



Office for Standards
in Education

Wings School

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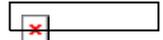
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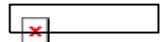
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Introduction and summary

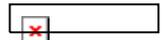


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

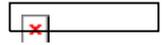


Wings School is a residential school registered with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for up to 28 girls and boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties aged 11 - 16 years. The school opened in April 2003. There are currently 22 pupils on roll, of whom 12 are girls. A number of pupils have specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and disorders in attention and communication, in addition to their behavioural problems. Pupils are referred from a wide catchment area, including Scotland and the south of England. All have statements of special educational need, or the Scottish equivalent. The places of half of the pupils are funded solely by their local education authorities (LEAs) and half jointly by their LEAs and social services departments. The school is registered as a children's home with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) as some of the boarders (currently six) remain at school during the holidays.

The school is in a rural location in South Cumbria, on a 24-acre site. There is a purpose-built teaching base. The residential provision is adjacent on the site, comprising two large houses and two small bungalows which have recently opened as semi-independent accommodation for more mature pupils. The bungalows have been registered by CSCI to increase the total number of boarders to 36 pupils. The school is awaiting consent from the DfES to increase the number of pupils to this total.

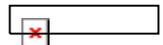
Wings School plans to provide as close an experience as possible to that of a mainstream school, while supporting and developing pupils' ability to cope with a structured classroom environment and an academic curriculum. The school aims to develop pupils' self-awareness and their capability for self-management, so as to reduce their reliance on external control. It seeks to provide a high-quality living and learning environment to reflect its ambitious aspirations for the pupils.

Summary of main findings



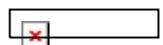
Wings School has quickly established itself as a very good school. It provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum within which work is accurately matched to the pupils' capabilities. The pupils are well taught and make good progress in lessons. The quality of their care is excellent. There is a conscious and very evident consistency in the way that pupils are managed. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. All staff show open warmth towards the pupils and make clear their high expectations for pupils' academic and social success. The young people respond by striving hard to meet these aspirations and by returning the consideration and respect shown to them. They make very good progress in their personal development. They appreciate and respect the outstandingly pleasant learning, residential and outdoor environments. The pupils and their parents express high opinions of all aspects of the school.

What the school does well



- it is very successful in meeting its aim to nurture pupils' academic and personal development;
- a combination of small teaching groups, good teaching, close adult support and encouragement, well-chosen resources and interesting activities leads to good progress in lessons;
- procedures for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress are effective;
- a wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided;
- thorough staff training and good communication result in a high degree of consistency in all that staff do;
- strategies to encourage pupils to gain greater independence are very effective;
- staff maintain close contact with parents and carers despite many families living a long distance away; and
- the school has developed rapidly into a well-managed and self-evaluative organisation and is well placed to improve further.

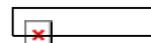
What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



The school meets all but one of the regulations. In order to comply fully, it should:

- implement the outline plan to replace the sports hall with a building in which heating and ventilation are satisfactory.

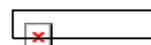
Next steps



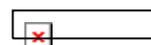
Whilst not specifically required by the regulations, the school may wish to consider the following points as areas for development in addition to the agenda for action already set out in the school development plan:

- continue to build up the range of fiction and non-fiction books in the school library and identify an area dedicated more clearly to use as a library; and
- disseminate the best practice in the marking of pupils' work so that a greater proportion includes suggestions for improvement.

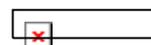
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The curriculum is broad and balanced. The timetable provides for six 45-minute lessons each day. This allows for a balance of work in subjects across the week. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). This meets the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational need, many of which require access to the full National Curriculum. There are well-written policies which set out the school's rationale for teaching and assessing each subject. Schemes of work are appropriate for all subjects; they describe lesson content and teaching approaches for each term for every year group. They set out the key learning objectives for each module of work, in most cases for pupils of higher and lower levels of ability. These schemes are scrutinised by the curriculum co-ordinator to ensure that their content is appropriate, that objectives are clear and measurable, and that cross-curricular links are incorporated, such as those relating to the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

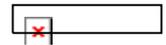
There is a good range of activities within each subject, so that the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study is taught. For example in ICT, the school has taken care to ensure that resources for teaching control technology are available. There is a strong focus on developing literacy skills, and each morning begins with a short lesson in basic skills with individual work for every pupil. This draws upon a commercial scheme designed to improve reading and spelling skills.

The collection of fiction and reference books which comprise the library is limited and should be enhanced as funds and priorities permit. Otherwise, there are sufficient resources for teaching and learning. Resources for science, physical education (PE), music, design and technology (D&T) and ICT are particularly good.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities, some planned and led jointly by classroom and residential staff, complements the academic curriculum. An afternoon of 'Enrichment Activities' at the end of the week provides a variety of valuable academic and social activities in a less formal context.

The school seeks to offer a '24-hour curriculum' with the aim of providing the best support for pupils' all-round progress. This is achieved through frequent and effective communication and through consistency of approach between classroom and residential teams. Key objectives for pupils' personal development are shared between the two teams. There are many effective links between the academic and the residential provision. For example, pupils build hutches in D & T lessons to house pets in the residential setting. The head of care takes a lead in arranging work experience in conjunction with the teacher responsible for careers. A number of teachers and teaching assistants work in the residences at weekends and in the evenings. Both academic and residential staff lead trips and activities such as adventure holidays and cycle journeys. Activities in the residential setting are well planned and managed.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is good overall. It is good or better in three quarters of lessons and never less than satisfactory. The best teaching is found where teachers work within their subject specialisms. Written plans are prepared for every lesson. These include varying amounts of detail according to teachers' preferences, but all set out a small number of key learning objectives, define the role of the teaching assistant and include a short list of vocabulary associated with the topic being studied.

Lessons begin promptly and teachers are ambitious in the amount of work they prepare for pupils. The lesson objectives are shared with the group. The pace of lessons is usually high and teachers are enthusiastic in their approach. Classes are small and there are invariably two adults with each. Teaching assistants take an energetic and pro-active role. These factors combine to make most lessons into intensive learning experiences. Resources are often well-chosen and attractive, and topics are selected for their potential interest for pupils, helping them to engage with the content of the lessons and remain on task. Many lessons conclude with effective question and answer sessions which check on pupils' learning and make them aware of their new knowledge.

As a result of their emotional difficulties, pupils can be difficult to manage and to engage in the lesson, particularly at the outset, so that teachers have to work hard to draw them in. Several lessons followed a pattern of increasing interest and co-operation on the part of the pupils, who were initially volatile and easily distracted, but who subsequently became eager participants as the lesson went on. Pupils respond particularly positively to practical work and they use tools, computers and apparatus sensibly. Discussion sessions are managed skilfully, using a variety of techniques and a vigorous teaching approach. As a result, pupils sustain their involvement for long periods in lessons with little practical activity. They usually respond well to the many opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups.

In a small number of lessons, there were isolated elements of weakness; these included missed opportunities to use suitable resources to illustrate the topic or to challenge appropriately pupils' ability or independence. However, good relationships and positive responses from the pupils outweighed any such weaknesses, so that they still made progress. Pupils' work is marked consistently in an encouraging manner, but only a few pieces of work have any comment indicating how performance might be improved. The best practice could usefully be disseminated.

Senior staff regularly monitor and report on the quality of teaching. Teachers are encouraged to explore and develop individual approaches to teaching which work particularly well with this group of pupils. For example, each PE lesson begins and ends with the completion of a planning and evaluation sheet by each pupil. This impresses on pupils that PE is not merely an enjoyable activity,

but is also a serious learning opportunity. The value and interest of these sheets is being developed further with the inclusion of digital photographs taken by the pupils during the activities.

There are effective arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' attainments and progress. Support for the assessment process, particularly the initial analysis of pupils' weaknesses in basic skills, helps teachers to plan to meet these needs on the basis of the assessments. The assessment of pupils' subject skills and knowledge is well founded upon National Curriculum levels. This has provided an informative overview of attainments in every subject, and is beginning to yield a profile of progress as data is accumulated over time.

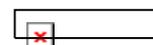
Reports on pupils' progress are written termly. These present an outstandingly clear account of pupils' current attainment and recent progress in each subject. References to the learning objectives set out in the schemes of work for subjects help to exemplify pupils' attainment. In addition, many subject reports include practical examples of what pupils can do in the subject, for example solving a particular type of equation in mathematics. Teachers and residential staff also provide helpful overviews of pupils' responses, attitudes and social development. Information for pupils' annual reviews linked to their statements of special need is comprehensive and informative.

As a result of the effective teaching and support, pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy and in the broader curriculum, and very good progress in terms of their personal development. Pupils feel strongly that they are successful as a result of the effective teaching and because of the staff's readiness to help with any problems. Because of the pupils' difficulties, their profiles of academic progress do not conform to any consistent pattern, but early results from standardised reading and spelling tests include some remarkably good gains over the course of a year. Pupils take part in the National Curriculum Key Stage 3 tests. The school is preparing pupils to take an ambitious range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in Year 11, and all the indications are that pupils will do well. For example, the Year 10 pupils have all gained sufficient Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) Unit Awards to receive an Entry Level accreditation in science.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It provides a wide programme of activities which reflect the school's philosophy and ethos. The aim of raising pupils' self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-confidence permeates all aspects of the academic and residential life of the school.

Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced by a daily assembly during which there is opportunity for reflection as well as a strong focus on developing pupils' self-esteem as expressed by the Wings School philosophy. An excellent assembly on smiling and laughing focused on the positive aspects of life and promoted co-operation and social skills as well as making spiritual links. Visits to places of worship for different faith communities provide further experiences.

The good examples set by staff help to develop pupils' sense of morality. This is reinforced by elements of the well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) course. As well as considering personal morality, pupils have opportunities to look at wider moral issues in RE and PSHE as seen in the lessons on the passion of Christ and on ageing. Pupils are encouraged to consider the effects of their actions on others.

The school takes care to provide situations which enhance pupils' social development. At break and lunch times the courtyard is a pleasant environment in which to spend time together in conversation, to use small games equipment and to observe the development and activities of a group of ducklings being raised there. Many similar opportunities occur, for example at meal times in the "Wings Bistro" and when carrying out duties in the residential units. All staff share a focus on promoting positive behaviour and there are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. There is an extensive and imaginative range of activities both after school and during holidays which provide vigorous physical activity and opportunities to explore the natural world, as well as responding to pupils' more reflective emotional needs by planning, for example, 'an evening snuggly with duvets and hot chocolate'. All these are valuable opportunities for pupils to socialise in groups with staff and with members of the wider community.

The school has recently developed accommodation to promote independence for older pupils who reach an appropriate level of maturity. All pupils are encouraged to respond positively to the high quality environment and the school rewards pupils when they demonstrate that they can take care of their bedrooms. They are allowed to shop for new bedroom furniture within a set budget which then becomes their personal property.

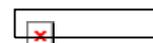
The many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility form a particular strength of the school. These include being a librarian, editing the school newsletter, and acting as tree warden or duck warden. The questionnaires completed by the pupils prior to the inspection show that all believe they are encouraged to do things for themselves and to take on responsibility. They believe also that the school listens and responds to their views and that it helps them to develop an understanding of their own and other people's cultures.

There are opportunities for pupils to consider different cultures through art, most recently through topics on the Far East, aboriginal art from Australia and the art of native North Americans. Both PSHE and citizenship courses cover issues about multi-cultural societies. The citizenship course ensures that pupils are familiar with the major institutions and public services in Great Britain, and it introduces them to international events and issues.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school takes excellent care of its pupils and keeps careful records of accidents and of incidents which have required positive handling. There are clear policies on bullying, child protection and child abuse, health and safety and educational visits. There is a named child protection officer who has received appropriate training, and there are plans for further training for a range of staff. Admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately.

The behaviour policy gives helpful guidance to staff on the promotion of good behaviour and on helping pupils to attain their behavioural objectives. Rewards and sanctions are made clear and are applied consistently throughout the school and residential units. The comprehensive system of rewards and sanctions is reinforced by references in displays throughout the school. Staff promote and operate the rewards and sanctions system consistently. As a result, pupils understand the system and respond positively. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and behaviour. They are fully involved in the operation of the points system operated by the school and in the construction and review of their behaviour management plans. The school takes every opportunity to draw attention to the positive achievements of pupils, for example through the 'Meritorious Board' in the assembly room on which work of especially high quality is displayed.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and has produced an access plan. There are guidelines on the administration of medicines and on the management of relevant medical conditions and staff are aware of procedures for First Aid. The school has had considerable success in working with pupils, their families and medical advisers to reduce or eliminate pupils' reliance on medicines prescribed to assist in managing their behaviour.

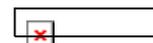
There is a well-qualified support services co-ordinator who maintains comprehensive records relating to health and safety. Risk assessments are undertaken wherever relevant.

CSCI inspected the school's residential provision in April 2004. The report drew attention to a number of improvements required in order to meet fully the national standards for children's homes. These were concerned principally with amendments to documents and with a small number of requirements for further staff training. The school is in the process of responding to all these requirements and has begun to provide evidence of their fulfilment to CSCI.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The school has sufficient staff in all settings, and a good range of subject expertise amongst the teachers. The suitability of staff to work with pupils is checked with the Criminal Records Bureau, and there are procedures in place to check medical suitability and to verify applicants' character and professional references.

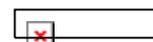
Despite some difficulties, the school has taken appropriate steps to obtain references for all staff as required by legislation. Where references have not been forthcoming, it has sought, and received, assurance from the previous employer that none of these staff have any history which would preclude them from working with children. CSCI and DfES have been kept informed of the details of the difficulties the school has faced.

Wings School requires checks with the police forces in other countries where staff have taught abroad within the last five years. One such check has recently resulted in an appointment not being confirmed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The premises are well suited to their purpose and are of good quality. The classrooms and the dining room are arranged around an attractive courtyard some distance from the pupils' residences. There are good specialist teaching rooms for science, ICT, art and D & T. Another room serves as a base for music and assembly and also houses the library books. There are four general purpose classrooms. It is planned to re-organise the use of rooms so as to provide a kitchen nearer to the

be a valuable addition to the range of specialist rooms when circumstances permit.

The teaching and other areas are very well cleaned and maintained, with good quality furnishings. There are outstandingly attractive displays of pupils' work, including a great deal of high quality art work, and digital photographs of pupils' participation in a wide range of activities in and out of school.

A large sports hall is used for PE lessons and for evening recreational activities. The school is aware that this requires refurbishment and the installation of effective heating and ventilation to meet the required standard. There is an outline plan to replace the hall with a new building next year.

There are extensive areas of mown grass around the site, some allocated to games pitches, and also hard-surfaced tennis courts. There is an adventure playground constructed with logs, and an area devoted to hutches for small animals and ducks. These enhance the school environment and provide good sporting and recreational opportunities.

The pupils' residences are well-constructed and provide attractive living areas. Furnishings are of a high standard.

There is sufficient space in the teaching areas, and adequate washroom provision, to accommodate the proposed increase in numbers to a total of 36 pupils.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets almost all the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *implement the outline plan to replace the sports hall with a building in which heating and ventilation are satisfactory (paragraph 5(p)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



Wings School has very good links with parents and carers and offers daily contact if so desired. In some cases contact is by email. Parents and carers can arrange to visit the school at any time. A member of the residential staff acts as home-school liaison officer and this allows for additional individual links with families. Families, carers and others with significant involvement with pupils are invited to attend their review meetings. The school sends 'positive letters' home which describe pupils' successes, and copies these to officers in pupils' home LEAs. Pupils and staff are now working on the second edition of 'The High Flyer' - a newsletter for pupils, parents and other friends of the school.

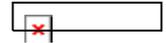
The school's prospectus, which fully meets the requirements, consists of a folder containing a wide range of information about the school and how staff are working to meet the needs of pupils.

Responses to the parents' questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school. All parents understand the complaints procedure, believe the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress and feel comfortable approaching the school about any difficulties.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

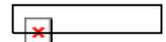


The school has documented complaints procedures for parents and for pupils. The procedure for handling pupils' complaints is also presented in the pupils' handbook in an easily readable form. The procedures meet the requirements of the regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Wings School		
DfES ref number:	909/6053		
Type of school:	Residential special school		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 10,	Girls 12,	Total 22
Number of boarders:	Boys 10,	Girls 12,	Total 22
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 10,	Girls 12,	Total 22
Annual fees (boarders):	£84,564 for term-time boarders. A daily supplement is required for holiday boarding		
Address of school:	Whassett Milnthorpe Cumbria LA7 7DN		
E-mail address:	info@wingsschool.co.uk		
Telephone number:	015395 62006		
Fax number:	015395 64811		
Headteacher:	Mrs P Redican		
Proprietor:	Wings Education Ltd c/o Moore & Smalley Richard House Winckley Square Preston Lancashire PR1 3HP		
Lead Inspector:	Mr R G Dyke HMI		
Dates of inspection:	7 - 10 June 2004		

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