

Options Barton

Barrow Road, Barton-upon-Humber, North Lincolnshire DN18 6DA

Inspection dates

26–28 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and recently appointed deputy headteacher work well together to provide effective leadership. They share the same high aspirations for pupils to receive the best education and care to prepare them well for their future.
- The proprietor, governing body and leaders have ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders have introduced policies and procedures which have improved the curriculum. The curriculum is personalised to meet the individual needs of the pupils.
- Leaders have a clear focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment. This has resulted in well-planned lessons which enable pupils to make good progress.
- Respectful and positive relationships between adults and pupils are a great strength across the school. Staff are very skilled at helping pupils to make the right choices about their behaviour.
- Staff are very committed to the pupils. They form a united and enthusiastic team which combines a nurturing approach with high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points, which are often below what would be expected for their age. This is because teachers provide opportunities for pupils to engage in interesting activities.
- Leaders ensure that the post-16 curriculum meets students' needs and that, as a result, students make good progress. Leaders recognise that outcomes for students could be improved further by offering a wider range of qualifications and accreditation.
- Leaders have worked very hard to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils. They know that there is still work to do to improve the attendance of these pupils further.
- Pupils' independence is fostered throughout the day. However, opportunities for pupils to work together to develop their social skills are not as well developed.

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?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - strategies for reducing pupils' persistent absence and improving their attendance continue to be explored
 - a wider choice of qualifications are available to post-16 students.
- Improve the effectiveness of pupils' personal development by ensuring that pupils are provided with more opportunities to develop their social skills through working and interacting with others in lessons.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has taken effective action to improve the governance of the school and to hold leaders to account. The leadership has ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher and the recently appointed deputy headteacher have created an aspirational ethos across the school. They work effectively together in leading a committed and very skilled team of staff. All staff share high expectations of how pupils will behave and what they can achieve.
- Leaders are honest and reflective about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As a result, their self-evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment is accurate.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are coaching and mentoring other leaders across the school. New leaders share the same high expectations and they have a good understanding of the next steps for developing their subjects further. Post-16 leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the actions that they will need to take to improve the range of qualifications offered to students.
- Leaders value the positive contribution that staff make. They foster the well-being of their staff through providing mindfulness sessions and 'time to talk' meetings with senior leaders.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving under the new leadership team. A programme of lesson observations and checks on teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks by the leaders ensures that they are clear about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The arrangements for the performance management of teachers, tutors and learning support assistants provide staff with opportunities to develop their skills through training and supervision. This results in a consistency of strong practice across the school.
- The curriculum meets the pupils' complex needs well. It is effectively planned, very personalised and is integrated well with a range of therapies, including occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and psychology. English and mathematics are woven throughout the curriculum. Pupils follow recipes to make cookies, order from menus in the bistro and count vegetables in 'grow and cook' lessons.
- Parents and carers spoken with and those completing the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences at the school. They praised, in their words, the 'incredible' staff team for their care and knowledge of the pupils.
- The curriculum fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils learn about how the democratic process works through voting for their representatives on the newly introduced student council. Pupils are aware of the major world faiths and they celebrate events and cultural traditions such as Burns Night, Diwali and Ramadan.
- Pupils' moral responsibility is fostered through raising money for good causes and volunteering at a local charity to look after hedgehogs.

Governance

- The recently created governing body, which includes the proprietor, works closely with senior leaders in setting the strategic direction of the school. Governors ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Governors are very committed to providing a high quality of care and education to pupils in the school. They have a broad range of skills and experience with which to support and challenge school leaders.
- Governors check on standards in the school through evaluating detailed information that they receive, for example on behaviour, safeguarding and the progress of school development planning. They also engage the services of a school improvement partner who provides challenge and support to school leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy which is available to parents on the school's website. The policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance.
- Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding across the organisation.
- Pupils have very complex needs. The very skilled staff have a detailed understanding of how to reduce the barriers that pupils encounter and keep them safe.
- Staff are well trained in many aspects of safeguarding. This begins with a comprehensive induction for new staff and continues with specific online modules that staff must complete each term. For example, modules on peer-on-peer abuse, the 'Prevent' duty and online safety have been undertaken in recent months.
- Risk assessments are routinely prepared for individual pupils and for activities within school and in the community. This ensures that any risks to pupils are anticipated and planned for in advance.
- Staff are vigilant and know what to do if they are worried about a child.
- There are strong processes in place to check that appropriate staff are recruited into the organisation.
- Good communication between care and school staff contributes to keeping pupils safe. Information about pupils' well-being is shared before and after school. This informs and prepares staff to support any potential issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning are effective. Teachers and tutors plan bespoke lessons to match the individual abilities and aptitudes of the pupils. Staff know pupils well and they have a good understanding of their learning styles. This ensures that pupils engage well and enjoy learning.
- Strong relationships are central to the good progress that pupils make. Staff are very committed to guiding and teaching pupils to be successful learners. Staff anticipate pupils'

emotions. They respond intuitively to pupils and maintain their interest in an activity for the maximum amount of time.

- Well-established routines help pupils to feel secure and build their confidence. Pupils know their daily timetables and they can select their own activities at 'choose time'. Pupils are motivated to complete their work so that they can enjoy their choice of activity. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive because teachers tailor lessons to their interests. For example, during the inspection, in an information and technology lesson, a pupil was delighted when he recognised himself and watched his actions on a screen.
- Pupils are supported well to communicate in lessons through the use of visual timetables, now and next boards, signing, symbols and the picture exchange communication system. Pupils' success in understanding and responding in lessons builds on their communication skills and improves self-esteem.
- High expectations are demanded of pupils by all staff and this results in pupils trying harder. For example, in a physical education (PE) lesson observed, the teacher reminded a pupil what to do and the pupil consequently participated with enthusiasm in his rigorous circuit training for the entire session.
- Praise is used effectively to reward pupils and motivate them to work hard. For example, in an English lesson, key stage 2 pupils were praised for using unfamiliar words from a Roald Dahl book in a sentence.
- Outdoor learning at the school enriches the pupils' experiences and helps them to develop their confidence and independence. The well-resourced areas provide a variety of activities, such as horticulture and forest schools. Several large play areas with swings, trampoline and tunnels help pupils to self-regulate their emotions.
- Teachers and tutors check on pupils' progress throughout lessons. They probe pupils' responses and reshape their explanations to help pupils understand new concepts.
- Reading is promoted across the curriculum. Some pupils read daily from the school's reading scheme. Older pupils read in the context of real-life situations, for example while writing a shopping list.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a mutual and deep respect between pupils and staff, and this is evident across all aspects of the school day. These relationships build pupils' confidence and self-esteem as they know that staff are always there to support them.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that they enjoy coming to school. Parents spoken with agree.
- Pupils' self-confidence and emotional needs are met effectively through the therapeutic input that they receive. Psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists provide training to staff and work individually with pupils to meet needs identified in education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when using social media and when out in

the community. For example, they learn how to cross the road safely and how to be safe at the swimming pool.

- Pupils socialise with their peers at informal times during the school day. However, they do not have enough opportunities to work with others during lesson times.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Before joining the school, some pupils have been out of education for long periods of time because of their emotional needs. They are not used to coming to school and attending lessons. School records show that the number of physical interventions to address pupils' behavioural issues reduce as they settle into life at the school.
- Leaders have ensured that there is an effective and consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour and emotions. Staff are very skilled at understanding the emotional needs of the pupils and knowing what to do to support them. Staff have high expectations of how pupils will behave, and they are patient and calm.
- The school provides a very nurturing environment where pupils develop strong bonds with the staff. Staff intuitively defuse potentially challenging situations before they arise.
- The outdoor environment provides pupils with equipment such as swings and trampolines to help them learn how to regulate their own behaviour. Most pupils understand which activities will help them to feel calm.
- Pupils respond well to staff and the strong relationships that they have developed. Staff remind pupils that inappropriate language and poor manners are not acceptable. During the inspection, the school was calm and orderly, with little disruption to learning.
- Leaders use many effective strategies to improve pupils' attendance. This has resulted in improved rates of attendance for many pupils when compared to their previous attendance before joining the school. Despite the steadfast work of leaders, persistent absence remains high for some pupils with complex needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Almost all pupils start the school with gaps in their learning because they have missed long periods of education. A range of assessments are carried out by the multi-disciplinary team to establish a baseline of each pupil's knowledge and skills. This information is used to inform good-quality positive behaviour plans and individual education plans, which contribute to the good progress that pupils make across the curriculum.
- Leaders measure the good progress that pupils make in their academic skills, together with gains in their social and emotional development.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. Good progress is confirmed by the quality of work seen in pupils' exercise books and observed in lessons.
- Pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. They read and count in PE lessons, when out in the community, when working in the bistro and during 'grow and cook' projects.

- Pupils develop their communication skills well because of the effective support that they receive. Some pupils are able to read confidently and with expression. They demonstrate a good understanding of the texts that they are presented with.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training through developing their communication and life skills.

Sixth form provision

Good

- Students in the sixth form make good progress from their starting points because of the tailored planning of lessons to meet their individual needs and abilities.
- Students in the sixth form achieved accreditation in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) personal progress qualification in the last academic year.
- All aspects of the sixth form are well led. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and what their next steps are to improve further.
- Students are well prepared for their next stage in life. They develop their independent living skills and experience the type of activities that they might choose to pursue in the future as a leisure interest, for example bowling and swimming.
- Students receive careers advice and guidance to choose their future placements. Detailed preparations are made with providers to ensure that students have a smooth and successful transition. All students leaving the school at the end of the previous academic year continued into education, employment or training or made the transition into a residential placement.
- Opportunities for work experience are provided in the school's bistro and maintenance department. Students follow recipes to make simple snacks, wait on tables and help staff to make checks on the school's motor vehicles. Two students attend East Riding College to undertake a level 1 vehicle maintenance course and a level 2 health and social care course.
- An individual and personalised approach to planning students' learning outcomes results in good-quality teaching and learning. For example, during the inspection, a student learned how to write a briefing paper to promote a mobile telephone recycling scheme. The student compared their own work to the teacher's example and was able to identify ways to improve it.
- Pupils are working successfully at a range of levels from ASDAN to functional skills in English and mathematics, GCSE mathematics and BTEC National Diploma awards. Leaders acknowledge that offering a wider range of vocational qualifications would personalise future plans for individual students even further.

School details

Unique reference number	134315
DfE registration number	813/6004
Inspection number	10061262

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	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Options Autism (1) Ltd
Chair	Graham Norris
Headteacher	Ed Watkins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,938 to £129,678
Telephone number	01652 631 280
Website	www.optionsautism.co.uk/school_home/options-barton/
Email address	barton.reception@optionsautism.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–7 July 2016

Information about this school

- Options Barton is an independent special school located in Barton-upon-Humber. It is one of six special schools in the Options Autism group.
- The school opened in 2006 to provide residential and day education for pupils aged from

eight to 19 years who have autism spectrum disorder and complex learning difficulties. The majority of pupils have a history of challenging behaviours.

- There are currently 32 pupils on roll: 14 residential pupils and 18 day pupils. There are eight students in the post-16 provision.
- Most pupils are boys but there are four girls on roll. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school has dual registration as a children's home. A standard inspection of the home took place in January 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out short visits to lessons with the headteacher.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including documents relating to health and safety, behaviour, the curriculum and the progress that pupils make.
- During the inspection, meetings were held with one of the proprietors, the headteacher, school staff, parents, a corporate parent, the school improvement partner, the clinical lead and pupils.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work was carried out with the deputy headteacher.
- The inspector took into account views expressed by parents spoken with, as well as parents and staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Suzette Garland-Grimes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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