

# SwitchED2

Ulpha Farm, Meathop, Grange-Over-Sands, Cumbria LA11 6RG

## Inspection dates

20–22 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>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- In the short time that the school has been open, the headteacher, senior leaders and staff have succeeded in realising their vision of providing good-quality education for pupils who have struggled in mainstream schools or been out of education for long periods.
- All staff are skilled at supporting pupils to manage their behaviour and to develop self-confidence. Adults share a commitment to ensure that all pupils feel safe, enjoy school and are proud of what they achieve.
- Pupils, many of whom have had negative experiences of education, develop positive attitudes to learning and are achieving well. Pupils leave school with a range of worthwhile qualifications that prepare them well for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff enable pupils to engage in learning by providing a range of stimulating and interesting learning activities. However, occasionally pupils do not make the best possible progress because they work too slowly.
- Pupils feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe.
- The school provides bespoke courses to support the interests and needs of individual pupils. There is a good emphasis on life skills.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils respond well to learning in the farm environment. External visits help them to understand some of the other faiths and cultures within modern Britain.
- Parents and carers are pleased with the care and support their children receive.
- The proprietor ensures that the independent school standards are met. He is currently developing the role of middle leaders and is in the process of establishing a management committee to hold the school to account.
- Although the quality of teaching and learning is regularly checked, there is insufficient focus on what pupils are learning.

### 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?

- Enable pupils to make even better progress in lessons, by monitoring learning closely to ensure that all pupils achieve the best they possibly can in the time available.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
  - ensuring that leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is more clearly focused on how well pupils are learning
  - ensuring that middle managers take a fuller role in improving the school
  - establishing the new management committee to effectively hold the school to account.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor's passion and enthusiasm have quickly established a new and successful school that is improving the life chances of young people. In the short time it has been open, the number on roll has increased from two to 17.
- The school accommodation is unusual in that it is part of a working farm. Pupils enjoy the proximity to livestock and the farm dogs, who are also trained as therapy dogs. The proprietor, who is the headteacher, ensures that all the relevant health and safety requirements are met. Pupils who have been school refusers or out of education for a long time thrive in this environment.
- The proprietor, business manager and senior staff make regular checks to ensure that the school remains fully compliant with the independent school standards.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is honest and accurate and identifies the areas where improvements can be made. As a result, school improvement planning is detailed and identifies the right priorities for improvement.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. The headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants work together to develop their practice. Middle leaders are starting to share good practice and develop leadership skills across the school. However, sometimes when they are observing teaching and learning, too much emphasis is put on what the teacher is doing and not enough on what pupils are learning.
- The curriculum is adaptable and provides bespoke learning for individual pupils. There is a strong focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health (PSH) education, and information technology. Art and the humanities subjects contribute to pupils' understanding of wider culture. In addition, the school offers a good range of vocational courses in hospitality, land-based studies, outdoor education and motor vehicle maintenance. These courses equip pupils well for future studies or employment.
- Pupils who attend on a part-time basis follow specific courses leading to vocational qualifications, such as in motor vehicle maintenance or land-based studies.
- The curriculum puts a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' communication skills and preparing them for the next stage of their education, training or employment. This helps to build pupils' confidence in their own abilities and to become more ambitious in considering their next steps.
- Pupils regularly take part in physical education and team-building sessions at a nearby outdoor centre. They especially enjoy archery, canoeing, sailing, climbing, abseiling and other pursuits. Because the school is based in a farm environment, there are also opportunities for pupils to learn about animal husbandry.
- Impartial careers advice is available to all pupils from an organisation that provides careers advice for pupils in schools in Cumbria. The pupils leaving Year 11 in July 2018 were all able to go on to their chosen options.
- Pupils learn about the diversity and culture of modern Britain through many elements of the curriculum and from visits and visitors. For example, in recent months, pupils have

visited a Hindu temple, a rural county show, a zoo and local sites of special scientific interest.

- Professional partners indicate that the school is proving to be highly successful in supporting pupils who have rarely engaged with learning in the past. As a result, pupils in key stage 4 are gaining qualifications that previously would have been beyond their reach.
- Parents and carers are unanimous in their praise of the work of the school. They all agree that staff listen to their children and that they enjoy school. Comments such as, 'they are doing a fantastic job,' and, 'the school always goes the extra mile,' are typical of the many positive comments received during the inspection.
- Staff morale is high. Staff feel proud to work in the school because they know they are making a significant contribution to the future of the young people in their care.

### **Governance**

- The school is in the process of establishing a management committee to oversee all its work.
- Before the school opened, the proprietor used the professional expertise of three critical friends to oversee the establishment of this new school. One of these professionals will be part of the new management committee and has become a school improvement partner. Two others with suitable expertise in business and special education will join the management committee in the very near future.
- The business manager plays an important role in supporting school development and manages finances effectively. This allows the headteacher and other leaders to concentrate on developing and further improving educational and pastoral provision.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A culture of safeguarding is threaded through the school. Leaders recognised that some pupils needed additional support and so a nurture class has been established. This is providing a safe and secure learning environment in which pupils feel safe and comfortable and become ready to learn.
- All staff are fully trained in up-to-date safeguarding practice.
- The school is in regular contact with parents and carers, outside agencies and with host schools to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The headteacher has taken all possible steps to ensure that pupils are safe and that all policies and procedures meet the requirements. All safeguarding policies are published on the school's website. Arrangements for the appointment of new staff are secure. Risk assessments are carried out for all aspects of the school's work. Policies and procedures fully meet the requirements set out in the independent school standards.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Very positive relationships between staff and pupils underpin effective learning. Mutual respect between adults and pupils is evident across the school. For example, during the inspection, the nurture group enjoyed crossing an obstacle course while blindfolded, guided only by the instructions of a fellow pupil. Pupils overcame their initial reluctance and learned from personal experience the importance of giving, and following, precise instructions.
- All staff place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and helping them to develop assurance and confidence. This was amply demonstrated in a key stage 4 English class, where pupils enjoyed role playing waiters and customers. The customers had to make a complaint but remain polite and courteous. Pupils rose to the challenge well.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read as much as possible and devise different strategies to promote the development of literacy skills across the curriculum. Reluctant readers enjoy using technology to support their reading. This increases their enjoyment and so promotes better learning.
- Teachers enable pupils to make strong progress in mathematics by devising many practical tasks, often using the beautiful outdoor environment. Work is usually pitched at the right level to provide challenge for all abilities. Numeracy skills are incorporated appropriately into learning activities across a range of subjects.
- All staff are skilled in using probing questioning to encourage pupils to think through their answers and to gain confidence. This was evident in a science lesson, where pupils were able to recall prior learning so that they understood the new work more deeply.
- Pupils particularly enjoy food technology practical work and often take part in helping to cook and serve lunch.
- Leaders have established an effective assessment system that is linked to the national curriculum. The system allows staff, pupils, and parents and carers to see how much progress has been made in different subject areas. It also enables staff to plan the next steps in learning.
- Support for pupils with education, health and care plans is effective. All interested parties are present in the regular reviews of these plans. These are adapted to take account of changing circumstances and progress.
- One-to-one support is available for any pupil who needs it. Teachers and support assistants work closely together to plan different steps in learning. Support assistants establish good relationships with individual pupils, so that they make good progress.
- Pupils respond well to being able to choose how they work or present their learning. For example, some prefer to use modern technology, while others prefer to write and illustrate. However, sometimes pupils are allowed to work too slowly, which limits progress.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Younger pupils enjoy reflection sessions in which they think about their weekly learning and consider their next steps. Their reflection journals show an increasing level of maturity and self-awareness, and rapidly changing attitudes to learning, which become positive.
- Older pupils become more ambitious and determined to overcome any difficulties they have. They respond well to various opportunities to carry out work experience and concentrate for long periods when working on different elements of their vocational studies programmes.
- Pupils' personal development is fostered through helping them to feel valued and secure, to have respect for others, to be honest, and to fit successfully into society. Pupils know their voice is heard through the school council and tutor sessions.
- Pupils feel that they are well informed about how to stay safe in potentially risky situations. They can describe the hazards to avoid when using the roads or playing near deep water. They understand the rules for using the internet safely and the dangers of social media. They are aware of peer pressure and the danger of gangs.
- Pupils are well aware of the importance of keeping the safety rules for their own school environment, which is within a working farm.
- Pupils say that bullying is dealt with effectively by the school. Some describe it as 'little disagreements' rather than bullying. However, the school has a clear policy, and a procedure which is followed if bullying occurs. As a result, pupils feel safe and free from harassment of any kind. They insist that there is no homophobia or racism.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- At first, some pupils find it hard to follow the school's rules because of difficult experiences of education in the past. However, once they have settled into the unusual school environment, they follow daily routines well.
- Individual instances of challenging behaviour are managed well by staff and records show that these significantly reduce over time. Pupils' behaviour is not allowed to have a negative impact on the learning of others.
- Pupils are strongly supported in the development of their emotional and social resilience. As a result, behaviour around the school is cooperative and positive.
- Although some pupils have attendance records of 100%, the overall figure across the school is below the national average. However, records show that many pupils show marked improvement over time in their attendance levels. All absence is checked on a daily basis and phone calls home are made whenever absence is unexplained. School leaders regularly check on the attendance of pupils carrying out work experience.

Improving attendance is currently an area for development in the school improvement plan.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- From the time that the school opened in March 2018 to July 2018, the small number of Year 11 pupils gained worthwhile external qualifications. They successfully completed units on hair and beauty, creative crafts, outdoor education and exploring business and enterprise. This represents good and rapid progress.
- Pupils currently in Year 11 are working towards entry level 3 in mathematics and entry level 2 in English, as well as a wide range of vocational qualifications.
- An examination of pupils' workbooks across a range of subjects, as well as of the school's tracking information, shows that all pupils currently in school are making good progress from their different starting points.
- In English, key stage 2 and key stage 3 pupils are improving their reading levels, often from a very low base. At key stage 4, pupils are making strong progress in communication and writing skills. The most able pupils read fluently and have a good understanding of their work.
- In mathematics, pupils' progress is evident in their successful responses to problem-solving challenges, and in science they are successful in completing investigations.
- The work in key stage 4 pupils' English, mathematics and science books shows a marked improvement over time in both presentation and accuracy.
- Staff follow the interests of pupils in selecting which aspects of history and geography to study, so that pupils are keen to learn and then celebrate their work. For example, the nurture group produced a striking and effective display for this year's Remembrance Day.
- All pupils enjoy the regular food technology practical sessions, where they learn how to cook and serve a variety of dishes. This important life skill helps to prepare them well for the future.
- The school attempts to secure worthwhile work experience for pupils in key stage 4 to help them decide on future options. An external careers officer conducts interviews with each individual pupil and attends reviews of their education, health and care plans. This enables staff to help leavers make informed choices about their next stage of education, training or employment.
- The school succeeds in helping pupils to become ambitious, to foster self-confidence and to manage their feelings and behaviour. This, combined with an effective focus on the values of tolerance and respect, equip pupils well for life in modern Britain.

## School details

Unique reference number	145402
DfE registration number	909/6007
Inspection number	10053744

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	12
Proprietor	Andrew Coates
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Andrew Coates
Annual fees (day pupils)	Not available
Telephone number	01539 552066
Website	<a href="http://www.switched2.org">www.switched2.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:andy@switched2.org">andy@switched2.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This is an independent special school for pupils who struggle with mainstream schooling or in a regular learning environment.
- The school opened in March 2018 and since then numbers have increased to 17 on roll. Currently, five pupils attend full time and 12 pupils attend on a part-time basis. There are never more than 12 pupils in school on any one day.
- The school is situated on a working farm in a rural area of south Cumbria. Pupils are accommodated in two purpose-built, temporary cabins installed within a large Dutch barn.



- All pupils have been referred by their local authority or by educational psychologists or other agencies.
- All pupils currently on roll have special educational needs and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- An above-average number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. One class is for pupils in upper key stage 2 and key stage 3, and there is a key stage 4 class.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The school was registered with the DfE in February 2018. This is the school's first standard inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in different curriculum areas across the school. These included mathematics, vocational studies, English, science, food technology and personal, social and health education. She observed breakfast club and spoke with pupils at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor/headteacher, the safeguarding lead, members of staff, groups of pupils and the senior inclusion officer for Cumbria.
- She held telephone conversations with the school improvement partner and inclusion officers.
- There were too few responses to Parent View for the inspector to analyse. However, the inspector held telephone conversations with seven parents and carers and received an email sent from another parent.
- The views of staff were gained from meeting staff and reviewing the eight responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including all policies and procedures to establish the school's compliance with the independent school standards. She also reviewed information about pupils' achievements, leaders' checks on teaching and learning, attendance and behaviour records, and the school's self-evaluation and development plans.

## Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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