

Wings School

Whassett, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7DN

Inspection dates

13–15 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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

- The principal, well supported by the proprietor, other leaders and staff, has created a happy, harmonious and deeply respectful school community which enables pupils to thrive.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection.
- Due to excellent opportunities for personal development, pupils rapidly develop their confidence and resilience. Pupils feel safe and speak with exceptional fondness about the school and its staff.
- All pupils quickly re-engage with learning at the school and make great strides in improving their behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is usually impeccable.
- All pupils have excellent attendance.
- From different and often low starting points, pupils make good progress in their learning. Pupils make rapid progress with their literacy and numeracy skills, which helps them to access the wider curriculum effectively.
- Teaching over time is good. Teachers have high expectations and they plan activities that enable pupils to make good progress.
- British values are systematically promoted and pupils are accepting of people's differences.
- The broad, balanced and flexible curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders know the school well and plan effectively for improvements in most areas.
- Leadership of teaching is less effective. Teachers do not always receive appropriate training that maximises their development. The monitoring of teaching does not routinely focus on the impact that teaching has on pupils of different abilities.
- Opportunities for teachers to share good practice are limited.
- Governors have established effective systems for ensuring that the independent school standards are consistently met. However, they do not rigorously hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The school improvement plan does not contain clear and measurable targets for improving teaching and outcomes. As a result, it is difficult for governors to hold leaders to account in these areas.
- Sixth-form provision is good and helps pupils to access appropriate further education or training.

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?

- Improve teaching, and thereby academic outcomes, by ensuring that:
 - training for teachers is carefully matched to individual needs
 - the range of opportunities for teachers to share good practice are extended
 - the checks on the quality of teaching focus on the impact that teaching has on the progress of pupils with different starting points, including the most able
 - the school improvement plan contains clear and measurable targets for improving teaching and pupils' outcomes, to make it easier for those responsible for governance to rigorously hold leaders to account for their work in these areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, capably supported by senior leaders and the wider staff team, has created a culture of high expectations which enables pupils to re-engage with learning and quickly make up lost ground.
- Leaders have established highly effective routines that sustain and enhance the school's strong community ethos. Twice-daily assemblies are used as vehicles for celebrating success and establishing high expectations for pupils' conduct and effort. Pupils respond positively to these routines and feel proud of the school and their own personal achievements.
- Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with members of staff and each other. Pupils value the dedication of staff and the majority of pupils spoken to attribute great significance to the role of the school in improving their lives.
- Leaders know their school well and understand its strengths and relative weaknesses.
- Leaders have ensured that the broad, balanced and flexible curriculum makes a strong contribution to the school's overall effectiveness. A strong focus on functional literacy and numeracy is augmented by an increasing range of options that provide pupils with individualised pathways. These harmonise with their interests and prepare them effectively for their planned next steps. Many pupils successfully engage with a range of courses at local providers. Equine studies, construction, catering and hair and beauty are popular options among pupils.
- Extra-curricular provision is impressive and enhances the formal academic curriculum effectively. Pupils are particularly fond of the many opportunities for outdoor learning and enrichment. On one afternoon during the inspection, pupils took part in a diverse range of extra-curricular activities, from 'crabbing' to recording music in a local studio. As a result of the breadth and personalisation of the curriculum, pupils remain engaged in their learning and develop clear ideas and ambitions for what they want to do when they leave the school.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is highly effective and helps pupils to become considerate, tolerant and respectful citizens. Pupils learn about different faiths in a variety of contexts and members of staff ensure that a consistent focus is maintained on developing pupils' ability to empathise with others. Pupils also access a range of trips and visits that aim to broaden their horizons and increase their awareness of the diversity that exists within the United Kingdom and across society. For example, pupils visit Edinburgh and a local Buddhist temple.
- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching is good across the curriculum and throughout the school. Despite this, leaders do not have a clear understanding of what needs to be done in order to improve standards of teaching further. Training for teachers is not matched sharply to the developmental needs of each individual and there are limited opportunities for teachers to share good practice within the school and with teachers from other providers. As a result, teaching is not improving as quickly as other areas of the school's work.
- Leaders' plans to improve the school are securing improvements to many aspects of the

school's work, particularly in relation to the broadening of the curriculum and the further enhancement of pupils' personal development. However, leaders' plans to improve pupils' outcomes and improve the quality of teaching lack precision. In particular, they do not contain clear and quantifiable targets that would enable them to measure progress more effectively.

Governance

- Those responsible for governance have played an important role in establishing the school's ethos alongside the principal and other leaders. Members of this body visit the school regularly and have a sound understanding of how the school operates and what its strengths and weaknesses are.
- Those responsible for governance have ensured that there are robust systems in place for ensuring that the independent school standards are consistently met. They provide rigorous challenge for leaders, particularly in relation to safeguarding practices, the suitability of the curriculum and human resources.
- The proprietorial body has not ensured that leaders are systematically held to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. The absence of measurable school-improvement targets in these areas makes it difficult for governors to challenge effectively. The chief operating officer is aware of these limitations in the work of the governors and has recently appointed a new senior member of staff to the Kedleston Group, who is responsible for providing school leaders with the necessary challenge in these areas.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and there is clear evidence that a positive safeguarding culture has been established within the school.
- Leaders have established highly effective routines for ensuring that members of staff receive timely and appropriate information about the well-being of pupils. Members of staff are highly attentive to the needs of pupils and they are vigilant to any changes in pupils' mood or presentation.
- Staff receive regular training on a range of safeguarding issues, such as child sexual exploitation and internet safety.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe when online is strong. Pupils take part in workshops on how to keep safe when online and the school's filtering system is effective.
- The school does a great deal of work to educate pupils on a range of potential dangers. Topics such as drugs, alcohol and health relationships are regularly revisited.
- The school's work to protect pupils from radicalisation is impressive. Pupils are supported to discuss topical and controversial topics in a sensitive, open and mature manner. As a result, they blossom into thoughtful, considerate and accepting young adults.
- The school's safeguarding policy is thorough and easily accessible via the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and they ensure that pupils complete work that challenges them to make fast progress in their learning.
- Teaching of functional literacy is given high priority and members of staff work intensively with pupils in small groups to develop their reading, writing and spelling. Teachers and other adults assess pupils' attainment in these areas frequently and with precision. As a result, pupils complete work which is carefully matched to their prior attainment.
- Teaching of numeracy is effective. Supported capably by the school's educational psychologist, members of staff provide pupils with work that addresses gaps in their learning. Pupils therefore make good progress with areas of numeracy such as times tables and number bonds.
- Teaching in practical subjects, such as art and photography, is particularly strong. In these lessons, teachers use real-life examples to engage pupils' interest. Teachers use modelling effectively and provide pupils with opportunities to develop and extend their skills. As a consequence, pupils grow in confidence and produce work of which they are rightly proud.
- Teachers make a conscious effort to challenge stereotypes within lessons. Where appropriate, they also highlight the harmful effects of discrimination. As a result, pupils are supported to become more tolerant and aware of issues to do with prejudice.
- Teaching of the core academic curriculum is good. However, there is some marked variation in the quality of teaching in these subjects. In particular, there is too much variation in the level of challenge in planned activities, particularly for the small cohort of the most able pupils. Furthermore, not all teachers are skilled in using questioning to assess pupils' understanding and deepen their thinking.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils quickly develop their confidence and resilience when they join the school. This is because the school provides excellent opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils greatly appreciate the support they are given by members of staff. For example, one pupil described the school positively, 'like one of those places that you never imagine existed'.
- Pupils' individual development plans focus sharply on what each pupil needs to do in order to develop the wider social skills that will enable them to be successful in later life. Members of staff rigorously monitor the progress that pupils make in these areas and the evidence they have gathered emphatically indicates that pupils make rapid progress in all areas of their personal development.
- Pupils are supported to make healthy-lifestyle choices. The school meals are nutritious and appreciated by pupils. Members of staff routinely promote the virtues of regular exercise and healthy eating. Pupils have recently been completing work on how to

maintain a healthy heart and can demonstrate a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to maintain their mental and physical health.

- Leaders have ensured that every effort is made to promote pupils' emotional well-being. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with members of staff, particularly their key workers, and they feel confident to discuss their feelings in an open and honest manner. Leaders have also ensured that pupils have access to additional support, such as clinical psychologists, should the need arise.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They also articulate a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This is because the school's work to promote safety threads throughout the curriculum and has rightly been prioritised by leaders. For example, pupils regularly complete work that helps them to make informed choices about alcohol, drugs and relationships.
- Pupils are fully supportive of the school's comprehensive anti-bullying strategy. One pupil told the inspector that 'this school does not do bullying' and all pupils agreed that bullying in its different forms is very rare. Leaders' records of bullying are meticulous and confirm the exceptionally low levels of bullying within the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in assemblies and at break and lunchtime is impeccable. Pupils are exceptionally responsive to established routines. They are enthusiastic about the school's reward systems and keen to avoid sanctions that they see as fair and proportionate.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is impressive. All pupils improve their behaviour markedly when they join the school. Little time is wasted in lessons and pupils demonstrate a consistent determination to make progress with their learning.
- On the rare occasions when low-level misbehaviour is evident, teachers and other adults quickly redirect pupils so that they remain engaged in their learning.
- Pupils who arrive at the school with challenging behaviour, demonstrate sustained improvements in their conduct. Leaders' records clearly indicate that the frequency of serious incidents of misbehaviour has declined markedly in recent years. As a consequence, fixed-term exclusions are very rarely issued by school leaders.
- Pupils interact with adults and their peers positively and respectfully.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent when pupils attend courses at local colleges. Members of staff from these institutions are complimentary about the conduct and attitude of pupils from the school. Pupils are safe when they access these provisions because they are always accompanied and closely supervised by staff from the school.
- Attendance is high. Leaders have ensured that no pupils are disadvantaged by regular absence. Pupils say that they attend regularly because they enjoy school and recognise the important role it plays in their lives.
- Pupils' punctuality is also excellent. Pupils understand the importance of good punctuality and, on the rare occasions when they are late to a lesson because of an additional planned activity, they apologise to members of staff with sincerity.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The vast majority of pupils make good progress, mostly from low starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. They fill in gaps from their previous schooling and make good progress towards the standards achieved by other pupils with similar starting points.
- Leaders have established a culture where literacy development plays a core role within the curriculum. Pupils read for pleasure and staff ensure that pupils read books that fire their imagination and are closely aligned to their reading and spelling ages. Pupils enjoy learning new words and are keen to develop their vocabulary and use new words in different contexts.
- Pupils make good progress with their functional numeracy and literacy and this helps them to access the wider curriculum. Pupils also make good progress in mathematics and English.
- Pupils make particularly rapid progress in art and photography. They make similarly fast progress in courses provided by alternative providers.
- For the last two years, all Year 11 pupils have left the school with a suite of qualifications that has represented good progress from their relative starting points.
- The most able pupils make good progress. A number of previous pupils have progressed to prestigious universities and the most able pupils currently at the school make good progress in relation to the challenging targets they are set by leaders.
- The school prepares pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education or training. Leaders have ensured that pupils in all year groups benefit from an extensive programme of work-related learning. As a result, all pupils are well supported with their future career planning, and almost all pupils can explain what they would like to do in the future and what they need to do to get there. All pupils over the last two years have advanced to appropriate destinations, overcoming significant barriers on the way.

Sixth form provision

Good

- A very small number of students resit Year 11 to ensure that all leave the school with the skills and qualifications that will enable them to successfully access their preferred post-16 course.
- Students who resit Year 11 benefit from the same impressive range of work-related learning opportunities as pupils in key stage 4. Leaders liaise effectively with key professionals who have been involved with each student to ensure that they access appropriate courses and that their engagement, attendance and success are carefully tracked upon leaving the school. Careers guidance is of a very high quality and this small group of students are guided to a range of appropriate destinations.
- Students continue to make rapid progress with their social development in the sixth form. Students enjoy mature and considerate relationships with their teachers and they make great strides with their behaviour and personal development.
- Students continue to make good progress with the development of their English and

mathematical skills in the sixth form as a result of good teaching.

- Students benefit from an extensive range of personal development opportunities that help them to keep safe and prepare them life after school.

School details

Unique reference number	134191
DfE registration number	909/6053
Inspection number	10034047

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Principal	Donagh McKillop
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,050
Telephone number	01539 562006
Website	www.kedlestongroup.com/wings-cumbria
Email address	wingscumbria@kedlestongroup.com
Date of previous inspection	6–8 May 2014

Information about this school

- Wings School is a small, residential, coeducational special school. It opened in April 2003 and is owned by Kedleston Group Ltd. The school is located on a spacious site of 24 acres. The site has been developed to include residential units, bungalows and houses, arranged around an indoor sports hall and a courtyard with classrooms and offices.
- The school provides residential and day provision for boys and girls aged between 10 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 school is registered to admit up to 60 pupils. Currently, there are 37 pupils on roll. Nearly all pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The large majority of pupils are looked after by their local authorities. The school has pupils from a number of local authorities across England.
- The school currently provides full-time residential placements for most of its pupils and 38 week placements for a few.
- The school uses four alternative educational sites. Some pupils complete courses at Lancaster and Morecambe College, Kendal College, Myerscough College and Witherslack Hall Equestrian Centre.
- The school's stated aim is 'to provide a high-quality education in a positive and nurturing environment in which every opportunity is taken to promote confidence and emotional well-being and enable young people to develop the range of skills that they will need for life beyond school.'

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects and across the full age range with the assistant headteacher. He scrutinised examples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects with the assistant headteacher.
- The inspector met with the principal, the chief executive officer of Kedleston Group Ltd, senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, the school's educational psychologist and the recently appointed educational quality-assurance lead of Kedleston Group Ltd.
- The inspector spoke with a representative from one of the alternative providers used by the school.
- The inspector spoke formally to a number of groups of pupils. He also talked with pupils informally during lessons, break times and meal times.
- Pupils were observed in assemblies, at break and lunchtimes, and when moving around the school.
- The inspector considered responses to the inspection questionnaire submitted by 18 members of staff. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be taken into consideration.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- During the inspection, it was identified that the school was educating pupils outside the age range for which they were registered. The Department for Education extended the commission of this inspection to determine the suitability of the curriculum for this lower age.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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