pride in their booklet to help others settle into Fred Nicholson School life because they worked hard on this project and staff assisted them to use their imaginative ideas and bring them to fruition.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils get on well together. In a physical education session, one pupil stopped immediately to make sure the pupil he had just bumped into was all right before he carried on playing a game of basketball. The pupils become very thoughtful because staff show them how to care and support others outstandingly well.
- Pupils respect each other and they enjoy socialising in many ways, including through sporting and ICT activities. Their self-esteem increases the longer they are at the school. This is because staff manage them using positive forms of guidance. In recent years there have been no racial incidents and exclusion does not often occur.
- The pupils behave particularly well whether they are attending local colleges, using alternative provision for music sessions or in Orchard House. This is because an extremely consistent approach to managing behaviour is in use with all staff.
- Behaviour in the residential provision is outstanding. Relationships between adults and residential pupils are extremely respectful and positive. As a result these pupils grow in confidence and become considerate young people.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils, parents and staff all agree pupils are safe in school. Staff work thoughtfully to explain the impact of their actions and so pupils learn to handle equipment and various situations safely. They learn how to cross roads and about the dangers of driving a moped or vehicle.
- Pupils learn extremely well how to keep themselves safe using the internet. They know what to do if they find themselves on an internet site which is not suitable for them. They understand how to handle cyber bullying and use social media responsibly. A recent anti-bullying week allowed pupils to select a slogan for their school and the website, 'Be a buddy, not a bully!' which ensures pupils are clear about how to treat others in school. The small number of bullying incidents which occur are handled very carefully.
- Attendance has risen again this year and is above average. Pupils come to school every day unless they have medical appointments or illnesses. The school watches pupils' absence carefully and works with parents and other agencies to ensure that this is kept to a minimum.
- Pupils are kept safe very successfully whether they are attending local colleges, alternative provision or in Orchard House because staff watch over them. Risk assessments are used rigorously to ensure that pupils who go out of school are safe and planning means preparations are made to minimise risk. Staff receive regular training in child protection.
- Staff are very skilled at recognising and responding to safeguarding issues in the residential provision. They work outstandingly well with residential pupils, external professionals and family members to keep residential pupils safe. There is a history of excellent practice in monitoring and reporting any concerns. Residential pupils understand bullying is not accepted and will always be challenged. Staff defuse tensions and use behaviour techniques extremely effectively. As a result, restraint is very seldom used

## The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers and support staff expect a great deal from pupils and so they make good progress in all areas of learning. This is because staff plan activities which match pupils' stages of development. Teaching has a good impact and this was confirmed by studying work in pupils' progress folders, their books, school checks and observations made during the inspection. This includes those pupils who attend local colleges or Orchard House.
- The teaching of reading is a real strength. The use of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is taught systematically. The pupils learn to comprehend what they are reading about because staff use questioning well. Pupils in an English lesson read an e-newspaper effectively and then answered questions about the article and what it meant.
- Pupils' writing skills develop successfully. This year, the large majority of Year 11 pupils gained a qualification in Functional Skills at higher level 1 or 2 in writing which is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. This is because staff adjust pupils' work so that it is not too easy and not too hard.
- Pupils learn to communicate and use language productively. This is because teachers and support staff are skilled at explaining the meaning of words and encourage pupils to use accurate and varied vocabulary when they communicate with others.
- The teaching of mathematics is good and so, for example, pupils learnt to use analogue clocks and read local train timetables accurately. All pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, are included effectively in lessons.
- Occasionally, marking and feedback can be a little brief. This means that a few pupils are not clear about how to develop their work and make it better. Pupils' literacy and numeracy targets are not always shared with all staff who teach them and so pupils do not learn in all subjects how to develop these skills and reach higher levels of knowledge.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Pupils start at the school with levels of understanding which are well below average. Achievement is good because last year all groups of pupils made the quantity of progress expected of them. Half of all pupils, which is a good proportion, made better progress than this in key areas of learning. Pupils achieve well in developing personal and life skills which prepare them for their adult lives, including those who use the residential provision.
- Virtually all pupils in Year 11 gain entry-level Functional Skills qualifications in life and living skills, mathematics, science and physical education. Many attained the higher Level 1 in reading, writing, language and communication skills. Pupils who attend local colleges attain equally good results as the others.
- The most able pupils make good progress. In recent years, most able Year 11 pupils attained GCSEs in mathematics, science and art. They also gained Functional Skills higher Level 2 in reading, writing, language and communication. Most able musicians gained Arts Award in music at the higher levels of silver and bronze. This is because alternative provision for this subject is used well. Early entry to GCSEs is rare but on the occasions that this does occur, it does not limit the potential of the most able pupils.
- Boys and girls who are supported by the pupil premium funding make similarly good progress to others. In Year 6 and 11 the gap in progress between this group and the rest has reduced significantly and now it has almost disappeared. This is because leaders use extra tuition to boost the progress of those supported by the pupil premium funding.
- Pupils who attend Orchard House make good progress in all areas of learning. Staff plan lessons and use a variety of approaches to make learning fun. Mostly pupils are taught one-to-one but sometimes they work with others. Occasionally Orchard House pupils work in the main school for some or all of their lessons. This is because the school and Orchard House staff work well together.
- There is no significant difference between the progress pupils make in Key Stage 2, 3 or 4. This includes those with autistic spectrum disorder, moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties and severe learning difficulties.
- Although pupils make good progress in ICT not enough gain qualifications in this subject. This is because the school does not offer a wide range of courses in ICT.

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is outstanding</b>
<b>Residential pupils' safety</b>	<b>is outstanding</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>

- Residential pupils have outstanding provision and opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. They have access to a wide range of activities that provide new experiences both in the school and the wider community. They learn to manage things they previously found difficult. As a result, residential pupils develop confidence in their own ability, very much enjoy the residential experience and are supportive of one another. This helps them develop and sustain friendships.
- Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Family members feel the care is 'second to none'. One parent stated, 'The care provided is outstanding. Since my daughter has been at the residential provision she has changed and become a confident young person. Her life has changed for the better.'
- The well-being of individual residential pupils is central to the work of staff. The transition into the residential provision is entirely focused on ensuring the pupil is ready for the move. The emotional health of residential pupils is well supported by in-house counselling staff. The counsellor also works with family members to improve the outcomes for pupils and provide consistency 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>

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121256
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038284
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	447963

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	128
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	26
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Bradshaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Kahn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 July 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01362 693915
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