

# Westmorland School

Weldbank Lane, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 3NQ

## Inspection dates

20–22 March 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders successfully fulfil their ambition for pupils to succeed through high-quality teaching and outstanding care.
- All the independent school standards are met. Policies and procedures are in place and are effective in promoting the school's aims.
- Due to outstanding teaching, different groups of pupils make excellent progress from their different starting points across a wide range of subjects.
- Staff are supported effectively by leaders so that they can build important, trusting relationships with pupils.
- Strong relationships mean pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Pupils are kept very safe.
- Across the school, staff have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve in their learning.
- As a result of an effective curriculum, and teachers' excellent subject knowledge, pupils achieve very well across a range of subjects. However, at times pupils have less opportunity to develop subject-specific skills in history and geography.
- Excellent bespoke support results in pupils' self-esteem and confidence improving over time.
- Leaders ensure that behaviour systems are well developed and consistently applied. As a result, the school provides pupils with a calm and purposeful learning environment.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing further opportunities for pupils to develop subject-specific skills in geography and history.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- 'We learn to live together, together we live to learn' is a pertinent motto for this school. Leaders' passion for all pupils to succeed, combined with high-quality teaching, ensures that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Policies and procedures are bespoke to the needs of pupils. As a result, they are well thought out and are effective in promoting the school's aims.
- Leaders and the proprietors are clear and precise in their drive for improvement. They check diligently on the impact of their actions and the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils develop their skills and knowledge effectively.
- Senior staff and the proprietors are highly ambitious for the school. At the heart of their work is a commitment to preparing all pupils for the next steps of their education. As a result, staff share these aims and work very well together to build strong relationships with pupils.
- The curriculum meets the independent school standards. Adults focus on developing pupils' key skills, including their life skills. The broad curriculum is well planned to give pupils a wide range of experiences and to expand their horizons.
- Leaders have maintained outstanding outcomes for pupils since the previous inspection. Pupils consistently make strong progress from their different starting points, as a result of the highly effective provision.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development consistently improve as a result of the culture of respect across the school. Daily meetings enable staff to share their successes and the ways that they adapt their support and provision to meet pupils' academic, social and emotional needs.
- Leadership tasks are shared very effectively between senior and middle leaders. For example, middle leaders play a very active part in developing and evaluating the quality of learning in the vast majority of subject areas.
- Adults promote British values effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of the rule of law and recognise that we have rules so that they are kept safe. Pupils vote on matters of importance to them, such as the choice of activities at breaktimes.
- Parents, carers and placing authorities receive pertinent information about pupils' progress through regular detailed reports.
- Leaders rigorously track and monitor incidents of lower-level and challenging behaviour. They closely analyse these incidents to see how adults could better support pupils. As a result, there has been a significant decline in the number of incidents over the past few years. All adults follow the clear behaviour strategy consistently. Pupils respond well to the reward system.
- Staff provide a range of enrichment activities. These include visits away from school and visitors coming to the school, which are linked to pupils' interests and which develop necessary life skills. Pupils enjoy the curriculum provided by the school. Pupils with whom the inspector spoke described their learning as the 'best they have ever had'.

- School leaders are passionate about making sure the curriculum is engaging in all areas of the school. However, the development of subject-specific skills and knowledge in history and geography across the curriculum are not as strong as in other subjects.

## **Governance**

- The proprietors have a clear vision for ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive a high-quality education. This enables them to reach their potential and succeed in life.
- Senior leaders have an effective working relationship with the proprietors.
- Regular reports and meetings ensure that the proprietors challenge the headteacher in relation to pupils' progress and their personal development. This ensures that the proprietors are exceptionally knowledgeable about the school.
- The proprietors ensure that the school buildings are fit for purpose. Classrooms are suitable for the teaching required. A variety of outdoor spaces are available for pupils to use during the day.
- Proprietors ensure that the company's website is informative for parents and carers. The website meets requirements for safeguarding, complaints and curriculum information.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietors and leaders ensure that checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' welfare. There is a culture of vigilance because leaders ensure that safeguarding pupils is everyone's priority. All staff receive regular training and updates, often on a daily basis.
- The safeguarding policy meets current requirements. It is updated regularly and it is published on the website. This sets out clear guidance for staff. Consequently, staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.
- The school works closely with a range of other professionals to help keep pupils safe and to support them. Staff keep a close eye on pupils and take appropriate action to address any rare occasions of unsafe behaviour or situations. The behaviour and welfare team are held in high regard by parents and the local authorities with which the school works.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Outstanding**

- When pupils join the school, their often complex needs are assessed carefully and wide-ranging individual plans are put into place for them. Pupils are then placed in cluster groups according to their needs. Pupils' education and welfare are at the centre of all that the staff do.
- Leaders regularly check on pupils' progress and assess the impact of their actions on pupils' academic success, as well as their social, personal and behavioural development. For example, the many therapy sessions observed during the inspection were very effective in developing pupils' communication and cooperation skills.

- All staff have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. For example, pupils in one cluster have moved from counting in fives to using appropriate resources to solve problems involving fractions.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly effective in the way that they teach the different aspects of the curriculum. Pupils' outstanding progress, evident in their books, is a result of excellent subject knowledge and highly effective questioning by all staff. However, there is further scope for pupils to further develop subject-specific skills in history and geography.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Teachers organise effective small-group reading sessions and teach phonics very well to help pupils to improve their reading skills. Pupils are keen to discuss their reading books, thus developing their comprehension skills and improving their reading and speaking fluency.
- Teachers develop pupils' communication and language skills very effectively. For example, the rich discussion in one cluster on the use of language in report writing gave pupils the opportunity to develop their vocabulary.
- Staff ensure that work is very carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils undertake tasks with increasing levels of challenge and this enables them to progress and deepen their levels of understanding over a wide range of subjects.
- Work in computing is a strength. Teachers use resources very effectively across the curriculum to have a very positive impact on pupils' progress in a range of subjects. For example, slow motion videos used in science lessons help pupils to explain the results of their experiments.
- Through a new email system, teachers provide pupils and their parents with detailed feedback, in line with the school's assessment policy, about what to do to improve their work. This consolidates pupils' understanding of ideas and concepts.
- Teachers have created useful links with other schools in the Witherslack Group and the local cluster to moderate pupils' work, ensuring that their assessments of pupils' achievement are accurate.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders and staff place great emphasis on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. As staff know pupils' needs well, there is highly effective individual support that results in pupils displaying improved confidence in all aspects of their learning.
- Leaders and all staff are excellent role models. They engage with pupils in a manner that consistently embodies the high standards that they rightly expect. Consequently, pupils are polite, well-mannered and proud of their school.
- During the inspection, teaching staff were caring at all times while encouraging pupils' exemplary behaviour. This was particularly evident in mathematics when pupils had to show resilience when solving complex problems.
- Pupils understand British values clearly, such as the respect for law and democracy. They

could relate these values to real life and identified examples in the life of school, such as the way in which the themes of some topics are decided.

- Pupils value and respect each other. They are knowledgeable about other cultures because of the work completed through assemblies and throughout the curriculum.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep safe in a wide range of situations. In one lesson, pupils were learning not to share personal information on the internet.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy through exercise and their choices of food. School meals cooked on site offer a range of healthy choices at lunchtime.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- All classrooms and areas within the school are extremely calm and orderly and no time is wasted when pupils move around the school.
- Staff ensure that the breakfast club, lunchtimes and breaktimes are calm. Pupils enjoy being in this settled atmosphere with their friends. Staff also use these occasions to informally develop language and communication skills.
- Leaders work very closely with families and external agencies to continually improve attendance. As a result, attendance is in line with the national average for all groups of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that behaviour systems are well developed and consistently applied. Pupils value the rewards linked to them behaving well and adopting good learning habits.
- The school's approach to working with pupils so that they better manage their own behaviour leads to significant improvements in the behaviour of individual pupils. As a result, there are very few instances of low-level disruption. Pupils value their learning and remain focused and engaged.
- Adults maintain a warm relationship with pupils, while ensuring that expectations are consistent. These exemplary relationships between adults and pupils contribute well to pupils' overall outstanding well-being and development.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Outstanding**

- On starting at Westmorland School many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Due to the outstanding teaching and support that they receive, pupils catch up quickly and make outstanding progress in the vast majority of subjects.
- As a result of outstanding teaching, pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Adults provide opportunities for pupils to read widely across the curriculum. As a result, pupils develop a love of reading. Early phonics teaching enables pupils to sound out words and leads to better progress with spelling skills.
- Currently, teachers' assessments indicate that pupils are making rapid progress from their different individual starting points. The standard of work in pupils' books confirms current

assessment information. This progress is due to effective support which is tailored to meet pupils' specific learning needs.

- As a result of high expectations, the progress of the most able pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is outstanding from their starting points.
- Leaders pay close attention to the needs of children looked after by the local authority. As a result of effective support and the close attention paid to pupils' social and emotional health, these pupils progress very well across a wide range of subjects.
- Transition arrangements both into and out of school are effective. As a result, pupils are as well prepared as possible, given their starting points, to meet the demands in terms of maintaining relationships in mainstream schools.
- Progress in science is especially strong. Pupils develop understanding of the processes and methods of science through different types of enquiries that they engage in. These activities help pupils to answer scientific questions about the world around them.
- Progress across the wider curriculum is similarly strong and pupils make individually significant strides forward in their learning across a range of subjects. However, there are not as many opportunities for pupils to develop history and geography skills across the curriculum.

## School details

Unique reference number	132828
DfE registration number	888/6048
Inspection number	10043374

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Craig Baxter
Headteacher	Susan Asher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,994–£65,474
Telephone number	01257 278899
Website	<a href="https://witherslackgroup.co.uk/westmorland-school/">https://witherslackgroup.co.uk/westmorland-school/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:westmorland@witherslackgroup.co.uk">westmorland@witherslackgroup.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	24 February 2015

## Information about this school

- Westmorland School is a day special school located in Chorley, Lancashire. It operates under the proprietorship of the Witherslack Group.
- The Witherslack Group's vision statement is 'promoting resilience; developing independence'.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for up to 56 pupils in the age range five to 11 years. There are currently 56 pupils on the school roll.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of needs including social, emotional and mental



health needs; speech, language and communication difficulties; and autistic spectrum disorder. The proportion of pupils who have autism spectrum disorder has increased since the time of the last inspection. All pupils have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care (EHC) plan in place, or are in the process of assessment for one, at the time of entry to the school.

- The school organises classes based on pupils' barriers to learning, rather than age or ability.
- The school was last inspected in February 2015.
- The school has received a national award for its leadership of positive behaviour initiatives.
- The school runs a breakfast club for all cluster groups.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects and clusters. Some observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. The inspector toured the site and checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.
- The inspector met with pupils, both formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leadership team, subject leaders and behaviour and welfare staff. The inspector also spoke with the chair of the governing body and the regional director for the Witherslack Group.
- The inspector took into account the views of 47 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed pupils in lessons and during social time. The inspector also scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at a wider sample of their books.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: information about pupils' attainment, the school's self-evaluation and action points for improvement, and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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