

Westmorland School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	888/6048
Unique Reference Number (URN)	132828
Inspection number	386023
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2011



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Established in 2000, Westmorland School is an independent day special school which is registered for pupils aged from five to 11 years with significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. There are 22 pupils on roll and each has a statement of special educational needs. The majority of these are boys and most are in Years 5 and 6. Five pupils are looked after by their local authority and a few are from minority ethnic groups. The school is part of the Witherslack group of independent special schools. Housed in a Victorian building, formerly a primary school, it is located near the town centre in Chorley, Lancashire. Pupils attend from a number of local authorities in the North West region with the large majority from the Bolton and Bury areas. All pupils are brought to school by transport provided by their local authority.

Westmorland School seeks to 'develop the child's self-esteem, improve social skills and develop positive behaviours', as well as to 'encourage pupils to achieve their potential'. The Witherslack group's vision statement is 'promoting resilience: developing independence'. The school's own vision statement is 'We learn to live together, together we live to learn'. The school was previously inspected in October 2008. The school has applied to the Department for Education to make a material change. The request is to include pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to the category of pupils it is already registered to admit. This application was considered by the inspector and the judgement is contained in the report.

Evaluation of the school

Westmorland School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims well. The curriculum and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils remain outstanding. Welfare, health and safety arrangements are outstanding and meet all the requirements; the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All other aspects of the school continue to be good. Pupils make good progress because teaching is good. Good levels of care ensure that pupils' behaviour improves and is good overall and there are particular strengths in the way that pupils' personal development is promoted. All the regulations for continued registration as an independent school are met and the request for a material change is recommended for approval.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding in its breadth and relevance to pupils. It is based on the National Curriculum and includes Spanish for all pupils. Improvements since the previous inspection mean that there are new schemes of work in place for literacy and mathematics. The focus on basic skills is helping pupils to develop their confidence and experience success in reading, writing and mathematics and they make good progress during their time at the school. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of visits to places of interest and by visitors into the school. Pupils usually start at the school with very negative attitudes to both school and learning. They have often failed to succeed in their previous schools and exhibit challenging behaviours. A good induction system ensures that they receive effective support to help them to settle quickly into the school's routines. As their behaviour and attitudes improve they are able to benefit from the full range of subjects and experiences that the school offers.

Teaching and assessment are good. Staff have excellent relationships with pupils, who for their part are usually respectful and well behaved. Pupils, particularly those with autistic spectrum disorders, benefit from the very well-established routines. A key feature of the school's success is the excellent staff-to-pupil ratios in lessons so that staff are able to give pupils much individual attention, which helps pupils to remain engaged in their learning. Classrooms are calm and orderly because of very clear expectations of pupil behaviour. Although mostly good, and very occasionally excellent, there are times when individual pupil behaviour, often associated with their particular difficulties, is less than satisfactory. When this occurs it is always managed well and rarely disturbs the learning of others. Most pupils do remarkably well in remaining on task when incidents occur.

Lesson planning is thorough and provides a good basis for teaching and learning. Learning intentions are clear and always presented to pupils in the form of 'We are learning to' (WALT) statements. Consequently, most of the observed lessons were good. Planned work is usually well matched to the differing needs of pupils within a class and is particularly effective where it is carefully tailored to individual pupils' abilities. For example, one pupil with an autistic spectrum disorder had an individually planned lesson, connected to her individual care and education plan, taught by one of the very patient teaching assistants. However, in some satisfactory lessons, tasks were not as well planned and some pupils found the work too difficult and others found it too easy as assessment information is not always used well. In the most effective lessons learning activities consist of a series of short but intensive tasks, which are often practical or involve moving about. For example, in one effective Spanish lesson, pupils had to move around the room to rehearse simple Spanish greetings and then move around to ask each other how they were feeling. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is good. This usually indicates if the learning intention has been met and often offers clear guidance for future improvement. All pupils have individual targets on 'talking postcards' which pupils are able to listen to.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very effective systems for pastoral care along with a strong focus on personal, social and health education ensure that pupils make very good progress in their social development. Each pupil is allocated a mentor who establishes a close relationship with the pupil and liaises with parents and carers and other staff to ensure that the pupil's emotional well-being is given a high priority. Pupils are given opportunities to talk about and explore issues such as behaviour, relationships and feelings. Pupils usually mix well with each other. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and many show kindness to one another, which is a testament to the work of the school in promoting the pupils' personal development. Pupils are able to distinguish right from wrong. The school's very clear system of sanctions and rewards is well understood by pupils.

Assemblies, along with religious education, art and music lessons, provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about their own and other faiths and cultures. The planned themes over the year ensure that pupils are taught about a range of public institutions and services in England. For example, a visit from the local mayor provided pupils with an awareness of local democracy. Despite their difficulties, pupils' attitudes toward staff and visitors are very good. Pupils are aware of the difficulties they sometimes experience with their emotions and behaviour. They are encouraged to discuss and reflect upon any incidents so that they can better cope with future situations. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through assemblies, which provide them with good opportunities to consider specific religious festivals such as Christmas and Divali and national events such as Remembrance Day. Assemblies also allow pupils to reflect on a weekly theme. For example, as part of the theme 'respecting differences', pupils were encouraged to identify similarities and differences between themselves and other members of the school community.

The school follows a recognised programme for developing the social and emotional aspects of pupils' learning. This contributes significantly to the outstanding gains that pupils make in their personal development. Pupils' behaviour is good because of the very effective support they receive from both pastoral and teaching staff to manage their significant behavioural and emotional difficulties. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously as members of the school council and Eco council. They enjoy taking part in fundraising activities for charity; for example, they have all helped to collect and fill 'Bags of Benefit' to be sent to children at a linked school in Africa. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. The attendance of the vast majority of pupils is very good. Parents and carers have very positive views of the school and are very appreciative of the high level of support and care provided for their children.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The high staff-to-pupil ratio, clear routines and very good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils are closely monitored and information is

shared with parents and carers to promote continuity of care between home and school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. All the required policies are in place for child protection and health and safety, including first aid. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment is checked annually. The building and grounds are exceptionally well cared for which ensures that the environment is safe for pupils. The school has developed particularly strong working relationships with the local authorities that place pupils at the school to ensure that their needs are met.

Staff training is a particularly strong feature. The designated teacher for child protection, along with a second member of staff, has received the appropriate higher-level training and all staff have received the required training so that they are fully aware of their role in safeguarding pupils. Staff are appropriately trained and well aware of procedures for first aid, fire safety and procedures for physical intervention or control with pupils. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010.

Pupils have a good awareness of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and demonstrate this by, for example, eating fresh fruit each day. Pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of physical education activities including swimming, trampolining and hockey. Older pupils are able to take part in the 'Bikeability' programme led by a member of staff. The school achieved Healthy School status in April 2008.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Effective safeguards are in place to ensure that pupils do not encounter unsuitable adults. All checks are completed prior to new staff taking up their posts which ensure that they are suitable to work with children. This information is held on the required single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The accommodation effectively meets the needs of the pupils. The standard of decoration and general maintenance is very good and this makes it a very pleasant place in which pupils can learn. Covering two floors, the school consists of a large detached building where there is a range of classrooms, storage rooms, offices, a dining room, a kitchen and an assembly hall. The four classrooms are appropriate in size for the numbers concerned. The building contains the required number of washrooms together with a medical room. To the rear, sides and front of the school there are play areas including a hard-surface area which is used for football and other sports. There are a number of grassed areas with benches and picnic tables and an adventure playground. The school makes good use of local community sports centres.

Provision of information

The school provides parents, carers and others with all the required information through its prospectus and website. There is a clear statement of the aims, ethos and curriculum of the school. The required policies are available for downloading from the website and include those for safeguarding, anti-bullying and the complaints procedures. The school provides parents and carers with an annual written report on the progress of their child along with information for annual reviews related to the pupils' statements of special educational needs. There are good systems for inducting parents and carers into the school using home visits where school policies are provided and systems are explained. In addition, there are two open days for parents and carers.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a complaints policy and set of procedures which have recently been updated to ensure that they meet all of the regulations. The school has taken steps to ensure that parents and carers are aware of these.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- make more effective use of information from assessments to ensure that planned learning activities are more individually tailored to the learning needs of each pupil.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
--	---	--	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Day special		
Date school opened	May 2000		
Age range of pupils	5-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 3	Total: 22
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 19	Girls: 3	Total: 22
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,625 - £48,036		
Address of school	Weldbank Lane Chorley Lancashire PR7 3NQ		
Telephone number	01257 278899		
Email address	office@westmorlandschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Asher		
Proprietor	Mr Michael Barrow		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2011

Dear pupils,

Inspection of Westmorland School, Chorley, Lancashire, PB7 3NQ

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when I came to inspect your school recently, and for telling me all about your school. The staff at your school take really good care of you from the moment that you arrive for the breakfast club until you leave at the end of the day. You go to a good school. You make good progress during your time there because you are taught well and have interesting things to do in your lessons. The curriculum (the things that you learn about) is outstanding. You told me that you enjoy the lunchtime activities, visits out and the many visitors who come into the school. You make good progress at improving your behaviour which is usually good. I was impressed by the way that if one pupil does misbehave almost all of you are able to ignore it and get on with your learning.

Your school does all the things that it has to do in order to continue to operate as a school. I have suggested just one thing that the school might do to make things better for you, that is for your teachers to use what they know about how well you are doing to more carefully plan activities that meet your individual needs.

I am sure that you would like to play your part too by doing your best in every lesson. You can also help your teachers by letting them know if you find the work too easy or too hard.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector