

The Linnet Independent Learning Centre

107 Mount Pleasant Road, Castle Gresley, Derbyshire DE11 9JE

Inspection dates

11 to 13 June 2019

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 quality of leadership is outstanding. The headteacher and head of education use highly effective systems to ensure that pupils make exceptional progress in a wide range of subjects.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers accurately use assessment information to plan lessons at the appropriate level of challenge. Pupils are, therefore, highly motivated, engaged and keen to succeed.
- The headteacher and head of education have ensured that there is a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils experience an extensive range of educational visits to enrich their experience and to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Relationships between all staff and pupils are extremely positive. They treat each other courteously and with respect. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are extremely rare.
- The head of welfare and all staff ensure that pupils are kept safe and feel safe. Staff are highly skilled in dramatically improving pupils' behaviour, attitudes, self-esteem and confidence.
- The headteacher has extremely high expectations of pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning. She is determined for pupils to succeed, despite their previous negative educational and social experiences.
- Pupils receive excellent careers advice and guidance. All pupils gain relevant qualifications and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and thrive in the warm, homely and safe environment. Pupils' attendance improves significantly when compared to that in their previous school or setting.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- Despite offering an excellent range of qualifications the school does not yet offer qualifications that could meet the changing needs of current and future pupils.
- School leaders do not yet have effective links with other schools, including those owned by the same proprietor.

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?

- Continue to offer an excellent range of qualifications in order to meet the changing needs of new and current pupils as they progress through the school.
- Leaders to explore ways of creating effective links with other schools, including those owned by the same proprietor.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher along with the head of education and head of welfare are highly effective in their respective roles. As a team they have developed robust systems to ensure all aspects of the school run smoothly. These systems are monitored and evaluated on a frequent basis to see if any improvements to the school can be made.
- The experienced and well-trained headteacher has high expectations of staff and pupils alike. She is determined that all pupils will succeed at The Linnet despite their previous educational experiences, personal traumas and social, emotional and mental-health difficulties.
- The well-respected head of education ensures that staff receive frequent and useful guidance on how they could improve their practice. Staff told the inspector that they welcome this advice, alongside the opportunity to develop professionally through attending various training events.
- The experienced and knowledgeable head of welfare is effective in ensuring that pupils and staff are kept safe and feel safe. For example, comprehensive and frequent checks are made on the school buildings, fire extinguishers, external lights and the first-aid kits.
- The headteacher has ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced. The inspector observed pupils learning in a wide variety of subjects, including English, mathematics, history, French, design and technology, science and art. There is a comprehensive range of frequent educational visits on offer to help broaden still further pupils' knowledge and skills.
- The science leader monitors carefully the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. There are frequent checks on the quality of pupils' work, accuracy of teachers' assessments, and checks with teachers to ensure the school has the correct resources for any upcoming topic.
- The leader responsible for the use of the pupil premium funding ensures that the extra funding is allocated and monitored closely. Disadvantaged pupils receive extra support to overcome barriers to learning and may receive extra resources to help overcome their social and emotional difficulties. This work helps to ensure that this group of pupils make very good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- The leader responsible for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) ensures that these pupils receive excellent support. The leader ensures that suitable targets are transferred from pupils' EHCP onto their individual education care plans. Pupils' progress towards achieving these targets is monitored frequently, which helps to ensure that pupils are making very good and sometimes outstanding progress, academically, socially and emotionally.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher has undertaken a variety of monitoring activities and has shared his expertise with the heads of education and welfare. This has further strengthened the levels of accountability and helped to improve the quality of information received by the advisory board and proprietor.
- The senior leaders ensure that the pupils' transition into the school is bespoke and well

considered. Before pupils start at the school, there are opportunities for them and their parents or carers to visit the school and for staff to make home visits in order to gather as much information about the pupil as possible. This information is then shared with staff so a decision can be made regarding a possible phased introduction to the school. This thoughtful approach ensures that pupils settle quickly and start to make very strong progress as soon as possible.

- Staff with whom the inspector spoke and who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its leadership. They feel well supported and welcome the opportunities to develop professionally. A typical comment being, 'I am proud to say I work at The Linnet and love telling people about the great work we do.'
- Communication between school and home is a considerable strength. Daily phone calls, communication books and frequent reports home help to keep parents fully informed regarding the improvements made by pupils, academically, socially, behaviourally and emotionally.
- Parents have extremely positive views about the school. A recent parents' questionnaire issued by the school showed that parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its aims, with one parent, typical of many, saying, 'I am so happy my son is here,' and another saying, 'He is like a different child, I feel like I have got my son back.'
- The proprietor and headteacher have ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders have not yet made effective links with other schools, including those owned by the same proprietor, in order to share good practice.

Governance

- The relatively new advisory board have made a good start in effectively monitoring the work of school leaders. The board has a wide range of experienced governors who have the necessary skills and experience in order to challenge school leaders and hold them fully to account for their actions. Individual governors have received appropriate training in such areas as safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.
- The school's link governor visits the school frequently and reports the findings during board meetings. This information ensures that the proprietor and all other governors are kept up to date with the school's strengths and development areas.
- The proprietor has recently arranged for an experienced special schools improvement adviser to visit the school and support the school leaders. This work has strengthened school leadership and encouraged staff to work with even greater togetherness and cohesiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The head of welfare ensures that all staff, including the designated safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding leads, receive appropriate and up-to-date training. Staff demonstrate very good knowledge of how to spot the signs of potential neglect and abuse. Staff are very clear regarding the procedures they should follow should they have a safeguarding concern about a pupil or be worried about the actions of a member of staff.

- Safeguarding concerns are logged diligently, and where further support or advice is required from an outside agency, such as social care, this is sought swiftly.
- Staff receive appropriate child protection training and are provided with copies of the school's most recent safeguarding policies and government statutory guidance as part of their induction process. Ongoing training and safeguarding updates are provided during weekly staff meetings, as and when necessary.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and takes into account the current statutory guidance.
- The proprietor has ensured that all relevant checks are made on adults before they are allowed to work at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers plan a bespoke curriculum for each pupil. Individual subjects, topics and lessons are planned exceptionally well, using precise assessment information. The level of challenge in lessons is, therefore, accurate. Consequently, pupils are thoroughly engaged in the planned activities and are enthusiastic learners who are keen to succeed and progress.
- Teachers use objectives from the national curriculum to plan learning that is specifically tailored to the individual needs of every pupil. Pupils' work is then assessed against these objectives and recorded so that pupils' progress can be carefully checked. The inspector confirmed the accuracy of the school's assessment system by cross referencing teachers' recent assessment judgements with pupils' work in writing and mathematics.
- Daily 'news group' sessions are a highly effective and appropriate way for pupils to socialise and enjoy a positive start to the day. In one group, pupils were enthusiastically discussing potential items to pack for an upcoming residential visit. In the second, pupils were listening attentively to the teacher read a story, while offering sensible and considered opinions on the characters and how the plot may develop in the future.
- Pupils are encouraged to plan some aspects of their own learning. For example, during a history lesson, learning about and researching the British Empire was a selected topic for study.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are given opportunities to develop their self-confidence and speaking and listening skills. One pupil enjoyed exploring the idea of empathy by being given various moral dilemmas. When asked what he would say to his mother if she was wearing a terrible hat, he thoughtfully said, 'I don't like it, but you can wear it if you do.'
- Teachers insist on high standards. Pupils are encouraged to try their very best and to contribute fully during lessons. Pupils respond positively to these high expectations by producing work that is generally neat and well presented.
- Teachers possess excellent subject knowledge. During a science experiment, the teacher gave a clear explanation as to why water pressure caused a pen lid to sink after it had initially floated.
- The lead teacher ensures that staff cover all areas of the curriculum through weekly checks on lesson plans and pupils' work. This comprehensive system ensures that teachers are covering all the necessary subjects and that planned work is appropriate,

enabling pupils to make very good and, sometimes, outstanding progress.

- The head of education has produced a file of moderated work in a wide range of subjects. This enables teachers to check the accuracy of current pupils' assessments.
- Parents are kept up to date with their child's attainment and progress through frequent, detailed reports. The reports are sent home weekly and half-termly, and contain relevant information regarding pupils' progress, attainment, future targets, behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Teachers, key workers and instructors are all highly skilled in building warm, positive relationships with individual pupils. Pupils told the inspector that they felt safe and, when asked who they could talk to at school if they were worried or had a problem, they replied, 'Anyone.'
- Pupils say they feel safe and are kept safe. They have a very good understanding of how to stay safe online and when playing games on the internet. Pupils know not to share personal information with people they do not know.
- Bespoke risk assessments, behaviour management plans and individual care management plans ensure that staff minimise the risk to pupils when they are at school or on educational visits. These documents are bespoke, extremely detailed and reviewed frequently to take account of any potential change in circumstances.
- Pupils display significant improvements in their behaviour, self-esteem and self-confidence when compared to their previous school or setting. Pupils have a vastly improved attitude towards school and learning during their time at the school.
- Pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding through a comprehensive number of educational visits. For example, pupils experience a residential visit to the Isle of Wight and they enjoy numerous visits to local museums, places of worship, castles, galleries and concerts. A recent visit to London incorporated visits to famous landmarks, including Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament.
- Pupils have a healthy breakfast at the start of the day. There are also healthy snacks and drinks available during breaktimes. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy physical activity. They play happily in the school grounds and visit the local leisure centre for physical education lessons.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of the British values of tolerance, respect and democracy. They are knowledgeable regarding faiths and places of worship different to their own. Pupils are, therefore, being prepared very well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy taking on the extra responsibility, for example as an elected member of the school council, or as prefects, friendship counsellors, or junior mentors to younger pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave extremely well during lessons, transition times and during breaktime and lunchtime. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are extremely rare. Pupils told the inspector that any instances of poor behaviour or inappropriate language are dealt with promptly and fairly by staff.
- Pupils' attendance improves dramatically when compared to that in their previous school or setting. The vast majority of pupils' attendance is above the national average for pupils at non-special schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Despite pupils entering the school with knowledge and skills much lower than those typically expected for their age, they make very good and outstanding progress in a wide range of different subjects.
- Pupils settle quickly into the routines and attend school frequently. This, combined with the positive ethos and high expectations set by all staff, ensures that pupils achieve relevant qualifications. Pupils are prepared extremely well for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Pupils have recently achieved qualifications in functional skills 1 and 2 English and mathematics and entry level awards in English, mathematics, science, computing, geography and history. Gaining these qualifications represents outstanding progress from pupils' low and sometimes very low starting points.
- Pupils have recently achieved short course certificates in such areas as sport/fitness, food wise, gardening, food hygiene and first aid.
- Due to the bespoke nature of the curriculum and individual pupils' needs being so unique, there are no particular areas or subjects where the vast majority of pupils excel. However, a significant number of pupils make particularly strong progress and attain well in art.
- The school has recently successfully reintegrated a small number of pupils into mainstream education. This is because pupils have made such good progress in catching up academically, and they attend well and are more emotionally settled.
- The vast majority of pupils enjoy reading and do so daily. The school has been successful in encouraging pupils to read at home by buying books to create pupils' own 'library' at home.
- Pupils receive highly effective careers information, advice and guidance. In Year 9, for example, they have a detailed and appropriate transition plan and have a fortnightly meeting with an independent career adviser. Where appropriate, some pupils undertake work experience. Every pupil leaving the school last year moved on to either further education, training or employment.
- The school currently offers an excellent range of qualifications. However, as current and future pupils' needs change, a wider range of appropriate qualifications is required.

School details

Unique reference number	131327
DfE registration number	830/6033
Inspection number	10078665

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	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Lewis Charlton Ltd.
Chair	Zaheer Esat
Headteacher	Janice Sullivan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£69,000 – £72,450
Telephone number	01283 213 989
Website	www.thelinnetindependentlearningcentre.co.uk
Email address	jsullivan@linnet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 to 19 May 2016

Information about this school

- The Linnet Independent Learning Centre is an independent day special school for boys aged three to 16 years. There are currently 15 boys on roll aged between eight and 16. Boys may be admitted at any point during the academic year.
- Pupils have typically experienced previous trauma and have significant behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour because of their complex difficulties.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans. A few pupils are in the care of their placing local authorities.

- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in May 2016 where it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school's motto is 'Well-being, involvement, support and challenge'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was unannounced. This was because the proprietor had requested a material change inspection in order for the school to admit more pupils. However, on starting the standard inspection, the inspector was informed that the material change inspection was no longer required.
- The inspector observed the learning in 12 lessons or part lessons, in a wide range of subjects. He examined all the workbooks from six pupils and checked the accuracy of their assessments with the school's assessment system. For these activities, the inspector was accompanied by the head of education and sometimes by the headteacher.
- The inspector undertook a tour of both school buildings and held a range of meetings with the headteacher, head of education and the head of welfare. He also met formally with the executive headteacher, link governor, proprietor, school improvement adviser and the leaders for careers information and guidance and for the provision for pupils with SEND. He also spoke with eight teachers, four pupils and two parents.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those relating to the curriculum, assessment, pupils' progress, school improvement planning, risk assessment and records relating to safeguarding.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's Parent View, free-text service or pupils' questionnaires. There were 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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