

# Linton School

## Inspection dates

20–21 November 2018

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b>              |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Good</b>              |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Good</b>              |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Good</b>              |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Outstanding</b>       |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and staff are guided by the genuine belief that every pupil deserves a chance 'to be the best they can be'.
- Leaders and staff work with a passion to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure enough to learn.
- Pupils make substantial progress from their starting points. The strong trusting relationships that they have with staff, and the good-quality teaching and learning that they enjoy, ensure pupils' exceptional and rapid progress.
- Pupils' attendance is significantly better than at their previous schools and has been key to their rapid educational success.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are fully met.
- The proprietor is the sole governor. She is supportive and makes an important contribution to school life. However, she is not as confident as she could be in challenging school leaders.
- Leaders and teachers use assessment information well to match activities precisely to pupils' ability needs and help them improve and move on in their learning.
- Pupils are supported well. Their social, emotional, behavioural and mental health needs are met. They benefit from a thoughtfully personalised curriculum.
- The curriculum is engaging. Teachers make learning interesting. This includes the newly developed outdoor curriculum, where pupils can learn gardening and animal husbandry. However, there are missed opportunities to link this provision more closely to other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are an important part of the work of the school. Strong relationships help pupils develop their self-confidence and begin to feel positive about their future.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils typically conduct themselves appropriately around school. Where difficulties arise, staff are adept at calming the situation quickly.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers draw on prior learning and real life to make learning relevant to pupils. Sometimes pupils lack confidence to work on their own.

### 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 the associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers encourage pupils to develop resilience and confidence in working independently.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - building the confidence of the governance of the school to effectively challenge school leaders
  - exploring further opportunities to increase the effectiveness of outdoor learning to support the application of knowledge, skills and understanding taught elsewhere in school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor, leaders and staff have established a school that is making a positive difference to pupils' lives. As a result, Linton School is a good place to learn. Together with the whole staff team, leaders have created somewhere that welcomes vulnerable pupils and works successfully to remove their barriers to learning.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Firm, supportive boundaries help pupils feel secure enough to learn, begin to experience educational success and start to rebuild their self-confidence.
- The school actively promotes equality and diversity. This helps pupils to become compassionate, respectful and tolerant. Pupils have opportunities to develop consideration of others in the wider community. For example, remembering the victims of a recent bombing incident in the northwest, or learning about animal welfare as part of their animal husbandry skills.
- The leadership team is dedicated and focused. They accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their reflective, proactive approach is evident in a detailed school development plan. This outlines precisely how leaders will address those areas needing further attention. Leaders have developed effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The school has developed an effective system to assess pupils' attainment and progress. It provides leaders with in-depth knowledge of pupils' skills, their learning gaps in academic areas and those related to their personal and emotional development. It is used effectively to assess each individual pupil's needs, to set challenging targets and to plan a personalised curriculum for each pupil. The information gathered allows leaders to analyse pupils' progress regularly.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which pupils find engaging. They benefit from a wide range of subjects, including science, history, geography, creativity and those subjects related to developing their personal, social and emotional health and well-being. A striking feature of the school is the new outdoor curriculum. Pupils benefit from the extensive school grounds and engage in gardening and animal husbandry activities. This provides opportunities for pupils to build their self-worth and sense of compassion. They can also work towards accreditation in horticulture and farming. This outdoor curriculum is still evolving. Leaders have missed some opportunities to use outdoor learning as a way of pupils applying some of the knowledge, skills and understanding that are taught formally into a practical setting, for example in subjects such as mathematics, English and science.
- The school offers a good enrichment curriculum. Pupils also enjoy a range of trips and visits, including boating, bowling and horse riding. These opportunities make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through the school's activities. Pupils learn about, and participate in, activities within the local and wider

community. They raise funds for charities and absorb British values, such as tolerance, respecting differences and the rule of law.

- The school does not receive any pupil premium funding nor additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, all pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC) for their social, emotional and mental health needs. The lead for the provision for pupils with SEND has been very effective in identifying meaningful targets for pupils from their EHC plan. These are reviewed daily and reset each half-term.
- At the time of the inspection, there was a 9-year-old pupil registered in school. The executive headteacher has been made aware that the change in age range requires her to apply for a material change.

### **Governance**

- The proprietor shares a whole-hearted commitment to improving pupils' academic, social and emotional outcomes. She makes an active contribution to the life of the school.
- The proprietor offers a good level of support and is increasingly able to hold school leaders to account. However, she is very aware that education is not her field of expertise. She still relies on receiving external support to help her challenge senior leaders effectively, and to analyse school improvement and progress with confidence.
- The proprietor ensures that the school remains compliant with all independent school standards. She supports the executive headteacher in holding staff to account.
- The proprietor is diligent in carrying out her responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose. Leaders demonstrate a high degree of expertise and knowledge of all matters relating to safeguarding and welfare.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a safe and secure environment by promoting the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Leaders maintain detailed safeguarding records. Staff, senior leaders and the proprietor undertake regular and appropriate training, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. The school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents on request. It is also available on the school's website.
- The school's pastoral support is strong. Senior leaders, liaising with parents and carers, coordinate every aspect of the care that is offered to vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders are very aware of the high level of vulnerability of the pupils in their care. They are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Good relationships with other agencies and with parents and carers ensure that pupils are kept safe and that their welfare needs are met.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers and support staff share leaders' ambitions and belief in the power of education to transform lives.
- Adults work hard to build strong relationships with pupils and to ensure that barriers are broken down. They use these relationships well to build pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence and from there to develop their academic learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are typically good.
- Teachers and support staff provide pupils with well-prepared and motivating activities. They use good-quality, age-appropriate resources to capture pupils' interest.
- There are high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour, which pupils try hard to meet. For example, pupils indicate a clear pride in their well-presented work. If a pupil is late to a lesson, there is an expectation that they will still complete the work set. Breaktimes, lunchtimes and activities are moved flexibly to accommodate this.
- In many areas of the curriculum, teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge. English and mathematics are taught particularly well. They draw on pupils' prior learning and often give real-life, relevant examples to explain what is being taught. Adults are skilful in maintaining pupils' focus on activities and are quick to pick up if a pupil is beginning to struggle.
- Teachers use questioning adeptly to give the right amount of challenge at the right time. They do this without putting too much pressure on a pupil and disheartening them. Equally, they are quick to realise when a pupil is interested in what they are learning. They take this opportunity to ask more probing questions to encourage pupils to think more deeply about their learning, for example by exploring the feelings of characters in class reading books.
- Occasionally, pupils are reluctant to work independently, often relying heavily on adults to guide them. Although the behavioural needs of pupils require a high number of adults available in the classroom and around school, this situation has not aided pupils' ability to build resilience and confidence in their own capability.
- The development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills is a high priority. This is evident from the exceptional progress seen in pupils' books in these subjects. Wherever possible, teachers link subjects across the curriculum, but there remain missed opportunities to make these links in the extensive outdoor curriculum that the school offers.
- The school's systematic approach to reading has greatly improved pupils' reading ability. The exposure they offer pupils to experience more complex texts such as 'Macbeth' has begun to extend their vocabulary, their understanding and pupils' growing love of books.
- The information gathered about pupils is detailed, and teachers use it precisely to ensure that the tasks are well matched to the individual pupil's ability and learning needs.
- Pupils are expected to complete a number of pieces of homework over a half-term. These are organised so that pupils can choose the tasks that they complete. All activities are connected to their personalised curriculum and targets. Pupils, parents and carers enjoy

working on them together.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Both are central to the work of the school. Teachers' and other adults' thorough knowledge of pupils and the strong relationships they build ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils rebuild their confidence.
- Staff are skilled at developing positive relationships with pupils, many of whom have faced and continue to face great personal challenges. Despite many of the pupils having presented with very challenging behaviour in their previous schools, staff have worked adeptly to help them to settle in to the school quickly and begin to 'turn them around'.
- Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff at the start of each day. Adults model respectful and caring behaviour in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils feel relaxed and begin to enjoy school life.
- Pupils are offered a highly personalised personal, social and emotional curriculum based on individual needs. This includes developing pupils in areas based on their personal life experiences and potential future risks. Pupils then engage in a prevention-focused curriculum and are set personal targets to assess their growing resilience.
- Every effort is made to ensure that pupils have access to alternative provision that supports the aspirations and interests of pupils. Staff work hard to prepare pupils by building their self-esteem and social skills. This enables them to engage more effectively in their placements and get an authentic taste of possible future careers.
- Staff actively promote discussions about differences in people and lifestyles. They also encourage conversations about current events, particularly ones that affect pupils, for example knife crime. Despite the complex needs of pupils, they respond well to this. Where they do not, staff skilfully challenge pupils' attitudes or perceptions. Where there are clashes between pupils, these are managed well by staff.
- Bullying is rare and, if it occurs, it is dealt with quickly.
- Parents and carers who spoke with the inspector felt that the school had made a big difference to their children. They commented that children 'felt listened to' and they particularly appreciated how the school 'goes above and beyond', for example by buying an interview outfit and offering interview practise. They felt that communication between home and school was excellent, commenting that: 'We talk every day. It is great to hear good news as well as the bad.'

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Considering the difficulties that pupils have in managing their behaviour, pupils conduct themselves well around school. The school is typically a calm, orderly place where pupils feel safe and able to learn.
- Movement around the school is carefully and sensitively managed by adults, so there is limited opportunity for negative situations to arise. At the same time, adults are mindful of giving pupils space.

- Staff promote consistently high expectations of behaviour, to which pupils respond well. Pupils are increasingly self-regulating their behaviour.
- On the occasions when a pupil is in crisis, staff skilfully deal with the incident, helping pupils to calm down and rejoin their activity. However, pupils are left in no doubt of behaviours which are unacceptable. Some behaviour such as swearing or derogatory language may not be dealt with at the time of the incident, because it may inflame a situation. However, these incidents are logged and talked through with a pupil at their end of day debrief on what went well and what they could have done better.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and supported to establish a safe learning environment in which pupils conform to high standards of behaviour. Pupils value the support they receive from staff and appreciate their measured and caring approach.
- Behaviour logs are well maintained and regularly analysed by senior leaders and the proprietor.
- A computer and text-based reward system is very popular with all pupils. They value their 'dojos' and are visibly proud when a parent or carer responds to their good work or behaviour in a text.
- Pupils who attend Linton have had extremely poor attendance for much of their previous school careers. Their attendance is now excellent and above national averages for mainstream schools. Leaders promote the importance of regular attendance for learning and future employment. Excellent attendance has played an important part in the educational success of pupils. Leaders have effective systems for monitoring attendance and absence.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Pupils make strong and substantial progress from their starting points. Pupils join the school with progress and attainment considerably below their peers. They join Linton having had years of disrupted education, and with a profound sense of disengagement from the school system. Their attitudes to learning, attendance and academic achievement all improve rapidly due to the work of Linton staff. Pupils are making outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Leaders assess pupils when they join the school to establish a wide-ranging picture of their starting points. Pupils are then set very specific goals around their personal, social and emotional development, their progress in English and mathematics and a range of other subjects, including science, geography, creativity and outdoor skills.
- Leaders have devised a comprehensive assessment system which is effective in capturing the individual progress of pupils in a range of areas. It allows leaders to keep a regular check on pupils to ensure that they make sufficient progress against their targets. Often, the ambitious targets set are exceeded. In response to the rapid progress that pupils have made, targets are reviewed very regularly.
- In English and mathematics, with starting points well below what would be expected for their age, pupils have closed the gap in their learning by approximately two years in less than six months. In other subjects, they have closed the gap by approximately a year. This is because: they attend school regularly; they have built strong, trusting relationships with adults; they engage and enjoy learning; and they benefit from good-quality teaching

and learning.

- The school's assessment information and evidence in pupils' books confirm the rapid and sustained progress that pupils are making in a short space of time. For example, pupils' books evidenced that they struggled to write full sentences at the beginning of the academic year but are now able to write at length in pieces such as two-page speeches on gang and knife crime.
- All pupils are identified as disadvantaged and with SEND. They have an education, health and care plan for their significant social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils benefit from highly-personalised support and provision. These pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have linked aspects of the curriculum to awards and accreditation. Creating a package of courses leading to qualifications has raised pupils' self-esteem and confidence in learning. Pupils who felt they had no hope of gaining any qualifications are now proudly working toward entry-level and functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, and BTEC qualifications in science, citizenship, farming and horticulture.
- The school provides bespoke careers guidance and works individually with pupils to prepare them for their next stage in education. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and to explore their aspirations. They are helped to make informed decisions about how to pursue their goals for the future. The curriculum ensures that pupils can develop work-related skills and benefit from an impartial adviser to talk about different career possibilities. Leaders work hard, drawing on pupils' interests and aspirations to set up work experience placements.



## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 145242   |
| DfE registration number | 888/6075 |
| Inspection number       | 10053746 |

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              | Independent special school   |
| School category             | Independent school   |
| Age range of pupils         | 11 to 18   |
| Gender of pupils            | Mixed  |
| Proprietor                  | ROC Northwest Limited  |
| Chair                       | Katie Stephens   |
| Headteacher                 | Emily Haddock  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)    | £54,000 per annum  |
| Telephone number            | 01772 957 074  |
| Website                     | <a href="http://www.lintonschool.lancs.sch.uk">www.lintonschool.lancs.sch.uk</a>             |
| Email address               | <a href="mailto:emilyhaddock@mountwoodacademy.co.uk">emilyhaddock@mountwoodacademy.co.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- Linton school is a small independent special school. The building offers a range of additional facilities, including a small sports hall and an extensive outdoor space. This provides activities such as gardening, farming and animal husbandry.
- The school provides full-time education for up to 12 male or female pupils, aged between 11 to 18 years. However, at the time of the inspection, there was a 9-year-old pupil registered in school.
- All pupils have a high level of need related to social, emotional and mental health needs and behavioural difficulties. Some but not all have been excluded from their mainstream or special school.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and have an education, health and care plan.

- The sole referral route for placing pupils at the school is through local authorities from across England and Scotland.
- The school aims to nurture pupils by offering quality learning experiences so that they can 'be the best they can be'. Pupils are given the opportunity to learn and develop in a 'supportive and creative environment'. Ensuring that they 'feel safe and happy' to progress and achieve.
- Linton school is one of two schools owned and run by the proprietors, ROC Northwest Limited. As well as the executive headteacher, there is a proprietor. The proprietor acts as sole governance of the school.
- The school uses Myerscough College as an alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in classes. She also observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. She observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, who was also the lead for the provision for pupils with SEND.
- The inspector spoke with the proprietor, who also represents the sole governance of the school.
- The inspector spoke informally with pupils around school and discussed, where possible, their opinions about the school and their learning.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, but the lead inspector spoke informally to staff during the inspection.
- There were no responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. However, the inspector spoke on the telephone with a carer.
- School policies and other documents were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence, including minutes from governance meetings, information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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