

Wennington Hall School

Lodge Lane, Wennington, Lancaster, Lancashire LA2 8NS

Inspection dates

7–8 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, the safeguarding of pupils has not been sufficient. Leaders have not been systematic enough in implementing fully the statutory guidance about safeguarding.
- While those currently responsible for safeguarding are taking determined action to ensure it is robust, deficiencies remain. Some of these were identified during the inspection.
- Until recently, governors have not provided sufficient challenge to school leaders. Some governors are unclear about their roles. The school's website does not have all the required information, including about governors.
- Some members of staff do not have full confidence in each other.
- Until recently, the school has had little intervention from the local authority or sharing of practice with other schools. Training for leaders and teachers has been limited.
- Some parents feel that the school does not communicate with them as well as possible.
- The progress pupils make in academic subjects is slower than typically seen nationally. The systems for tracking pupils' progress are not used to full effect.
- Pupils' basic skills are sometimes developed too slowly and remain weak.
- Teaching of academic subjects is not as effective as that of social and other wider aspects of learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, staff and governors believe that pupils come first. They have ensured that pupils have been protected, as far as possible, from the current difficulties the school faces.
- The acting headteacher and other staff, some in new leadership roles, have started to bring about clear improvement. Staff recognise and welcome this change. The staff team is becoming less fractured.
- When governors have become aware of personnel and other issues, they have tackled these directly.
- The social and wider development of pupils is rapid. They are friendly and behave well. They attend regularly and are proud of their school.
- The curriculum gives pupils a wide range of experiences. The provision for vocational learning, in and out of lessons, has led to success in national and international competitions and high attainment in the qualifications taken.
- Boarding pupils and others are treated equally.
- The school is well equipped and has good facilities for different kinds of learning.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Governors and senior leaders must urgently ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are made fully secure by:
 - providing continuing training, support and supervision for those leaders directly responsible for safeguarding
 - giving those leaders sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities without undue pressure
 - checking that aspects of the current statutory guidance are met including those concerning the job specifications of such leaders
 - reviewing previous records of incidents which could have safeguarding aspects to make sure that nothing has been missed
 - requiring all records of any restraint used by staff on pupils to provide more detail, particularly of the actions taken before there is any physical contact
 - continuing the recent improvements to safeguarding practice, including to the availability of the current safeguarding policy, record-keeping and checks on any members of staff who have missed training
 - clarifying the responsibilities of governors concerning safeguarding, including those of any with specific roles, and providing training for governors if any are uncertain about these responsibilities.
- Ensure that the recent improvements to leadership and management are further embedded by:
 - governors taking the necessary steps to appoint a permanent headteacher
 - governors and the headteacher working in appropriate partnership so that there is open but challenging accountability at all levels in the school
 - governors and senior leaders continuing to rebuild staff confidence and morale, and all staff contributing to this process
 - all involved contributing to rigorous but supportive performance management arrangements
 - governors arranging for continuing effective mentoring and support for any senior leaders new in their roles
 - leaders accurately evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school so that the school improvement plan is relevant and realistic

- governors ensuring that the school website includes all the required information
 - leaders ensuring that teachers use the new opportunities to take part in training and other developmental activities to improve any weaker practice
 - senior leaders bringing forward their plans for better communication with parents.
- Ensure that teaching and learning in academic subjects, including English and mathematics, is as successful as in vocational subjects by:
- teachers providing suitable challenge for pupils so that they make faster progress from their starting points
 - teachers and leaders using the school’s assessment system to set demanding targets and to check that pupils learn quickly enough to meet these targets
 - teachers further emphasising the development of pupils’ basic skills in English and mathematics so that these are secure enough to support their learning in other subjects.

An external review of the school’s use of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Over time, safeguarding arrangements in the school have not been sufficient. While there has been recent improvement, weaknesses remain.
- There has been considerable recent change in leadership in the school. There is currently an acting headteacher and a number of other leaders are new to their roles. Some members of staff have long-term absences from school. A number of new systems have been introduced but many these are at an early stage of development.
- Leaders, other staff and governors are clear that the school should meet the needs of pupils and support their academic and wider education. However, this commitment has not been sufficient to prevent the staff team from becoming fractured. The acting headteacher is determined to rebuild staff confidence and morale. He has taken steps to successfully resolve a number of long-term personnel matters. Members of staff spoken to by inspectors recognised and welcomed the changes in the school. However, they also recognise that there is more to be done. Staff have ensured that the recent turbulence in the school's leadership has had as small an effect on pupils as possible.
- Leaders completed a formal evaluation of the school's effectiveness together with a plan for improvement towards the end of the last school year. This was overgenerous and did not identify urgent improvement needs precisely enough. Insufficient action has been taken to respond to the priorities for improvement about safeguarding identified in the one-day inspection of the school which took place in March 2016.
- Opportunities for training and other continuing development of staff have, in the past, been limited. This has meant that it has been harder for teachers to refine their classroom practice and for leaders to be prepared for new roles and responsibilities. Teachers and other staff are now made aware of training courses offered by the local authority. Arrangements for checking on staff's effectiveness have not been rigorous, particularly for senior leaders.
- The local authority has, until recently, provided 'light touch' support and challenge to the school. Those involved now accept that much firmer intervention is needed and close working relationships are being established.
- Very few parents have used Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, to record their feelings about the school. Too few did so at the time of this inspection for overall results to be available. A small number of parents and others contacted Ofsted directly, in part, because of the short timescales available for parents to provide their views in detail. While some of the views expressed were positive, others identified concerns about specific matters. Where this was the case, inspectors found that the school was taking action in response to matters parents raised. School leaders have started to consider more effective ways of communicating with parents.
- The school curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of pupils. It provides a balance between academic and wider learning. Sufficient time is provided for the study of key subjects such as English and mathematics. The choices available motivate pupils. Leaders have ensured that there is also an emphasis on vocational study in key stage 4. The resources and facilities available for such learning are of high quality.

Pupils' learning is further broadened through extra-curricular activities. These are built into the programme for boarders. Day pupils also have access to these on two days a week. Pupils have had considerable success in Greenpower races involving small motor vehicles and are in the process of building a battle robot to allow the school to take part in competitions.

- The school's system requires that pupils' behaviour is assessed each lesson. This gives staff useful information as they help pupils to improve their behaviour. While systems are in place to check on pupils' academic learning, these provide far less detail. Pupils' academic learning is less rapid than their social and behavioural development.

Governance of the school

- While governors are keen and committed to the school, their challenge to school leaders has been insufficient to prevent the challenges the school currently faces. Governors have relied too much on information provided by senior leaders rather than using the broader information they have available to ensure that leadership is effective. They have taken steps to determine the wider views of staff through surveys and direct conversations with different groups of employees.
- A culture of robust challenge and support between governors and the acting headteacher and vice versa is starting to develop. When governors have become aware of important issues, they have taken clear and decisive action.
- The governing body's scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements has been insufficient to properly hold staff to account.
- Some governors are unsure of their roles and responsibilities.
- While governors are aware that they must appoint a permanent headteacher, they had not started to made definite arrangements for this at the time of the inspection.
- The governing body has not ensured that statutory requirements are met. For example, the school's website lacks a number of required details. These include information about governors' links with school staff. Such details are particularly important in ensuring that there is open governance, particularly as a number of such links exist in the school.
- The information available on the website about the use of the additional pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is out of date. The latest available data from the school shows that such pupils make similar progress to others in the school but do not learn quickly enough to catch up with other pupils elsewhere.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- In the past, reports of potential safeguarding issues have not been treated rigorously enough. Recording of any such issues has been poor. Therefore, it is not certain that all have been followed through to an appropriate conclusion.
- Requirements in the statutory guidance about safeguarding, such as that about the job description of the leader responsible for safeguarding, have not been met over time.

- Parents have not had the easiest possible access to the school's child protection policy because, until very recently, the latest version was not available on the school's website.
- While safeguarding training has been provided for staff, until very recently, there has been no systematic record of who has attended. It has not been possible for leaders to easily ensure that all staff are fully up to date. Regular training about the use of appropriate physical contact with pupils has been provided. Staff have also been informed about how to protect pupils from the risk of contact with people with extremist views.
- Staff have recently taken on new responsibility for leading the school's safeguarding practice, in addition to their existing roles. These leaders are assiduous. They have received appropriate initial training to allow them to complete their roles, but school leadership lacks the capacity to provide the continuing support, training and supervision they may need to be as efficient as possible. Their time to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities is currently limited. However, governors are starting to consider how this might be remedied.
- School leaders are aware of a number of recent concerns which have been raised by pupils, parents and staff about aspects of safeguarding. They have worked closely with external partners, including the police and local authority, to ensure that these are properly followed up.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- While teaching leads to rapid gains in pupils' social skills and behaviour, it has not ensured that their academic learning is fast enough. Pupils' rates of learning differ between different subjects.
- Pupils' academic attainment is assessed when they join the school. This sets a baseline from which leaders and teachers can judge how well pupils are learning. However, the systems to do this are vague and are not closely related to the rates of progress typically seen in other schools. This means that teachers' expectations of pupils are not as high as possible. In contrast, the very close assessment of pupils' behavioural starting points and development reflects the high expectations about this aspect. Pupils are taught to think about and control their behaviour through lessons and the wider experiences offered. Leaders are developing new assessment systems but this work is at an early stage.
- Pupils' basic skills development in English and mathematics lags behind their other learning. Teachers do not ensure that there is consistent challenge to pupils in these subjects. Scrutiny of pupils' English books indicates that rates of progress are slow in Years 7 and 8. While these speed up in Year 9, pupils' writing development remains limited because there is little opportunity for pupils to write at length. In mathematics, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. In addition, pupils' errors are sometimes not addressed, so their learning slows.
- Some pupils' reading is at a basic level. Such pupils lack the phonic skills they need to confidently work out and understand words. These skills are not taught systematically.

Some pupils' poor literacy skills limit their progress in academic subjects.

- Pupils learn well in practical subjects which they enjoy. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge effectively to provide real-world contexts to their teaching. For example, an inspector saw Year 10 pupils using their catering skills very well as they prepared Christmas food for sharing. The well-equipped workshop allows pupils to learn about engineering as they work on real motor vehicles.
- As the staff team is small, some teachers are required to teach in subjects which are not their specialism. They rise to this challenge well because teachers are prepared to develop their own subject knowledge. This allows them to offer exciting activities to pupils. When this happens, pupils are interested in the topics covered and learn well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are ineffective. This means that, over time, leaders have not been able to guarantee that pupils are as safe as possible.
- The school provides a supportive environment in which pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can take place. The strength of this aspect of the school's work can be seen in the effective social and behavioural development of pupils. They are taught how to tell the difference between right and wrong, and to live in a positive community. This approach also underpins pupils' developing understanding of the values they need to be successful in the future. Features such as respect for others and the rights of individuals are central to the school's ethos. The school has a system to identify when pupils have learned about such aspects, for example, in its work on remembrance and the annual carol service.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is little bullying in the school and that if there are any problems in relationships between pupils, staff sort these out. Inspectors saw pupils interacting happily and harmoniously. However, the challenges some pupils face mean that, from time to time, incidents of poor behaviour happen. These sometimes include difficult relationships between pupils. Examples of these were identified by some of the parents who contacted inspectors. When these are complex, school leaders work in partnership with external partners, including the police, so that they can be sure that appropriate action has been taken.
- Pupils also told inspectors that they feel safe in school, for example, through the clear information they receive about how they can protect themselves when they are online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils generally conduct themselves well around the school. They know what is expected of them in lessons. Their good behaviour in class is supported by teachers' consistent lesson-by-lesson scoring and discussion of their behaviour. Inspectors saw pupils contributing to their lessons and helping each other to learn. Their approach in

an assembly during the inspection led to it being a positive and orderly start to the day. It was enhanced further by pupils' willingness to perform in it as soloists and in a group.

- If the quality of behaviour in lessons drops, there are well-understood systems for staff to respond. For the most serious incidents, staff are trained to use restraint when this is appropriate. The school's records indicate that the use of restraint has reduced over time and that this response to pupils' behaviour is the exception rather than the rule. However, some of the details kept do not describe as clearly as possible the steps taken before any physical contact is made between staff and pupils.
- Pupils' attendance is similar to the national average for other schools. It is higher than the average for special schools. If a pupil's attendance drops or they are persistently absent, leaders work with the pupil's family to address the reasons for this. As with other aspects of the school, pupils are proud about the way they attend. They recognise that their good attendance is important if they are to do well. Leaders support this approach by the use of rewards and encouragement.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils join the school with starting points which are typically much lower than seen nationally. This reflects the disrupted education of many pupils before joining the school. This can also mean that pupils lack assessment information from the national tests taken in primary schools.
- Very few pupils, with none in 2015 and 2016, have high starting points. This means that it is not possible to comment on the achievement of this group of pupils.
- Pupils in Year 11 attain overall results which are lower than the national average. Those with lower starting points achieve relatively more strongly than those with somewhat higher starting points. Pupils gain few GCSE grades at grade C or above, including in English and mathematics.
- In 2016, Year 11 pupils made less progress in English, mathematics and other subjects than seen from pupils across the country with similar starting points. While overall progress in 2015 was identified as broadly average, the published data included only two out of the 14 pupils in the year group because others did not have full information about their prior attainment. In other recent years, pupils' progress by the end of Year 11 has also been below average.
- Observation of pupils' learning and scrutiny of their exercise books show that pupils across the school continue to make slow progress in many academic subjects, including English and mathematics. In contrast, pupils have more success in practical subjects. The school has been identified by the relevant examination board as being one of the top-performing schools in the Level 1 vocational courses it offers. Pupils take these qualifications at the end of Year 10 to allow them to spend more time concentrating on English and mathematics. However, this means that they do not have access to Level 2 vocational courses which would give them access to qualifications equivalent to GCSE grade C and above.
- Most pupils in the school are disadvantaged. Such pupils make progress from their

starting points at broadly similar rates to others in the school.

- School leaders and other staff successfully ensure that pupils are helped to develop important wider outcomes which relate to their special educational needs. They learn positive social behaviour and how to behave well.
- Pupils are well supported in preparation for the next stage of their education. There is an effective programme of careers education. Work experience undertaken by Year 11 pupils is carefully matched to their skills and aspirations. In the past, pupils' work experience has led to further opportunities, for example, to apprenticeships in highly regarded restaurants. Current leaders have tracked pupils' destinations on leaving school and taken action to ensure that all pupils engage in appropriate programmes. They have increased the support offered to pupils before and after they move to college. This is already showing benefits in helping pupils to be successful after they have left the school. All the pupils who left school in 2016 took up college places or embarked on vocational training.

School details

Unique reference number	119873
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10024472

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Max Lunt
Headteacher	Paul Wealleans
Telephone number	01524 221333
Website	www.wenningtonhall.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@wenningtonhall.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 July 2012

Information about this school

- Wennington Hall School is a day and residential school situated in a former country house in Wennington, a village in Lancashire.
- The school currently has 77 boys on roll aged between 11 and 16. Of these pupils, a large proportion attend on a residential basis.
- A high proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals.
- All pupils are identified as having special educational needs related to their behaviour and have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- A small proportion of the pupils have been on roll at the school for less than a year.
- The school has a high adult-to-pupil ratio.

- The previous headteacher resigned shortly before the start of this school year. The acting headteacher was previously the deputy headteacher.
- A number of members of staff currently have long-term absence from school. Many leaders are in temporary posts or newly appointed.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupils' examination results, the curriculum, the use of the additional pupil premium and catch-up funding, special educational needs, the complaints policy or governors on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in the school. They visited an assembly. They observed pupils' conduct in lessons, while moving around the school and during social times. An inspector listened to pupils as they read.
- No Year 11 pupils were at school during this inspection because they were attending work experience placements.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher and other leaders, and a group of teachers and other members of staff. They met formally with a group of pupils and spoke to others during lessons and at other times during the school day. An inspector met with a group of governors.
- An inspector met two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined pupils' books during lessons and during a scrutiny of samples of written work across a range of pupils and subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed documents including school policies, safeguarding information, the school's improvement plan and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered. However, the inspectors received phone calls and emails from some parents and members of staff. There were no responses from pupils or staff to their online questionnaires.
- This inspection took place at the same time as an inspection of the boarding provision in the school by Ofsted social care inspectors.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector

Linda Griffiths

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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