

# Inspection of Windlestone School

Chilton, Ferryhill, County Durham DL17 0HP

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Inspection dates: 12–13 November 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

School leaders do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in school. Leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour are also too low. Some pupils say they do not feel safe and happy in school. Pupils and some staff told us that quite a lot of bullying goes on in school.

In some classrooms, pupils do not learn well. Pupils told us that they did not always understand the work teachers set. Some pupils said they could not always see how things they were asked to learn linked together. This meant they did not always understand the new learning they were asked to do.

Pupils pointed out that sometimes when they do not understand what is expected of them, they start to become upset and angry and some leave the classroom. During our visit, we saw pupils running around the corridors and missing learning.

In some parts of the school, pupils do feel safe and happy. For example, in rural science pupils told us they enjoy learning how to care for the school's farm animals. However, not enough is being done at the moment to make school a happy place in which pupils learn well in all subjects.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school is failing its pupils. Behaviour in classrooms is often poor and pupils are frequently disrespectful to staff and other pupils. Staff know that this is not right. They told us that pupils' disrespectful attitudes make it difficult for them to do their jobs properly. Nearly all pupils in Year 11 left with some form of accreditation in mathematics and English at the end of last year. However, work in current pupils' books is of a low standard which makes it unlikely this will be repeated this year.

Staff and leaders feel that they have high expectations for pupils. However, much of the work they give to pupils is too easy. This is because staff are concerned that if pupils' work is too hard, behaviour will get worse.

Subject leaders often lack the skills to develop the curriculum in their subject areas. They explained to inspectors that they have asked for more up-to-date and relevant training, but so far this has not been provided.

Weaknesses in the curriculum have not been addressed by senior leaders. Some subjects have too little curriculum time. For example, the lead teacher in English would like pupils to have more time to catch up when they fall behind. However, to date, this has not been made possible.

Teachers do not sufficiently build on the skills and knowledge that pupils already have. Pupils do not always see the point of new learning as it does not build on the things they know already. They do not learn and understand more. This often makes

pupils frustrated and uninterested.

Leaders, in particular the deputy head, have a clearer idea of the school's intended curriculum. However, curriculum leaders and teachers are not as clear about how the curriculum should be taught. Some subject areas follow the national curriculum. However, the order in which pupils learn does not let them build an understanding of future work. For example, in history younger pupils' books highlight that they have recently learned about the Romans, a medieval village and Henry VIII. The lack of sequencing of pupils' learning does not allow them to learn and understand more.

Leaders are not effective in managing pupils' behaviour. The behaviour party working group which was set up in the last academic year has taken a range of formal action such as reviewing and updating the whole-school behaviour policy, in full consultation with staff. However, these actions have had very limited impact.

Currently, the school does not have a board of governors. The local authority has started to put in place an interim executive board. A chair of this board has been chosen but, so far, members have not met to decide on a course of action to bring about improvements in the school.

Pupils' work on the farm and other outdoor activities enable them to develop resilience and personal organisational skills. Pupils' enjoyment of food technology and physical education enables them to understand the importance of healthy eating and physical fitness. This contributes to their personal development and future health.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Pupils and staff told us pupils do not feel safe in school. School records show 313 incidents of bullying were logged last year and 68 so far this year. Pupils explained they enjoyed attending the school's residential provision because they felt safe from bullying and harm. However, the same pupils told us that staff in school do not take action quickly enough to stop fighting and incidents of bullying in school.

Pupils were seen smoking on the school site on each day of the inspection. Leaders' actions to support pupils to quit smoking are not working. For example, posters around the school have no impact.

Staff log safeguarding incidents regularly. However, dates are not always well recorded, so it is difficult to know what happened and when.

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

## **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school curriculum has not helped pupils to build knowledge progressively over time. Pupils learn content in isolation, often repeatedly. This does not allow them to learn and acquire knowledge systematically. Pupils' achievement is weak. Leaders should monitor the quality of the curriculum more closely to help pupils learn more. Teachers should have higher ambitions for pupils' academic progress.
- The subject content of some curriculum areas is not sequenced well enough. Staff do not always identify important curriculum content and ensure that pupils learn and remember it. This weakness could clearly be seen in history and mathematics. Leaders know they need to check curriculum planning and implementation more carefully to ensure that the key information pupils need to learn and remember is identified and delivered. Implementing the planned system has been too slow.
- Subject leaders have not developed a curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Some leaders recognise that they lack key skills and are frustrated that their requests for further training and development have not yet been met, particularly in English. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive the training they need to develop a cohesive and well-sequenced curriculum.
- Leaders have not been able to establish a positive climate for learning. Pupils are very often disrespectful to staff and each other. Leaders need to take a more proactive role in managing difficult behaviour within the school and work more closely with staff to establish clear expectations that pupils adhere to.
- Safeguarding is not effective because pupils report they are regularly bullied in school. Staff expressed concerns to the inspection team about the safety of vulnerable pupils. Leaders need to take urgent further action to eradicate bullying in school.
- Pupils' attendance has remained broadly the same for the last two years. Leaders have set a target of 90% attendance which has yet to be reached consistently. Some pupils improve their attendance after they start at the school. However, many do not continue to improve because they are concerned about the behaviour of their peers. Pupils are also disrespectful of school behaviour rules and/or do not feel they are required to attend school. Leaders have systems in place to follow up on pupils' absence but do not adhere to them with sufficient rigour, so attendance does not improve. This needs addressing as a matter of urgency.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114347
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110570
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	70
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Currently not yet fully in place
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tim Bennett
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.windlestoneschool.com">www.windlestoneschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 May 2017

## Information about this school

- Windlestone School provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, all of whom have an education, health and care plan. Pupils travel from across Durham and the surrounding areas to attend the school.
- Recently, the local authority has replaced the governing body with an interim executive board. Several board members are awaiting final appointment. However, a chair has been elected. It is planned that the board will take control at the next meeting.
- The school runs a residential provision for up to 20 pupils for four nights per week during school term time. The school provides an extended school day, open to pupils for four nights per week until 6.30pm.
- The local authority commissions the school to run the Personalised Alternative Curriculum Centre at a site in Durham. Currently, the funding for this service is for 40 places. This will soon be reduced to 20 places. This will have an impact on the current school budget.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 improvements in school.
- We evaluated the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding system and record-keeping. We did this by analysing records kept and discussing with staff and leaders the actions they would carry out if a pupil shared a concern. We also checked the school's single central record to ensure that appropriate checks had been carried out when recruiting staff.
- We met with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, a representative from the local authority, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- We scrutinised a range of school documents including curriculum documentation and the school's evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement in addition to the school's improvement plan.
- We took into account the views expressed by pupils, the small group of parents who met with me and those parents who left comments on Ofsted's online texting service. We also took into account the views of 29 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspection focused deeply on English, mathematics, history and rural science. In these subjects we met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, met with teaching staff and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Penny

Ofsted Inspector

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