

Inspection of Wigston Birkett House Community Special School

Station Road, Wigston, Leicestershire LE18 2DT

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school. Pupils say that they feel safe and are happy at the school. Staff are very caring and supportive. They understand pupils' individual needs well. Parents and carers appreciate the help that staff give them and their children. One parent expressed a view that was shared by others when they stated, 'This school has been incredible to both our child and our family as a whole.'

Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils know staff will look after them and help them to learn. Staff are very skilled at meeting the pupils' complex needs.

Leaders have high expectations that there will be 'no glass ceiling' for any pupil. They want all pupils to be ready for their next steps. They ensure that the school supports all pupils to make progress towards this aim.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They engage well with their learning. Lessons are not affected by disruption since staff support pupils to understand and manage their emotions. Distress is minimised because staff understand pupils' needs. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens. They are certain that if bullying did happen staff will deal with it quickly and effectively.

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

Leaders have rewritten the curriculum to cater for pupils' wide-ranging needs and abilities. After an assessment of their needs, each pupil joins one of three 'coloured' curriculum pathways.

Pupils on the blue pathway experience a sensory-based curriculum. Teachers establish clear routines and expectations. They adapt the learning environment to suit pupils' needs, paying careful attention to any sensory needs. Pupils enjoy well-planned therapeutic activities. Staff establish caring relationships with pupils. They help them to feel safe and secure.

On the yellow and green pathways, most subjects meet pupils' needs well. Teaching by skilled teachers ensures that pupils develop their knowledge and skills well. However, in mathematics, leaders have not given enough thought to how they teach the curriculum so that they cater for pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils are often introduced to new mathematical concepts before they are ready to learn them.

Leaders have prioritised reading for pupils on the green and yellow pathways. They have adopted a systematic phonics programme to support the teaching of early reading. Pupils are able to apply their phonics knowledge effectively when reading unfamiliar words. Staff are well trained to help pupils become more confident and fluent readers.

Children get off to a strong start in the early years. This is because leaders are ambitious for all children to achieve their potential. They have ensured that communication should 'underpin everything' so children can be successful.

Older students on the senior site benefit from a curriculum that helps to make them ready for their adult lives. Leaders and staff provide access to high-quality careers education, information and guidance. This is delivered in conjunction with an external provider. Leaders have provided opportunities for work experience and taster days at colleges. Students speak enthusiastically about how much they have gained from these experiences.

Staff know all pupils well. The class teams work well together to ensure that they meet individual pupils' needs. Staff provide consistent care and attention to all pupils.

Teachers use targets from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to produce individual education plans (IEPs) that outline the support for each pupil. However, there is not a consistent approach to checking the effectiveness of targets in IEPs. Some targets may not be the most appropriate for pupils. Teachers are not always aware of the targets that previous teachers have set. The information leaders gather about pupils' learning and development does not always provide clear evidence of the progress that pupils are making towards achieving their targets.

Developing pupils as individuals is a strength of the school's provision. Leaders and staff make sure that pupils are aware of key values such as respecting and valuing differences. They have also found ways of introducing pupils to the concept of democracy through voting. Pupils who are part of the school council help to plan event days such as the recent Jubilee party. Pupils enjoy a range of lunchtime clubs and activities, with the 'Kahoot club' being a firm favourite.

Pupils benefit from clear and simple routines. Staff encourage pupils to focus on what is happening in the classroom. They support pupils to manage their behaviour well. Most pupils pay attention and join in with lessons because of the consistent efforts of the staff.

Leaders have ensured that they maintain close contact with families. All parents inspectors met said that they appreciate the efforts staff make to keep them updated about their children's learning and welfare.

Staff value the support leaders give them. They say that leaders care about their well-being and are considerate of their workload.

Governors have an ambitious vision for what they want pupils to achieve. They have ensured that there is a clear strategy to achieve this vision. They are working with leaders to try to overcome the difficulties of operating a school over five different sites.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team is knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs and particular vulnerabilities. Staff are well trained to recognise any signs that might cause concern about pupils' welfare. Leaders closely monitor behavioural changes of any non-verbal pupils to identify any early indicators of concern.

Safeguarding records are accurate. Leaders act on any concerns in a timely manner. They work with appropriate agencies when appropriate so that pupils receive the right support. Leaders have appropriate procedures in place to manage any allegations. There is an honest and open culture around safeguarding. Staff work with pupils and parents to ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the mathematics curriculum is precisely sequenced towards clearly defined end points. Teachers do not consider well enough how they take into account pupils' needs and build on what pupils do or do not already know. As a result, pupils often learn about new mathematical concepts before they are ready to do so. Leaders need to ensure that the mathematics curriculum is coherently sequenced to meet all pupils' needs.
- Leaders have not ensured that they have a comprehensive overview of the targets that pupils are set through their IEPs. Leaders and teachers do not always know how pupils' targets have developed over time. Some targets are not always precise enough to allow pupils to make the maximum amount of progress possible. Leaders must ensure that their oversight of IEPs is sufficiently comprehensive so that the targets pupils are set focus precisely on catering for their individual needs. This, in turn, will help pupils to achieve as highly as they should in their learning and development.

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138935
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10212204
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	247
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andy Mcquaid
Headteacher	Chris White
Website	www.birketthouse.leics.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides education to pupils aged four to nineteen who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include: specific learning difficulty; visual impairment; hearing impairment; speech, language and communication; autistic spectrum disorder; multi-sensory impairment; physical disability; moderate learning difficulty; severe learning difficulty; and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- The school operates on five different sites. The main school, Wigston Birkett House, is in Wigston. The four other provisions are based on the sites of two different primary and two different secondary schools.
- The school has expanded to accommodate a larger number of pupils since its last inspection.
- The school does not use make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, communication, mathematics, science and personal, spiritual and health education (PSHE). For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at individual pupils' EHC plans and checked these against the school's provision.
- Inspectors spoke to the leader of the early years provision and visited the early years foundation stage area.
- Inspectors spoke to the leaders of the sixth form and visited the sixth-form classroom and the 'senior site'.
- Inspectors heard pupils in different year groups read books.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to gather their views.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the safeguarding team. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Watkins

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Ofsted Inspector

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