

Wemms Education Centre

W Block Therfield School, Dilston Road, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7NZ

Inspection dates

23 October 2019

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The principal, who is also the proprietor of the school, is the designated safeguarding leader (DSL). Other senior leaders are also trained at a suitable level to deputise when dealing with safeguarding or child protection concerns.
- Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil and are alert to signs that pupils may be at risk of harm or neglect.
- However, the school's systems for recording, storing and maintaining information about safeguarding concerns are not fit for purpose. When staff are concerned about pupils, they either note details on the school's behaviour log, speak to the DSL or send an email. This system is not efficient and could lead to important information being missed. In addition, leaders are not easily able to analyse patterns of concerns or maintain a running record of contact with the local authority children's services.
- The principal has sought advice and guidance from an independent adviser about improving record-keeping in the school but has not yet made changes to the school's approach.
- The school has a published safeguarding and child protection policy that is up-to-date and suitable. The school's website is currently under construction and the safeguarding policy is not yet available online. However, the policy is available in school for all parents.
- The school does not meet this aspect of the independent school standards.

Paragraph 14

- The principal has ensured that the school is fully staffed and that pupils are adequately supervised. Staff work together closely as a team and adhere to the school's protocols for safe supervision of pupils.
- This aspect of the independent school standards is met.

Paragraph 15

- The school has an efficient system for recording details about pupils who are admitted to the school, including when they leave and their destinations. The school is

registered to admit 60 pupils, aged between 10 and 20. There are currently 37 pupils on roll.

- This aspect of the independent school standards is met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The school's approach to assessing and managing risk is weak. The risk assessment policy is not suitable and does not match what happens in practice in the school. For example, the policy indicates how the school's advisory board will oversee whether reasonable steps are taken to ensure that staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety on and off the school premises. However, the school did not provide any evidence that the advisory board has formally considered the quality of the school's risk assessment procedures.
- In addition, the risk assessment policy does not take enough account of the potential risks for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders and staff clearly know and care for pupils. The principal and senior leaders talk about how they make decisions about activities for pupils and whether these are appropriate. However, many discussions and decision-making processes are not recorded formally. The school is therefore failing in its duty to ensure that potential risks to pupils are considered, minimised and recorded helpfully.
- Risk assessments for trips and activities are not presented in a consistent way. Some visits are risk-assessed, with some detail about potential hazards. Others, including some high-risk activities, are hardly risk-assessed at all. For example, the risk assessment for a recent trip to the USA did not outline precisely enough all the possible hazards for pupils. In addition, it is not clear who drew up the risk assessment, nor is it dated.
- Other information about the visit to the USA, including that provided for families, consisted of verbal briefings and informally worded emails to and from parents. This information does not provide secure evidence that checks had been made on those accompanying the trip or the activities to be undertaken. Although parents took the information from briefings and in emails on trust because they have faith in the school, the principal did not carry out a thorough risk assessment, and decisions were made that might have placed pupils at unnecessary risk.
- The school does not meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18(2)(c)(ii)

- The principal has recently made improvements to the records of checks made on staff working in the school and has set up a helpful system to keep these up-to-date.
- At the time of the inspection, the principal was in the process of carrying out checks on staff's medical fitness to work, as required. However, records of these checks are not yet complete.
- The school does not meet this aspect of the independent school standards.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33(g)

- The school's complaints policy does not fully meet the independent school standards. The policy includes a statement relating to the independent panel selected to hear a complaint. However, the policy does not outline how one member of the panel must be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The school does not meet this aspect of the independent school standards.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(a), 34(b), 34(c)

- The principal has not made sure that the independent school standards are met consistently and continuously. The school has grown rapidly in recent years. Senior leaders are developing their skills and expertise, but do not yet take full responsibility for leading the school. The principal has not ensured that there are efficient systems in place to run the school effectively and meet all statutory requirements.
- Safeguarding requirements, as outlined in the independent school standards, are not met. The principal's approach to assessing and managing risk is unsatisfactory.
- The principal and her team clearly show their commitment to pupils and their education. They know pupils well and put their learning first. The principal has sought professional advice and external oversight of the performance and systems in the school. However, this has not been effective in ensuring that all the independent school standards are met.
- There is insufficient regular oversight of the work of the principal and the school. She is not held firmly to account for her decisions and the school's performance. The school's advisory board does not operate independently of the leadership of the school and is not set up in such a way to provide objective challenge. Some members of the board also work in a voluntary capacity in the school, which creates a potential conflict of interest. Members of the board have not been fully trained to understand the school's policies. They do not check the work of the school and no records are kept of any meetings that take place.
- The school does not meet this part of the independent school standards.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	142416
DfE registration number	936/6006
Inspection number	10124947

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 school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 20
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Joy Wemms
Chair	Alan Dean
Principal	Joy Wemms
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000
Telephone number	01372 276 499
Website	school.wemms.eu
Email address	wemmsmaths@gmail.com
Date of previous standard inspection	9–10 May 2017

Information about this school

- Wemms Education Centre is an independent special school catering for pupils with SEND. Most pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school is registered for up to 60 pupils.
- A material change inspection was carried out on 11 September 2018 and judged that some of the independent school standards were unmet. A progress monitoring

inspection in May 2019 judged that previously unmet standards were now met. The last standard inspection, in May 2017, judged the school to be good.

- The principal is also the proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools because of concerns about safeguarding and the quality of leadership and management at the school.
- The inspection was carried out with no notice.
- Her Majesty's Inspector met with the principal, senior leaders and a member of the advisory board. She toured the school and met pupils and teachers in lessons.
- The inspector met two parents and a pupil.
- She considered the school's policies, safeguarding records and the checks made on adults working in the school. Risk assessments and other records were scrutinised.
- The inspector took into account information provided by Surrey local authority, alongside other evidence.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2)(c)(ii) the person's medical fitness.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which–
 - 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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