

# The Linnet Independent Learning Centre

107 Mount Pleasant Road, Castle Gresley, Derbyshire DE11 9JE

## Inspection dates

17–19 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Pupils make outstanding progress from starting points that are below, or well below, those expected for their age.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding because staff have an excellent understanding of how to motivate and engage previously disaffected pupils.
- The school curriculum is organised creatively to ensure that each pupil experiences all required areas of learning through an individualised timetable.
- Pupils make strong progress in improving their behaviour. Staff provide care, advice and support which ensure that pupils' anxieties decrease over time and they are able to engage successfully in learning.
- The high quality of cooperation and mutual support between members of staff ensures that teachers and key workers are confident about the subjects they teach and know how to develop their individual practice.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed exemplary arrangements to ensure that the assessment of pupils' progress is rigorous and accurate. Pupils understand how to improve their work because they receive continuous feedback from staff.
- Pupils are safe and secure because senior leaders and staff implement robust arrangements for all aspects of safeguarding.
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, together with continuous reflection and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. Staff know exactly what is expected of them and that their contributions are valued.
- The proprietor and senior leaders share an exemplary and effective commitment to the continuous improvement of the school. They have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

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

- Further enhance the outstanding quality of teaching by using the excellent opportunities provided for teachers' professional development to share the very best practice in the use of questioning that challenges pupils, extends their knowledge and deepens their understanding.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**is outstanding**

- The headteacher has created an outstanding curriculum that combines an emphasis on fundamental learning and thinking skills with comprehensive coverage of the requirements of the national curriculum.
- The inspiration and enthusiasm of the headteacher and senior leaders have an enormously positive impact on the commitment and dedication demonstrated by the whole staff. Staff agree unanimously that the school is well led and managed and that they are proud to work at the school.
- Senior leaders have created an ethos of high expectations, and a shared belief that every pupil can achieve more than the pupils previously thought possible. Teachers and key workers enable pupils to make outstanding progress across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The structure of the curriculum is unique and effective. Teachers provide one-to-one lessons that include excellent intensive support to help pupils develop important skills in English, mathematics and science. Pupils also experience a wide and varied curriculum through high-quality workshops that enable them to develop other skills, for example in art, music or food studies, and to explore themes in subjects such as history, geography and science.
- The work of the school is characterised by exemplary teamwork. All members of staff appreciate the exceptional support that they receive from senior leaders and from each other. Staff develop the confidence to improve their teaching through the regular sharing of ideas with colleagues.
- The school provides a commendable range of opportunities for staff to improve their qualifications and expertise through additional training provided on-site and through further education providers. Pupils' progress accelerates because staff constantly strive to strengthen their skills in motivating and challenging pupils.
- The headteacher has a deep and comprehensive understanding of the strengths of the school and of the actions needed to bring about continuous improvements. Any necessary improvements are identified in a comprehensive development plan. Staff understand how, precisely, they are expected to contribute to the implementation of this plan.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have excellent opportunities to consider moral and social issues through meaningful stories and news items in regular assemblies. During the inspection, for example, older boys listened attentively to a story from the Buddhist tradition that emphasised the value of treating others as you would wish them to treat you.
- The school upholds British values, including an emphasis on equality of opportunity for all pupils, together with respect for diversity. Pupils learn how to value their own identities and to celebrate diversity, for example through celebration of Diwali, making African masks or developing an understanding of Indian or Chinese cultures. They take part in a number of visits, for example to museums, art galleries and places of religious worship. Visitors to the school, including an author, a dancer and an artist, provide pupils with role models of diverse interests and professions.
- The school's commitment to developing external partnerships to benefit pupils has resulted in the achievement of a number of significant awards, including National Healthy Schools, Eco School Silver, Centre of Excellence for Inclusion, and ArtsMark Gold Award. Staff work with nutritionists, conservationists, visiting artists and others to extend the range of opportunities available to pupils.
- Staff maintain ongoing dialogue with pupils' parents and carers. They provide regular information about pupils' progress and work effectively to resolve any concerns about behaviour or well-being. All parents receive detailed reports about their child's personal development and progress in all subjects studied.
- The school has established effective working relationships with advisers in the local careers service and with further education providers that offer places to school leavers at the end of Year 11. As a result, pupils are provided with suitable information and understand well the future education and employment opportunities available to them.
- Proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. They demonstrate outstanding capacity for continued improvement.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The chair of the board of directors has an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the school's provision and outcomes. She has ensured a suitable balance between support and challenge for the school's senior leaders.
  - The directors are well informed about the performance of the school, including pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, and the school's areas for improvement.

- The directors ensure that the school operates robust appraisal arrangements. All members of staff work to appropriate targets related to their responsibilities, job descriptions and training needs. The directors have established fair arrangements to reward performance and levels of responsibility.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders ensure that rigorous procedures are in place for the supervision and care of pupils, and the training of staff in safeguarding. They take effective action to address any concerns that pupils may express.
- Senior staff ensure that all aspects of health and safety are managed and recorded rigorously, including the assessment of risk, together with regular checks on premises and fire safety.
- Staff are well trained to understand the risks pupils face and provide effective support to help pupils manage the dangers associated with, for example, the internet, radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding**

- Teachers and key workers share the responsibility for outstanding teaching, mostly in one-to-one arrangements with individual pupils. The quality of teamwork between staff members is excellent. Continuous discussion, debate and analysis of what works well and why, result in regular improvements in the quality of teaching and assessment.
- Senior leaders provide excellent leadership in shaping the curriculum and providing a framework that helps staff plan learning well suited to the needs of individual pupils. Teachers' planning takes full account of the preferred learning styles and behaviour characteristics of the boys that they work with.
- The school's lead teacher exudes enthusiasm that is infectious, motivating all staff to an outstanding level of commitment. Staff demonstrate extraordinary patience and resilience as they successfully address pupils' complex barriers to learning. Despite the challenges, pupils make continuous progress because staff support each other in planning, assessment and the management of pupils' behaviour.
- Staff use each pupil's individual education, health and care plan as the basis for planning the pupils' learning targets. These plans provide a secure route through stages of learning and are well matched to the needs of each pupil.
- Pupils learn to focus and engage in learning and show sustained concentration without distraction. The majority of pupils develop the confidence to extend and deepen their oral and written answers, while responding well to increasing levels of challenge provided by the staff.
- Pupils are provided with suitable opportunities to work in pairs or small groups when they or their key workers judge that they are ready to do so. Group teaching each week in personal, social and health and economic education, and physical education, enables pupils to develop friendships and to learn how to cooperate effectively with their peers.
- A major strength in the quality of teaching is the regular, accurate assessment of pupils' progress against their individual learning targets. Pupils benefit from feedback on their progress, at least weekly, and are able to celebrate their achievements and identify new targets for the next week. Pupils know how well they are doing and understand what they have to do next.
- Senior leaders and experienced teachers provide excellent, continuous support to their colleagues in judging accurately the standards at which pupils are working. The school makes effective use of moderation activities by external visitors to confirm teachers' judgements about pupils' achievements. Rigorous assessment of pupils' work results in accurate evaluation of pupils' progress across the school.
- Staff ensure that pupils' learning in school is integrated successfully into their experience in the wider community. Pupils enjoy the off-site trips and visits, which staff provide every Friday. Learning continues in a variety of different environments and community settings where pupils learn to apply their knowledge, understanding and social skills in real-life situations.
- Pupils at key stage 4 take part in regular work experience and receive suitable independent careers advice as they begin to consider future opportunities for their continued education. The attainment of these pupils is at levels below expectations for their age. This results from their individual barriers to learning or from gaps in their previous school experience. They have access to appropriate external qualifications, including entry level certificates, functional skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2, and a range of awards for practical and project-based activities.
- Experienced teachers are skilled at adding new levels of challenge as learning progresses, particularly through high-quality dialogue and skilful questioning. They share their experience with more recently appointed colleagues, creating a learning community in which, as one member of staff commented, 'I learn something new every day'.

- Very occasionally, teachers do not question and challenge pupils sufficiently to provide detailed answers that demonstrate the true extent of their knowledge and understanding. As a result, they miss opportunities to move pupils' achievements on to higher levels.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** are outstanding

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff share a common commitment to improving pupils' self-esteem and confidence as a means to achieving successful learning.
- Staff enable pupils to address their personal barriers to achievement successfully, including pupils' previous relationship difficulties, attachment disorders and difficulties with concentration. Pupils work successfully to make up previously lost time which has resulted from exclusions from other settings or pupils' refusal to attend school.
- Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to consider their personal responses to various moral dilemmas. Assemblies include the presentation of memorable stories which provoke careful consideration about social and moral issues.
- The role of the key worker is central to the school's success in building pupils' trust and respect for others. In response to the support of key workers, pupils begin to take personal responsibility for their actions, experience pride in their achievements and to enjoy school.
- Many pupils are able to identify improvements in their attitudes to school. Almost all pupils, in their questionnaire responses and conversations, state that they enjoy school.
- The school prepares pupils well for the transition to further education or employment. The curriculum at key stage 4 includes opportunities for pupils to experience taster courses in colleges or chosen areas of employment. Pupils achieve success in the development of employability skills and are strongly assisted with the preparation of applications and interviews in Year 11.
- Pupils state that they feel safe in school. They have excellent opportunities, including through presentations given by visitors to the school, to understand how to keep safe and to recognise threats to their safety and well-being.
- The school places a firm emphasis on the development of safe and healthy lifestyles. The school implements rigorous strategies, including joint working with appropriate external agencies, to resolve any concerns about identified risk-taking behaviours.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Over time, and often in small steps, they demonstrate sustained improvements in their ability to manage their behaviour. School records show a significant reduction over time in the frequency of serious incidents for almost all pupils.
- Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate respect for their teachers and key workers. They cooperate in lessons and take an active part in their own learning.
- Staff manage any incidents consistently and effectively. The school has established comprehensive and robust strategies for the management of disruptive incidents. Staff are trained well and senior leaders provide outstanding support and guidance.
- Levels of staff supervision are high and continuous. Pupils state that bullying is not a concern, and school records endorse the view that bullying is extremely rare.
- Attendance is close to the national average. The majority of pupils have no unauthorised absences. Staff implement robust strategies, working closely with parents and carers, to address the persistent absence of a small minority of pupils.

## **Outcomes for pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils across the full age range of the school make outstanding progress from starting points that are well below the average for their age. Pupils' excellent progress is evident across the full breadth of the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs or disability, make strong progress in filling in gaps in their knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects. They begin to

catch up and close the gaps that have resulted from continuous periods of disaffection with education.

- Many pupils begin to enjoy reading. They can name the books they have read and are proud of their achievements. The majority, although they are often reluctant writers, make at least good progress with their writing skills.
- The proportions of pupils making or exceeding expected rates of progress in English and mathematics are high in comparison with national figures. Almost half of the current pupils are making more than expected progress across all subjects of the curriculum.
- Pupils at key stage 4 achieve a range of external examination results that demonstrate outstanding progress from their low starting points on entry to the school. Of the small numbers leaving at the end of Year 11, increasing proportions are achieving success at levels 1 and 2 in functional skills English and mathematics.
- School leavers over recent years have achieved a commendable range of entry level 3 awards in science, geography, history, art, and information and communication technology.
- The majority of key stage 4 pupils also achieve nationally recognised awards in project-based assignments, food hygiene and the Trinity College bronze and silver arts award.
- The range of awards achieved equips pupils effectively to take up places in colleges of further education where they study work-related courses, together with the further development of their skills in literacy, numeracy and employability. The small numbers of leavers in recent years have all moved successfully into post-16 college placements.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131327
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008603
<b>DfE registration number</b>	830/6033

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	15
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Lewis Charlton Ltd.
<b>Chair</b>	Georgina Pearson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Sullivan
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£69,000 to £72,450
<b>Telephone number</b>	01283 213 989
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thelinnetindependentlearningcentre.co.uk">www.thelinnetindependentlearningcentre.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:linnet1@btconnect.com">linnet1@btconnect.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19–20 June 2012

## Information about this school

- The Linnet Independent Learning Centre is a day special school for boys with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour because of their complex difficulties.
- The school is registered to admit up to 15 full-time pupils aged between three and 16 years. There are currently 15 boys on roll aged between six and 15 years. Boys may join the school at any age and some are admitted towards the end of their compulsory school years.
- All current pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Four pupils are in the care of their placing local authorities.
- The school does not currently make use of the services of any alternative providers.
- The school's previous inspection was in June 2012.
- The school's motto is 'Well-being, support and challenge'. This includes 'an emphasis upon the whole person, within a context that promotes learning independence'.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work, across the full age range of the school.
- The inspector met with the chair of the board of directors, the headteacher, senior leaders, and members of staff with teaching and management responsibilities. He considered responses to 17 questionnaires submitted by members of staff.
- The inspector spoke with a number of pupils individually, and considered pupils' responses to a recent school questionnaire about their experiences at the school.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' questionnaire for these to be taken into account. The inspector considered 10 responses to a school questionnaire completed by parents, and a small number of written statements from representatives of placing authorities.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector



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