

# Inspection of a good school: Welburn Hall School

Kirkbymoorside, York, North Yorkshire YO62 7HQ

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Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

## Outcome

Welburn Hall School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

## What is it like to attend this school?

The headteacher is ambitious for the school and for the quality of education on offer. She is a strong, passionate and capable leader. However, the school has undergone substantial turbulence over the past few years. There has been a high level of staff turnover. Many staff are new. The leadership team has been restructured. It is not firing on all cylinders. Some staff have been appointed but are yet to start employment.

This turbulence has had an impact on the quality of education. Teachers do not have enough support to help them to know exactly what to teach and when in different subjects.

Nonetheless, pupils are safe and happy in the school. Members of staff know the specific needs of individual pupils. Teachers plan activities that match pupils' needs as identified in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The headteacher changed how pupils are grouped into classes. Everyone says what a positive impact this has had on pupils' behaviour. Some parents and carers say that pupils can be unkind sometimes. The 'anti-bullying task force' works hard to help pupils to get on with each other.

Members of staff care deeply about pupils at the school. The range of activities on offer is impressive: music therapy, horse riding, dance club, iPad club, the prefect team, school council, to name but a few.

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

Teachers think carefully about targets in pupils' EHC plans when delivering lessons. This is especially the case for those pupils that have more complex needs. Here, teachers provide activities for pupils that support their learning and physical development. Additional

therapies are available for pupils who need them. These include hydrotherapy and music therapy, for example.

The headteacher has made changes to improve the quality of education. At the beginning of the day, some pupils go to the hall for 'sensory circuits'. Here, teachers focus on pupils' physical development by doing exercises. This also helps pupils who have travelled for a long time to get to the school. They use up some energy and can focus more in class. This is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.

The headteacher has also changed the structure of classes. Pupils are now grouped by how complex their needs are rather than their age. This has helped pupils to interact with each other. Staff also say that it is easier to plan activities in class now.

However, the headteacher currently has a lot on her shoulders. Many staff are new to the school. Some appointments to the senior team are yet to be made or are yet to start work. The headteacher has needed to prioritise her time. There are some gaps as a result. Currently, curriculum plans to map out what pupils need to learn in different subjects vary in quality. Some are good, but some are weak. For example, plans for animal care and horticulture are strong. In maths and computing, however, planning is not precise enough. Plans do not help teachers to help pupils make progress step by step. Some curriculum leaders are strong and support other teachers effectively. However, in some subjects, there has been too little professional development for staff.

Nonetheless, by the time pupils leave the school they achieve well. The headteacher has ensured that pupils leave with a wider range of qualifications. Careers guidance and work experience are of a good quality. All pupils leave the school with sensible plans for the future.

Reading has a high priority. Teachers promote a love of reading. Pupils are keen to read challenging texts. Pupils say that they read nearly every day. However, the approach to teaching phonics is not systematic. Some curriculum plans for English lack clarity.

Curriculum plans for accredited courses are relatively strong. The requirements of each course form the backbone of teachers' plans. This is also the case for pupils studying for qualifications in English. Leaders' better planning for accredited courses has a positive impact on students in the sixth form. Their experience of the school is more focused as they prepare for leaving the school. They develop life skills and social skills well.

There is a lot on offer for pupils at the school. Pupils go to drama club, iPad club and football, for example. Pupils can get involved in the school council or the prefect team. A few parents say that some pupils can be unkind. Teachers deal with any concerns well.

Staff morale has improved. Members of staff speak about school leaders with confidence and respect. They know that there is work to do to improve the school. They do not feel that their workload is too high.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made sure that the school's policies are up to date. Procedures and record-keeping are adequate, although some systems overlap and lack clarity. Members of staff have the training needed to help them to keep pupils safe. Staff have a good understanding of what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. This includes temporary members of staff and those that are new to the school.

Leaders know that their pupils can be especially vulnerable. They have made sure that the personal, social and health education curriculum touches all the bases. It teaches pupils how to keep safe online and when out in the community. Relationships and sex education has a high priority also.

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

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

- The headteacher is highly capable and knowledgeable. She has a strong moral compass. The senior team is not at full complement. Many staff are new to the school. Leaders and governors need to make sure that the headteacher is supported by a strong senior team that is able, in turn, to develop the skills and experience of newer members of staff.
- For accredited courses, curriculum plans help teachers to deliver lessons that help pupils to make progress step by step. This is not the case for all subjects, including English and mathematics. Leaders need to make sure that schemes of work help individual teachers to plan lessons that help pupils to build on their knowledge in a logical order.
- Some curriculum leaders are on top of their game. They can support less experienced teachers well. However, some curriculum leaders are new in post. Senior leaders need to ensure that teachers receive appropriate subject-based training to help them to develop their skills.
- The structure of the curriculum is new. For example, the way in which classes are grouped changed as of September 2019. Leaders need to make sure that this roll-out is monitored and adapted, if any weaknesses emerge. Governors need to make sure that the senior team has the capacity to do this.
- Procedures and record-keeping relating to safeguarding are adequate. Some systems overlap and lack clarity. Leaders need to ensure that record-keeping is top-notch in this area.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2015.

## 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 are the school and you are 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>	121766
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110858
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	73
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	22
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Susan Morgan (co-chair) Alan Payne (co-chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marianne Best
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.welburn-hall.n-yorks.sch.uk/">http://www.welburn-hall.n-yorks.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1–2 July 2015

## Information about this school

- Welburn Hall School is a residential school that caters for pupils aged eight to 19 with a wide range of learning needs. These include: physical difficulties, moderate or severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, sensory impairment, profound and multiple learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties, and complex medical conditions.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. This includes students in the sixth form.
- Boarding provision is organised on a flexible basis. Currently, all of the boarders are students in the sixth form. Some board Monday to Friday, others for one, two or three nights a week.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. Staffing restructures have taken place. There has been substantial change in the composition of the governing body, including the appointment of co-chairs.

## Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. We talked to members of staff responsible for individual subjects. We met with one of the co-chairs of the governing body.
- We undertook deep dives in these subjects: English (including reading at key stage 2), mathematics, animal care and horticulture, and computing. We asked senior leaders for their views of the strengths and areas for development in these subjects. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We visited lessons. We spoke to some pupils about their learning, including students in the sixth form. We looked at pupils' work, including that of students in the sixth form.
- We met with those responsible for safeguarding. We looked at a range of documentation linked to safeguarding, including: child protection policies and procedures; absence data; information about how pupils' behaviour is managed; and risk assessments for pupils who are the most vulnerable. We looked into the use of restraint and how this is recorded. We talked to some pupils during the inspection and asked them about how safe they feel.
- We took into account the 16 responses to Ofsted's online parents' questionnaire Parent View, including any free-text comments. We also considered the 22 responses to the survey for staff.
- At the same time as this inspection took place, an inspection of the welfare of children in boarding provision took place under the social care common inspection framework. A copy of this report can be found on the Ofsted website.

## Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Berni Moorcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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