

Inspection of Wings School

Whassett, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7DN

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy being at Wings School and that staff keep them safe. Any negative experiences of education that pupils have previously had are soon behind them. Pupils appreciate the support that staff provide.

Pupils know that leaders and other staff expect them to work hard. Pupils have many opportunities to gain the highest qualifications that they can. By the time they leave the school, most of them have the qualifications that they need for the next stage of their education or employment.

Pupils arrive at the school with a range of needs related to behaviour or emotional and mental health. Pupils receive very strong guidance from staff to help them to improve their behaviour. They develop high levels of respect for each other and members of staff. There is not much bullying, but pupils said that staff respond to it quickly and effectively.

Pupils have many opportunities to take part in activities outside the classrooms. Leaders help them to develop their interests and talents. For example, some take part in sports like boxing or rugby and compete at regional level. Other pupils enjoy clubs, such as the history club or 'dungeons and dragons'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have an ambitious curriculum in place that fulfils the expectations of the independent school standards (the standards). In the majority of subjects, leaders have designed the curriculum well, and they have arranged what pupils learn in an appropriate order. However, sometimes the curriculum content and sequence of learning are not as clear as they could be. Teachers typically present the knowledge that they teach pupils clearly. They have effective ways to assess pupils' understanding, both in class and at the end of units of study.

All pupils usually leave the school with qualifications in English, mathematics and science as a minimum. Across most subjects, there is a logical order to the knowledge that pupils learn. Consequently, pupils' knowledge in most areas grows effectively as they progress through the curriculum. However, in a few subjects, such as the photography aspect of art and physical education (PE), it is not consistently clear what knowledge pupils need to acquire or how new knowledge will build on previous learning. This means that pupils do not develop their knowledge as securely as possible in all subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and receive helpful support and training from leaders. Teachers use effective ways to enable most pupils to know more and remember more. They assess what pupils have remembered in various ways. For example, they check pupils' previous learning at the start of lessons or give tests at

the end of a topic. They use assessment information effectively in order to plan future teaching.

Leaders make reading a priority. They check on pupils' reading ability when they start at the school. Staff identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge and support them effectively. This includes teaching phonics to pupils in the early stages of reading. These pupils have reading books which match their knowledge of phonics well and enable them to become fluent readers.

Pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour and show highly positive attitudes to their work. Staff very effectively teach pupils how to develop a high degree of self-control. There is very little disruption to learning and pupils show a great deal of respect to staff and other pupils. Leaders have exemplary ways of supporting the small number of pupils who sometimes struggle to behave consistently well.

Leaders plan a very wide range of well-organised activities. Pupils enthusiastically take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and take on positions of responsibility in the school council. Such activities ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop exceptionally strong resilience, independence and confidence. Pupils receive high-quality guidance on careers. For example, they enjoy regular visits from external careers advisers. Leaders have also restarted work-experience opportunities which they had to remove during the pandemic. Pupils receive independent information on both academic and technical opportunities.

Leaders identify pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Staff focus on supporting pupils' social and emotional needs, with highly positive effects on their behaviour and attitudes. As a result, pupils access learning successfully across most of the curriculum.

Leaders do all that they can to manage teachers' workload. Staff who spoke with inspectors said that leaders are supportive of their welfare. Teachers said that they benefit from well-organised training.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets all the standards. There is a suitable room for the care of pupils who may be sick or injured. The school has well-maintained toilets and washing facilities for pupils. There are also showers and a changing area for when pupils take part in PE.

Leaders have all the required documents in place. There is a suitable safeguarding policy. Leaders have published this on the school's website. There are also policies for matters such as health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment. Leaders implement these policies effectively.

The chair and members of the proprietor body understand their roles and duties well. They regularly check whether the school is meeting the standards consistently. Members have a wide range of experience, including in business and in education. They hold school leaders to account for their work effectively. They have ensured that they comply with guidance on providing relationships and sex education.

Leaders have a suitable plan to enable pupils with disabilities to access the school. Leaders' planned actions include providing written information in alternative formats if needed and carrying out an audit of classrooms to ensure suitable resources are in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have thorough processes in place to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. They make sure that any pupil who needs help receives it. They contact other safeguarding agencies if required. Leaders understand how to manage allegations about staff if they ever needed to do so.

Leaders provide pupils with a wealth of information about how to stay safe. They encourage an open culture in school, where pupils feel safe to report anything that worries them or makes them feel uncomfortable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects in the curriculum, it is sometimes not clear what content pupils will learn and in what order. This means that pupils cannot build their knowledge as effectively as possible. Leaders must ensure that, across the whole curriculum, there is clear content which is well sequenced to enable pupils to know more and remember more.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	134191
DfE registration number	909/6053
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10203824
Type of school	Independent school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	10 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Donagh McKillop
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,060
Telephone number	01539 562006
Website	www.kedlestongroup.com/wings-cumbria
Email address	wingscumbria@kedlestongroup.com
Dates of previous inspection	13 to 15 June 2017

Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection was from 13 to 15 June 2017.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- There were no post-16 pupils in the school at the time of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors spoke with the chair and a member of the proprietor body, the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, art, science and personal, social, health and economic education. In each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. They checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils. They talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding matters, pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They looked at a range of other policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and their education. They looked at pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. They also considered responses to the questionnaire for staff and the pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector
Julie Morley

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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