

# Wennington Hall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119873
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379899
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 July 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Jim Alexander

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	75
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Max Lunt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joe Prendergast
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2009
<b>School address</b>	Lodge Lane Wennington Lancaster LA2 8NS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 221333
<b>Fax number</b>	01524 222140
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:head@wenningtonhall.lancs.sch.uk">head@wenningtonhall.lancs.sch.uk</a>

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<b>Residential provision</b>	Wennington Hall School
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC035805
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Elaine Clare

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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Jim Alexander  
Alastair Younger

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents relating to safeguarding, students' attainment and progress, and the way in which the school evaluates its own performance. Inspectors analysed the views of staff and the 12 questionnaires from parents and carers. Inspectors also analysed the views expressed by students in a recent survey conducted by the school.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized special school. The school provides for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most students are residential. All students have a statement of special educational needs and many students have additional learning difficulties including attention deficit and hyperactive disorders, autistic spectrum disorders, and speech and language difficulties. Fifteen per cent of students are looked after by the local authority. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The vast majority of students are from a White British heritage and very few are from minority ethnic groups. The school has achieved a number of awards, including Healthy School status, the Learning Excellent Award, Childmark and the Innovative Practice Award. At the time of the inspection a minority of students were on educational visits but the majority remained at school.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. Since the time of the last inspection the school has gone from strength to strength. Parents and carers support the students' views that 'the school keeps getting better and better every year'. Senior leaders are currently taking planned action to further strengthen the skills of subject leaders. School leadership recognises that the effectiveness of these actions will continue to require careful monitoring to ensure they are successfully implemented.
- Achievement is outstanding and students, including those who are residential, make excellent progress from their generally very low starting points. A growing number of students gain A\* to G GCSE passes in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Many students also undertake a very wide range of vocational training courses, for example in hospitality and catering.
- Teaching is typically outstanding and never less than good. The overwhelming majority of lessons are characterised by excellent relationships, carefully designed activities pitched at the right level for individual students and well-deployed support staff. Teachers' subject knowledge is very high and their knowledge of individual students is excellent, allowing lessons to move along at a fast pace.
- Students behave exceptionally well and are very respectful towards one another and their teachers. Their very positive attitudes to learning are a significant factor in the typically excellent progress they make in their lessons. Older students provide excellent role models for younger boys.
- Leaders, including the governing body, know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. Teaching is extremely well led with performance management used effectively to continue to improve its quality. The curriculum is exceptionally successful in promoting academic achievement and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential experience is outstanding. The leadership is very effective and provides a safe and welcoming environment where young people can reach their potential. As a result, all students are very well prepared for life beyond school. All National minimum standards are exceeded.

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

- Continue to monitor the planned action being taken to further improve the skills of subject leaders.

## **Main Report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

In the overwhelming majority of lessons observed during the inspection learning and progress were outstanding and never less than good. Students were exceptionally well-motivated and very keen to learn. This was best illustrated in a Year 7 lesson where students were enjoying the opportunity to write a ballad. All students in school have experienced significant difficulties in mainstream schools and many had been excluded. As a result, their attainment on entry is usually very low. However, the school's focus on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as effective partnerships with feeder schools, enables students to settle quickly. Students, including those who are residential, make outstanding progress as they move through school. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that their children make good progress.

A broadly average number of students gain A\* to G GCSE grades in English, mathematics and science, as well as a range of other vocational qualifications. A growing number also achieve A\* to C GCSE in English and mathematics. All go on to study at college when leaving Year 11. In 2011 attainment in mathematics and science was higher than in English. The school has taken a wide range of steps to accelerate students' progress in their reading and writing. As a result, improvements in these subjects have been evident and most students are now achieving broadly in line with their age-related expectations. This represents outstanding progress from their individual starting points.

The school has an increasing number of students with more complex needs, including those with speech and language difficulties, attention deficit, and with autistic spectrum disorder. These students are supported to make equally outstanding progress as others across the school. The majority of students in Key Stage 4 also benefit from attending very well-planned work placement schemes and a wide range of other vocational training activities. Residential students are also given the opportunity to undertake a wide range of activities to improve their life skills and very successfully build their self-confidence. A typical comment made by one student was, 'the school give us great work experience opportunities and we even have a separate house to prepare us for living on our own'.

## Quality of teaching

A wide range of evidence, including observed lessons, assessment records, students' work in books and coursework portfolios, demonstrates that the quality of teaching is typically outstanding and never less than good. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire support the view that their children are taught well.

In lessons teachers make very effective use of the time available. They plan activities that interest and engage students of all abilities, developing their knowledge and enabling them to apply in a relevant way the skills they have learnt. For example, in a Year 9 design and technology lesson pupils added transistors to circuit boards in constructing a moisture tester. Pupils understood extremely well the analogy of comparing resistance to the turnstiles at a football ground. Support staff are directed to work with specific students on carefully planned, individualised work. Relationships are exceptionally positive and behaviour is very well managed. As a result, lessons move on at a fast pace and much is achieved. Strong relationships with students ensure that teachers and support staff develop a 'can do' attitude to lessons and activities. A typical comment made by one student was, 'I work very hard in my lessons and in my free time too; there is always so much available'.

In recent years the school has successfully focused on raising students' enjoyment of reading. A very well-organised library and team of adults listen to individual students read on a daily basis. This has fostered a greater enjoyment of books and ensured attainment in reading has improved.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

A very friendly welcome awaits students as they arrive for the morning assembly and effective procedures ensure that each day gets off to a positive start. Induction arrangements are carefully considered to ensure boys start Year 7 feeling safe, secure and that their opinions and feelings matter; this continues throughout their time at school. Students appreciate all that the school does for them. Behaviour in the residence is also outstanding and young people show a great deal of maturity when out on activities. This is due to the very positive relationships developed with staff, who provide a consistent approach. The school has also very successfully reduced the number of exclusions, and there have been none in two years. Students' attendance has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now well above average.

Parents and carers have positive views about behaviour and safety in the school. The overwhelming majority of them agree that very rare incidents of any type of bullying are dealt with extremely effectively by the school and in the residential provision. Students have a very good understanding of what constitutes a safe and unsafe situation, for example through learning about wise use of the internet. The vast majority of behaviour in lessons is excellent but, when it occasionally falls below that which is typical, swift action by staff and positive affirmation ensure that self-esteem is maintained and students quickly focus once again on their work. A typical comment made by one student was, 'whenever I have a problem, or have 'blown it', the teachers listen and help me, so I know that I'm OK'. Students are also very

supportive of their peers; they set for themselves a very high expectation and rarely fall below this standard.

## **Leadership and management**

Since the time of the last inspection leaders have successfully used performance management procedures and carefully considered training opportunities to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons. Robust and accurate self-evaluation is based on a wide range of monitoring arrangements. The wealth of experience that the headteacher and senior leadership team bring ensures that they know what is working well and what still needs to improve. They have, for example, made a significant impact in reducing the number of exclusions, improving attendance, raising attainment and accelerating progress in reading and writing. These very positive examples demonstrate the school's excellent capacity to improve further. Leaders make effective use of well-established, robust procedures to accurately measure the progress students make and to plot their attainment. Arrangements to make initial assessments as students start Year 7 and then set targets for them to achieve are secure and understood by all.

Senior leaders have rightly identified the need to further improve the role of subject leaders. Plans are in place to ensure this level of management improves still further. Senior leaders understand the need to continue to monitor these planned actions to ensure a successful outcome.

The impact of the exceptionally well-planned curriculum is demonstrated in students' unquestionable enjoyment of school life. The curriculum has been very carefully considered to meet the range of students' needs and interests exceptionally well. Very effective links with outside companies have, for example, provided excellent opportunities for students to compete in a range of motor sports at a high level. The students' active engagement in working on the school farm or in the performing arts are good examples of how the school offers a range of opportunities to enhance students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The governing body, under the leadership of an experienced Chair, is extremely eager to contribute to the success of the school and recognise the role it plays to both support and challenge leaders. Its members set high expectations for the school and are not disappointed. Together with senior leaders they have ensured all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. They ensure that students' well-being is paramount. As a result, equality of opportunity is excellent and students are given every opportunity to succeed in developing the skills that will help them in their future education or employment.

Leadership and management of the residential provision are of a high quality. Very effective communication between care staff and school staff ensures that support for students is seamless. The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding.

## Residential provision

The school exceeds all of the national minimum standards. The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding. This is underpinned by the excellent care students receive, which is delivered in a calm, positive atmosphere by caring staff who are highly skilled and committed to their work. Students are treated with dignity and respect at all times and are empowered to make a positive contribution towards their school life.

Students stay healthy and engage in active lifestyles during their stay. The school's personal, health, social education and citizenship curriculum crosses over into the residential provision and means students continue to receive excellent advice on matters such as health and relationships. They also have access to a comprehensive array of services that meet their physical, emotional, social and educational needs. Clear procedures are followed for the management, secure storage and administration of medication and this ensures students receive correct medication important to their health. It is with credit that staff have reduced and even removed the need for young people to take medication, working together with health professionals and parents and carers. Staff work alongside students to help them increase their knowledge of basic nutrition and to receive a balanced diet. Close, effective liaison between care and education staff promotes a shared understanding of students' needs and secures a consistent approach in care.

Arrangements for safeguarding students are stringent. All staff are suitably vetted with meticulous attention paid to their recruitment. In addition, the residential service has a fully trained designated person for child protection and safeguarding. All care staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction; this is then regularly revisited. Safeguarding within the school is steered by the leadership team and promoted throughout the residential provision. This includes students being protected from hazards associated with fire, water, electrical safety and also from going missing. Students report feeling safe, protected and valued by staff. These strong relationships provide them with the knowledge that they will be protected.

Staff appreciate the serious implications of bullying and its potential harm to students' welfare. There is a commitment by staff to tackle all types of bullying, no matter how rare, through initiatives and strategies that improve behaviour and increase awareness. Students are equally well informed about the impact of any bullying. As information is provided in a manner that helps them to understand, students know how to make a complaint and how to exercise their rights.

A clear threshold based on risk is applied when physical intervention is necessary. A hierarchy of techniques for physical intervention takes account of the student's age and the seriousness of the situation at any given point. The support given by care staff enables students to cope with their emotions and to practise learning strategies to help them manage their behaviour. This avoids behaviour escalating to a level where students become distressed and place themselves and others at risk of harm. Because of this highly effective approach, the use of restraint in the school is low.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is terrific engagement between students and staff. This is particularly enhanced through the seamless



communication between school and residential provision, enabling the 24-hour curriculum to be integrated positively into students' everyday lives. The students experience an extensive range of activities and use all facilities at the school including the gymnasium, playground, theatre, skate park and small holdings. In addition, students have excellent access to the community where they can extend their social networking. Their enjoyment of these varied activities is reflected strongly in their positive comments.

The social care staff are experts; they have the strong support of the school's management to sustain the high level of care provided, including regular supervision, training opportunities and meetings. Senior staff and the excellent contribution from the governing body ensure rigorous monitoring and the signing of appropriate records at the required intervals. These arrangements create a sound quality assurance mechanism to assess the quality of care in the interest of students. Strong links exist between the school and families to ensure the holistic needs of students are fully met. The key worker's role extends to maintaining positive engagement with families including home visits and telephone contact. Admissions to the residential provision are planned effectively to meet the specific needs of individual students. Once stays commence, all students have a comprehensive care plan that identifies pastoral and educational needs, including all aspects of health, and which specifies clear targets. Excellent support enables students to make the best of the opportunities offered by their stay.

There are striking examples of where the school has helped particular students overcome significant barriers associated with their specific conditions. They make great progress and have a fulfilled school life. The accommodation meets students' varying needs, both in terms of their care and in developing their independence. The premises are immaculate and students take great pride in maintaining high standards. The support enables them to gain the skills, values and attitudes necessary for transition to adulthood.

### **National minimum standards**

- All national minimum standards are met

*These are the grades for the residential provision*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the residential experience</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential students	1
Quality of residential provision and care	1
Residential students' safety	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	1

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



6 July 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Wennington Hall School, Lancaster, LA2 8NS**

On behalf of the inspection team I am writing to let you know the outcome of the inspection of Wennington Hall School. We enjoyed our visit very much and thank you for your very warm welcome. I am delighted to agree with you that your school is outstanding. It provides you with an exceptionally high standard of education and a wonderful range of activities that engage and challenge you to give of your best. I was particularly impressed with the motor sports, rock climbing and canoeing. However, I enjoyed the fresh pizza too!

Talking to you, and reading the comments from the questionnaires you recently filled in, I can see that you appreciate what the staff are doing for you. Due to the outstanding care and support provided, you are growing in confidence and, as a result, the progress you are making is also excellent. I was so very impressed with your behaviour in lessons and when taking part in the many activities offered. I particularly noticed how well you encouraged one another to do your best.

Senior staff are currently working with subject leaders to further develop the role they have within school. I have asked senior leaders to make sure they carry on keeping a careful eye on these developments to ensure they are successfully implemented.

I can see that your attendance continues to improve and is now well above average. Well done. You are obviously enjoying what this outstanding school has to offer.

May I take this opportunity to wish you the very best.

Yours sincerely

Jim Alexander  
Lead Inspector

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