

Options Barton

Barrow Road, Barton-upon-Humber, North Lincolnshire DN18 6DA

Inspection dates 5–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- A very effective partnership between the proprietor and the leaders and managers of the school ensures continuous improvement in outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils who have a range of learning difficulties make good social and academic progress from their own starting points.
- Pupils who have severe learning difficulties make good personal progress, both socially and academically.
- Students in the sixth form are effectively equipped to move on to the next stages of their lives according to their personal needs.
- The school has robust procedures to ensure the welfare and safety of its pupils. The school's policy of positive behaviour management results in significant and sustained progress, particularly in pupils' behaviour for learning.
- Attendance is high.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Assessment framework and practice are not yet fully developed to track pupils' long-term progress.
- Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils are inconsistent and the school's marking policy is unclear. Marking does not provide the challenge to enable most-able pupils to improve their work. There is no feedback to pupils who access learning through non-verbal resources.

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?

- Develop consistent policy and practice in marking to encourage and reward all pupils.
- Further develop the assessment framework to establish records of pupils' progress from when they enter the school to the present.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- The proprietor supports and stringently monitors the work of the school by holding leaders and managers to account fully for their actions through its 'scrutiny group'. This group links the school to the company's board effectively and ensures that pupils are the school's prime concern.
- Following a recent change of leadership, the school has redefined its philosophy, which has resulted in improved behaviour and progress. Good relationships between adults and pupils make a significant contribution to pupils' positive outcomes.
- Leaders and managers have produced an up-to-date, accurate self-evaluation of the school's work.
- The curriculum fully meets the areas of learning specified in the independent school standards and provides pupils, who have a wide range of prior levels of attainment, with appropriate learning experiences. Pupils benefit from access to a range of qualifications, including GCSE, entry-level literacy and numeracy, functional skills, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) accreditation, the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and vocational qualifications.
- Materials developed by independent companies successfully support learning in literacy and numeracy for pupils who have severe language and communication difficulties.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively ensured through the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship programmes, which deliver British values and help pupils to understand the dangers of extremism.
- Pupils have the opportunity to undertake work experience in school, such as working in reception or serving in the school's 'Bistro'. They also benefit from good, impartial careers advice provided by an external agency.
- Leaders ensure the good quality of teaching and learning by regular monitoring and a rolling programme of performance management procedures. Staff have access to a programme of continuing professional development identified by these procedures.
- Leaders and managers ensure that pupils who have autism and speech and language difficulties are effectively supported to improve their communication, behaviour and personal development. This results in their good behaviour for learning and good progress.
- Leaders and managers provide and implement appropriate policy and practice to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- The school is based in a modern, well-equipped building that enables each pupil to have valuable personal space. There is a wide range of facilities, including extensive outdoor space with activity equipment, a hydrotherapy pool and sports hall and specific facilities for horticulture. A range of teaching rooms, including specialist provision for food technology, science, art, and information and communication technology (ICT), provides an appropriate learning environment for pupils with severe learning needs.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The school does not have a governing board. Governance arrangements are carried out by the scrutiny group. This group meets twice a term and is the connection between the school and the proprietor. It ensures that leaders and managers are held to account and provides good support.
 - Members of this group visit the school on a regular basis, effectively monitoring the quality of education provided at the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The single central record meets requirements. All staff, agency staff and volunteers are included. The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is published on its website. All staff have signed to confirm their reading of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.
- Designated leaders and all staff have current training at the appropriate levels in safeguarding procedures. Leaders ensure that all recruitment procedures include at least one person trained in safe recruitment.
- Pupils are successfully guided to understand risks and report inappropriate behaviour. They responded very well with growing understanding to an assembly on 'stranger danger'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers ensure that pupils make good progress through their clear understanding of how individual pupils learn. They have a good knowledge of pupils' prior attainment and their learning difficulties, and reflect this in activities. Teachers challenge pupils to extend their learning successfully.
- Pupils' good progress is ensured because teachers recognise pupils' social and learning needs and create good relationships that successfully encourage pupils to have positive attitudes to learning. All adults in the classroom contribute to pupils' progress, many on an individual basis.
- Parents are very appreciative of what the school provides for their children. As one parent commented, 'the school is fantastic at understanding his needs.'
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use teaching styles which inspire pupils and challenge them to work. This is particularly evident in the more vocational subjects such as food technology and horticulture where pupils are helped to prepare for life after school.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and the school's marking policy is unclear. Where pupils create their own written responses, some teachers do not go beyond simple comments. Therefore, pupils are not encouraged to respond to issues in their work or be challenged further.
- Where pupils who have significant language difficulties are using picture-based learning resources, teachers' comments rarely go beyond a statement to another adult that the pupil completed the work independently. Consequently, there is no message or communication to the pupil to let them know how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve.
- The most able pupils read accurately, show good understanding and make reading a valuable part of their learning. Those who have severe speech and language difficulties are making good progress in responding orally to pictorial stimuli.
- Pupils are developing the self-esteem and self-confidence to begin to understand the next stage in their lives, for example, by attending a college course. All pupils who left school in the last 12 months have succeeded in taking up places in employment or education.
- Parents receive fortnightly reports and a comprehensive annual report. The school contributes reports to all formal reviews, as necessary.
- Teachers support pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum by introducing key words and calculations into other subjects. The use of computer technology to support learning in other subjects is good. At the same time, pupils who have severe learning difficulties continue to develop good computing skills, for example, mastering the use of the mouse.
- The school monitors pupils' achievement by using a framework for assessment based on national curriculum levels, and it is clear that teachers plan lessons that are appropriate to pupils' prior attainment. However, tracking pupils' progress from baselines established on entry is less robust. Leaders and managers are in the early stages of moving to a model of assessment without levels.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Prior to joining Options Barton, pupils have often had long periods away from education and join the school with low self-confidence and self-esteem, reflected in challenging behaviour. They develop rapidly on entering the school. As one parent said of her son, 'He is developing socially and emotionally.'
- Attendance is greatly improved and is now high. There are no persistent absentees.
- Pupils are learning to feel safe and know how to report concerns. There was significant growth in their understanding of personal safety when they took part in the assembly on 'stranger danger'.
- Pupils say that there is very little bullying and that any that did occur is always well managed by staff.
- Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and are learning to be accountable. The school's policy of positive behaviour strategies without sanctions makes an important contribution to pupils' understanding of individual accountability. There is a very large reduction in reported behaviour incidents.
- Pupils are well supervised at all times, in the classroom, in free time and at handover to and from care staff or transport.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the school's PSHE and citizenship curriculum, which includes a wide range of activities, visits and visitors. Pupils have created many displays around the school to show their understanding of interaction with the community and to support their ASDAN accreditation.
- Pupils show respect for people of all cultures, both in school and in the community.
- The school works hard to ensure that pupils understand the role of public institutions such as the armed forces, the fire service and the police.
- Effective health and safety policy and practice keep all members of the school community safe. This includes fire safety, first-aid provision and risk assessments, both for activities and for individual pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is improving rapidly. The school's tracking, based on a range of measures, confirms a rapid and sustained improvement in behaviour. There is minimal disruption of the learning of others. There have been no instances of physical intervention or exclusion this term.
- The caring and supportive nature of the school quickly enables pupils to regain the skills to make great improvements in their behaviour and to re-engage with learning. A parent, responding to the school's survey, said: 'our son has progressed so much since attending Options [Barton]. His behaviour has improved and he is completing lots of tasks he didn't do before.'

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils enter the school often with low prior attainment. Learning difficulties and interrupted schooling leave many of them well below the expected standards for their age.
- These pupils are successfully supported to re-engage with a one-to-one learning environment that caters for their individual needs, and make good progress in English and mathematics. All pupils make the nationally expected levels of progress from their starting points and most exceed them.
- In other subjects, pupils make at least expected progress and do particularly well in history and geography. They obtain qualifications such as the ECDL, GCSE passes in mathematics, entry-level qualifications and functional skills awards.
- All pupils make particularly good progress in food technology and horticulture. The enthusiasm for the practical horticulture lesson is infectious. All pupils take personal control of their activities; for example, an older pupil was seen showing a younger pupil how to plant lettuce. A representative of the college horticultural course compared favourably the outcomes of Options Barton pupils to those of pupils from a mainstream school.
- About half the pupils in the school have significant learning difficulties arising from their autism and speech and language difficulties. These pupils enter the school with extremely low prior attainment. In small steps, pupils in this group all make good progress. They succeed in practical areas such as ASDAN qualifications for integrating with the community. They develop self-confidence to eat in a local café, attend a theatre performance, use a community facility and identify sources of help. Their work is presented in picture form on the walls of their school, making their achievements a source of pride for all those connected with them.
- In food technology, pupils concentrate fully and produce excellent outcomes, much of it photographed and exhibited on the walls. They are prepared to share the products of their work, which are generously offered to others for sampling. They act as staff in the school's 'Bistro'. This has a very positive effect on their self-confidence.
- Pupils respond very well to music lessons, which are funded by the pupil premium. They show high levels of concentration and make good progress in making sounds from instruments such as the flute.
- The school has successfully met its aims as, at the end of the last school year, all pupils leaving the school progressed either to employment or education. Pupils leaving the school prior to entering the sixth form are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Sixth form provision

is good

- Students in the sixth form achieve well because they receive the same high standard of teaching and care as other pupils in the school. This helps them to overcome barriers to their learning successfully. As a result, they make academic and personal progress similar to that of other year groups.

- The sixth-form curriculum is based on a range of options, including living skills, work-related skills and community skills. Students also benefit from an enterprise programme and leisure skills, and continue to learn basic skills.
- Students make good progress in developing self-confidence and interacting with other people. They make good progress in small increments in all their learning.
- Sixth-form students are well prepared for the next stage in their lives. In the most recent year, all moved to adult care and education.

School details

Unique reference number	134315
Inspection number	10012920
DfE registration number	813/6004

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.

Type of school	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Outcomes First Group
Chair	Mr Graham Baker
Headteacher	Dr Drew Anderson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£62,400 to £106,686
Telephone number	01652 631280
Website	www.optionsbarton.co.uk
Email address	Drew.anderson@optionsautism.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 July 2013

Information about this school

- Options Barton is an independent special school located in Barton-upon-Humber. It is one of a small number of similar schools owned and run by its parent company, Outcomes First Group.
- The school opened in 2006 to provide residential and day education for pupils aged from eight to 19 years who have autism and complex learning difficulties, particularly in speech and language. The majority of pupils have a history of challenging behaviours.
- There are currently 23 pupils on roll; 12 with 52-week placements and 11 day-pupils. There are nine students above compulsory school age.
- Some pupils attend a horticulture course at a local college for a half day each week.
- Most pupils are boys but there are three girls on roll and almost all pupils are of White British heritage. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. They are funded by nine different local authorities from across England.
- The school's vision is 'to provide a safe environment where pupils have the opportunity to develop skills, attitudes and acceptable forms of behaviour through a range of flexible and creative educational and social experiences'. It aims 'to support the development of independence and citizenship appropriate to the needs of each pupil'.
- The school has dual registration as a children's home. An inspection of this provision took place at the same time and the full report is published separately.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- He viewed the school's website and school policies, and examined schemes of work and other relevant documentation. He scrutinised a selection of pupils' work, and analysed pupils' behaviour profiles and assessment records.
- The inspector visited lessons covering a range of subjects, age groups and activities and spoke with pupils during these visits.
- The inspector met with senior leaders and the head of children's autism services. He had telephone discussions with the representative of a local college and the school improvement partner.
- The inspector analysed staff questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, to generate a report. The inspector analysed responses to the school's own survey.

Inspection team

Peter McKenzie, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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