

Kirby Moor School

Longtown Road, Brampton, Cumbria CA8 2AB

Inspection dates

12–14 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, has taken the school from strength to strength. She provides excellent leadership, setting out an ambitious vision for the school.
- Quite rightly, the school has earned a reputation for turning around the lives of pupils when no one and nowhere else can.
- Leaders and directors ensure that all independent school standards are met.
- Pupils enjoy school. Pupils' rates of attendance improve significantly during their time at the school.
- Pupils join the school having been failed by the education system. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are key to the school's success. Within a short space of time, teachers reignite pupils' passion for learning.
- The school has rigorous and robust assessment systems. Teachers use this information well to plan lessons which help pupils catch up quickly.
- Leaders ensure that staff have high-quality training and support to help them meet pupils' diverse special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The school's safeguarding policy and procedures are exemplary. The school follows up assiduously on any concerns. Pupils feel well cared for and safe.
- Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. They use this information well to plan lessons which engage and enthuse pupils. Pupils contribute well in lessons, take care with their work and pay heed to their teachers' advice.
- Pupils join the school with a history of challenging behaviour. Within a few weeks, new pupils conform to the school's high expectations for behaviour. As a result, interruptions to learning are few and far between.
- Almost all pupils lag well behind their peers when they join the school. From these low starting points, high-quality teaching ensures that all groups of pupils, including children looked after and the most able, make rapid progress.
- Pupils in key stage 4 gain a range of qualifications, including GCSEs. This ensures that they secure places on their preferred college courses.

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?

- Further improve teaching and learning by ensuring that subject teachers access more high-quality training and support to keep up to date with developments in their subject areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher sets exceptionally high standards for both pupils and staff. She insists that 'only the best will do'. The headteacher has developed a committed team of skilled senior leaders, teachers and learning support assistants, all of whom share her high expectations.
- Pupils, staff, parents and carers are very supportive of the school's senior leaders. For many pupils, this school was their 'last chance'. Staff are proud to work at the school. Parents are delighted by the positive difference the school has made to their children.
- The headteacher has taken the school from strength to strength since the previous inspection. The increased focus on academic performance is paying dividends. All pupils follow suitable curriculum pathways, which lead to recognised academic qualifications.
- The school's strength is in the teamwork of its staff. Staff work together in the best interests of the pupils. Communication is excellent. Daily briefings ensure that staff have the information they need to respond to pupils' significant and ever-changing needs. Staff work well together, sharing strong practice and specialist knowledge.
- The school works well with external partners. The school provides high-quality information to key stakeholders, including social services, health and education across different local authorities, in a timely fashion. Leaders endeavour to involve families, professionals and pupils in planning and review meetings, both for pupils who are looked after and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which helps pupils rapidly acquire key knowledge, skills and understanding which stand them in good stead for their next steps. Teachers make good use of the local area to bring learning to life. Pupils at Herdley Bank Annexe enjoy learning about life in Roman Britain through trips to nearby Hadrian's Wall. Many pupils are encouraged to join clubs outside school to pursue further activities they have enjoyed, such as trampolining and taekwondo.
- Senior leaders and governors make sure they have up-to-date, reliable information about pupils' attainment and progress across the curriculum. They pick up quickly on any emerging patterns and trends. Leaders take swift action to address any emerging issues. Leaders work tirelessly to look for ways to further improve outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive comprehensive training and support to help them meet the wide range of pupils' SEN and/or disabilities. The school makes sure that it fulfils diligently its statutory responsibilities with regard to the code of practice.
- Leaders carry out frequent checks to ensure that teachers set suitably challenging work for the school's most able pupils, while carefully sequencing tasks for those of lower ability. This makes sure that all pupils, regardless of ability, achieve well from their starting points.
- The school's work with children looked after is 'second to none'. They work closely with social workers, residential care staff, therapists and other professionals involved in the

lives of pupils. These successful partnerships ensure that pupils' wider needs are met through excellent multi-agency working.

- The school works hard to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about the major world faiths, their beliefs and traditions. Pupils consider different points of view about current issues, such as refugees and asylum seekers as well as crime and punishment.
- Despite their own personal challenges, pupils are encouraged to help others. Pupils have raised money for war veterans to mark Remembrance Day, and hosted a coffee morning in aid of a cancer charity.
- The school promotes very well pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In beliefs and philosophy, teachers encourage pupils to learn about and debate a range of ethical issues, such as genetic engineering. Moreover, a trip to the battlefields in northern Europe brought home the devastating impact of war.
- Performance management is used well to improve the quality of teaching across the school. Staff find constructive feedback and challenging targets set by leaders helpful in improving their practice. Leaders encourage staff to develop their careers, for example two support staff who have trained as teachers. Staff appreciate the willingness with which leaders listen to and act on their ideas. Despite the very effective professional development, leaders acknowledge that staff need continual updating to maintain the excellence of their practice.
- Staff morale is high. Staff feel valued and well supported by leaders and each other personally and professionally.
- The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if the proposed material change, to lower the age range from nine to 18 to seven to 18 and increase the school's capacity from 40 to 50 pupils, is implemented.

Governance

- Governance of the school is strong. Directors share the headteacher's ambitious vision for giving every pupil a second chance to make a success of their education. Directors are effective in both supporting the school and holding it to account.
- Directors make sure safeguarding arrangements are effective. They ensure that all concerns are acted on swiftly and decisively by leaders so that pupils are kept safe.
- Directors have an accurate view of the school's work. Regular visits to school, meetings with the headteacher and discussions with pupils and staff help them keep a close eye on the school. Directors employ an external consultant to reassure themselves that they have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, as well as to support the headteacher's performance management.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that staff are up to date with their training so that they carry out their safeguarding roles and responsibilities assiduously. The school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents on the school's website. Leaders make sure that the school's

policy complies with locally agreed procedures as well as statutory guidance. Record-keeping is meticulous. The school works well with external partners to ensure that children and their parents receive the help and support they need. Leaders do not hesitate to seek advice and guidance from other professionals to reassure themselves that they have done everything they should when there are any concerns. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils are confident to talk with a trusted adult if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils, parents and carers agree that pupils are cared for well and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Senior leaders have taken effective action to further improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. High expectations and aspirations are promoted by teachers. At the heart of their outstanding provision are the high-level skills and commitment of teachers and learning support assistants. Teachers have a very sharp focus on academic progress.
- Almost all pupils join the school with a long history of educational failure. Within a short space of time, teachers help pupils find their zest for learning. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They talk about how their teachers make them think hard and make learning interesting and fun.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding, deepen their learning and refocus their attention. As a result of high-quality training and support, teachers now incorporate questioning into their planning so that they use it routinely in lessons. This approach is helping pupils to make rapid gains in their knowledge and skills.
- Comprehensive assessments when pupils join the school help teachers accurately identify gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers use this information well to plan next steps. Work in books and discussions with pupils confirm that lessons build on prior knowledge and skills and that the level of challenge is appropriate.
- Teachers provide pupils with a wealth of meaningful opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. In line with the school's policy, teachers ensure that pupils are given helpful feedback about the quality of their writing, including spelling, punctuation and grammar, across the curriculum. Pupils pay heed to their teachers' advice and guidance which helps them improve their work.
- Teachers know their pupils very well. They plan tasks which engage and enthuse pupils. For example, in mathematics the teacher sets problems which capture pupils' interests; for instance, working out percentages and fractions based on the values of cars. In English, the judicious choice of reading books ensures that pupils read books which resonate with their own experiences, as well as broaden their understanding of the world.
- Pupils develop a love of reading. Frequent, well-planned reading comprehension lessons help pupils acquire essential skills so that they can start to enjoy reading. Pupils talk confidently about different genres and authors they like, from Roman history to Charles Dickens.
- Teachers set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour in lessons. They make sure pupils are in no doubt about the high standards they expect for presentation, quality and quantity of work completed.

- Leaders have focused on developing the role of homework in improving pupils' independent study skills. The homework club supports those pupils who need further help and support to hone study skills, including revision for examinations. Pupils talk positively about how helpful they find the tasks set in consolidating their learning from lessons.
- Teachers make sure that parents and carers are well informed about how well pupils are getting on. Comprehensive annual reports, regular parents' meetings and frequent telephone calls home mean that parents and carers feel valued partners in their children's education.
- Teachers are eager to further develop their subject-specialist knowledge and skills. They are well equipped to deal with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, with the increasing focus on more academic pathways for pupils and the rise in the number of younger pupils joining the school, teachers recognise the need to keep up to date with subject-specific developments.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Kirby Moor is the 'last hope' for most pupils. Many pupils arrive at the school with negative views of themselves and education. Staff make the most of every opportunity to 'hold a mirror up' to pupils to help them recognise their strengths. As a result, pupils develop as confident and committed learners.
- The school provides a wealth of opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to learn about keeping themselves healthy. Staff make good use of local amenities, including sports centres, so that pupils can take part in frequent physical activity. Pupils enjoy trying out a range of different sports, including football, tag rugby, dodgeball and swimming. Pupils are taught about the risk of smoking, drugs and alcohol abuse, sexual health and nutrition.
- Teachers do not shy away from tackling sensitive issues with pupils. During the inspection, a teacher raised pupils' awareness of different faiths and of cultural views on food. The teacher hooked pupils in by asking them to consider whether they would eat a hamster sandwich. In this debate, pupils considered the reasons behind religious and cultural restrictions on foods sensitively and maturely.
- Pupils are adamant there is no bullying at Kirby Moor. However, pupils are confident that staff would deal swiftly and effectively with any rare incidents. Pupils and staff are quick to challenge any isolated homophobic or racist name-calling. More established pupils support staff to help new pupils conform quickly to the school's high standards of tolerance and respect.
- Leaders make sure that the curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils remember the hard-hitting messages they received as part of a visiting theatre company play, concerning child sexual exploitation and domestic violence.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared to move onto post-16 destinations. Independent careers advice aids pupils and their parents and carers as they decide the future direction

that pupils might choose. The pastoral manager works closely with every pupil to prepare meticulously for their next steps. She encourages pupils and their families to attend open days for colleges, participate in taster days for their preferred courses, and take part in summer schools.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Teachers ensure that new pupils settle quickly and conform to the school's high expectations for behaviour. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride, follow instructions promptly and speak politely to staff, visitors and their peers.
- Not a moment is wasted. Well-established routines and clear expectations mean that pupils move swiftly and sensibly between classes at lesson changeovers. Pupils quickly settle in their places so that lessons can start promptly. Staff know pupils very well and employ successful strategies to calm situations and ensure that problems do not escalate.
- The vast majority of pupils have missed huge chunks of schooling prior to starting at Kirby Moor. Despite this, pupils rapidly improve their attendance. Pupils enjoy coming to school so almost all pupils attend school on time, every day.
- The headteacher and pastoral lead work hard to re-engage any pupils whose families struggle to get them to school on time, every day. They work hand in hand with external partners to help these children and their families access the help and support they need. Consequently, most of this small group of pupils improve their attendance rates.
- Almost all pupils have presented with challenging behaviour in their previous schools. Most have had multiple exclusions prior to joining the school. Detailed analysis of pupils' social and emotional behaviour on entry means that staff are able to prioritise each pupil's most pressing issues. Moreover, the rigorous monitoring and tracking mean staff quickly pick up on any emerging difficulties, so that additional support can be put in place. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of pupils dramatically improve their behaviour from their starting points, so that exclusions are few and far between.
- Pupils become highly skilled in accurately evaluating their own behaviour across the school day. Pupils are able to pinpoint any aspects which have let them down. Pupils are keen to please their teachers and motivated by the school's reward system. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their behaviour and accept the consequences of any poor choices.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Kirby Moor succeeds with pupils where many other schools have failed. Pupils join Kirby Moor with a long history of educational underperformance. On entry, the overwhelming majority of pupils are working several years below the standards expected for their age. Despite this, all pupils go on to gain academic qualifications, including GCSEs, and secure places at college for post-16 courses, linked to their interests and aptitudes.
- Teachers carry out detailed assessments of pupils' skills and knowledge when they join the school. This information is used well to plan lessons which help pupils catch up quickly. Teachers make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to grasp basic literacy and numeracy skills, which stand them in good stead for their next steps.

- Pupils make rapid progress from their starting points across the curriculum. Pupils' academic success is particularly strong in English and mathematics due to the commitment of all teachers to address the deficits of the past in these key subjects. Within a short space of time, pupils start to catch up with their peers nationally, in a range of subjects.
- Teachers are adept at developing personalised pathways for pupils so that they fill gaps and acquire knowledge and skills relevant to their own circumstances, while learning to work as part of a group. This helps pupils prepare well for returning to mainstream school, moving on to specialist provision or taking up a college place.
- High mobility presents a particular challenge. Teachers make sure that older pupils gain qualifications as they move through the school so they are well equipped for their next steps at whatever point they move on. For younger pupils, the school works intensively with them to unpick and address presenting issues. This helps teachers to identify the most suitable next steps for these pupils, whether remaining at Kirby Moor, moving back to mainstream education or on to other specialist provision.
- All groups of pupils, including those of lower ability, the most able, disadvantaged, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and children who are looked after by the local authority, achieve well from their different starting points. Teachers are quick to spot any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. They are adept at putting in place additional support to ensure that these pupils continue to make strong progress.
- All key stage 4 pupils follow courses which lead to external accreditation, including functional-skills qualifications and GCSEs. Pupils perform well in examinations and these results stand them in good stead for securing places on the college course of their choice. Pupils who stay in touch with school after leaving college have embarked on successful careers in catering and information technology.

School details

Unique reference number	135410
DfE registration number	909/6056
Inspection number	10038929

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	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	North Lakes Children's Services
Chair	Craig Smith
Headteacher	Catherine Garton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,000–£37,000
Telephone number	01697 742598
Website	http://www.nlcs.uk.com/
Email address	catherine.garton@nlcs.uk.com
Date of previous inspection	14–16 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school is owned and managed by North Lakes Children's Services, which also owns the children's homes where some of the pupils live.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education (DfE), to meet the needs of up to 40 pupils between the ages of nine and 18 years. There are no learners in Years 12 or 13 currently.
- Following a request by the school for a material change, the DfE approved the establishment of a second site. The new site, Herdley Bank Annexe, opened to pupils in October 2016. Herdley Bank Annexe is housed in a building formerly used as a primary

school. Herdley Bank Annexe is approximately 12 miles away from the main school site.

- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Many pupils have further additional needs, including learning.
- A number of local authorities commission placements for pupils at Kirby Moor so that their educational and social care needs can be met.
- Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- Almost all pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- All the pupils on roll currently are boys.
- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- The school was previously inspected in October 2014.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.

Information about this inspection

- At the request of the DfE, a material change to increase the capacity of the school from 40 to 50 as well as to lower the age range of pupils from nine to 18 years to seven to 18 years was considered.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school, accompanied by the headteacher. Inspectors checked work in a range of pupils' books with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, directors and a representative of a local authority which is responsible for a high number of pupils placed at the school.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school self-evaluation and assessment information.
- Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as informally during the school day.
- Inspectors considered the eight responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke formally with two groups of staff and considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Quinn

Her Majesty's Inspector

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