

# Elmbank Learning Centre

Viewly Hill Farm, Stockton on Tees TS20 1PQ

**Inspection date**

20 October 2020

**Overall outcome**

**The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

#### *Paragraph 2(2)(g)*

- Pupils attending Elmbank Learning Centre have missed much of their early education. As a result, when pupils join the school they are usually working below where they should be. The headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations for pupils to be successful in life. His enthusiasm is shared by the staff team, who are fully committed to preparing pupils for adult life.
- Leaders make sure that they have detailed knowledge of the pupils when they start school. This information is used very well to plan for pupils' individual needs. The Witherslack clinical team, consisting of a mental health practitioner, speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist, support the staff and pupils well.
- The headteacher and staff find out what pupils like to do. They expertly build activities around pupils' interests, which hooks them into learning. Each pupil has a bespoke curriculum which is based on their aspirations for the future. The end goal of a college course or employment is worked towards step by step. This means that pupils have the appropriate qualifications and the self-confidence and resilience to succeed.
- Each pupil with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has an individual plan. Information from education, health and care plans is used well by the inter-agency team to inform pupils' targets. This is intended to continue into key stage 5, if the material change is implemented.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of enrichment activities. These are often based on pupils' interests and include horse riding, scuba diving, orienteering, rock climbing and bouldering. Such opportunities promote pupils' self-confidence and develop their understanding of how to interact in different situations. Leaders plan to continue to provide these activities in key stage 5.
- In key stages 3 and 4, pupils talk about their career choices. Leaders intend that pupils' high aspirations will be catered for in key stage 5. Students in key stage 5 will

continue with career planning and have external visits to careers fairs, as well as taking part in work experience.

- The headteacher has planned carefully for the proposed material change. The curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 comprises a wide range of subjects. Each subject builds on what pupils know and fills any gaps in learning. At key stage 5, students will achieve further qualifications and follow a more personalised curriculum. Proposed curriculum plans for key stage 5 show that they match the detail and ambition of the curriculum at key stages 3 and 4. This will help students be prepared academically, socially and emotionally to take up a college or work placement.
- The standards in Part 1 are likely to continue to be met if the material change requested is implemented.

## Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

### *Paragraph 5*

- Leaders have an insightful understanding of the complex needs of the pupils. They say that the development of self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience is key to pupils' success in life. The personal, social, health and economics education (PSHE) curriculum is based on materials from an external organisation. It covers a wide range of themes to nurture these characteristics.
- The school actively promotes British values through assemblies. Recent themes have included harvest festival, the importance of respect and the Jewish faith. This develops pupils' understanding of other cultures.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to discuss and debate issues such as the Grenfell Tower disaster and Black Lives Matter. Leaders intend to continue this into key stage 5, if the material change is approved by the Department for Education.
- Pupils accept responsibility for their own behaviour. An effective reward system encourages positive attitudes in school. Pupils can choose where they would like to go in the community if they have received enough stars. Leaders intend this reward system to continue into key stage 5, if the material change is granted.
- Pupils show their initiative through planning events such as 'dress-down day' for Children in Need and taking part in the Macmillan coffee morning. One pupil has raised £200 for retired police dogs by walking up Scafell Pike.
- Pupils listen to a range of viewpoints. They are encouraged to have their own opinions and make considered decisions. The headteacher ensures that materials that visitors are to share with pupils are checked beforehand for suitability.
- The school is working towards the 'rights respecting schools' bronze award. Through this award pupils will gain a better insight into diversity and prejudice. It will help them to be more confident in speaking out and making informed decisions.
- The provision for pupils at key stages 3 and 4 makes a positive contribution to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Evidence provided during the inspection shows that this is likely to be replicated and built on in key stage 5.
- The standards in Part 2 are likely to continue to be met if the material change requested is implemented.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- All staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding from the Witherslack Group. The designated safeguarding leads will receive training every two years. Staff receive refresher training annually. 'Seven-minute briefings' for staff provide regular updates and information about keeping pupils safe. Through these briefings, staff increase their knowledge of topics such as child sexual exploitation and children missing in education.
- The proprietor has provided an appropriate safeguarding policy. The policy meets current legislative requirements. The school does not have a website. Parents and carers are provided with these policies in an information pack before their child starts the school.
- Staff have a thorough understanding of the complex needs of the pupils and the risks that they may face. This includes the risks that older students may experience in their lives. Plans are put in place to minimise these risks. The close working relationships and expertise of all disciplines within the Witherslack Group contributes to keeping pupils safe.
- The standards in Part 3 are likely to continue to be met if the material change requested is implemented.

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

#### *Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(2)(f), 18(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c)*

- The proprietor has put in place a system to check the suitability of staff to work at the school. The headteacher has undertaken safer recruitment training. All the required checks have been made on staff currently working in the school.
- The proprietor has had all the necessary checks on background and suitability to work with children.
- The proprietor does not intend to employ supply staff or to engage volunteers.

#### *Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(6)*

- A single central register is in place. This records all the appropriate checks that have been made on staff.
- The standards in Part 4 are likely to continue to be met if the material change requested is implemented.

### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

#### *Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)*

- At the time of the previous pre-registration inspection, the areas outside the school were not finished to a good enough standard for them to be used by pupils for physical education (PE), and to play.

- The grounds have now been completed. There are two grassed areas, separated by a path to the classrooms. A large field next to the school is also available for outdoor activities.
- PE is timetabled to take place both on site and in the community. Rugby, football, badminton and tennis take place on site. A wide range of activities take place in the community, for example horse riding, orienteering, climbing, scuba diving, bouldering and boxing.
- Some pupils are studying to achieve the national indoor climbing award.
- The standards in Part 5 are likely to be met if the material change requested by the school is implemented.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

##### *Paragraph 32(1)(c)*

- The school does not have a website. However, the headteacher has ensured that parents and carers receive the safeguarding policy. This is provided through a home visit before the child starts at the school.
- The standards in Part 6 are likely to continue to be met if the material change requested by the school is implemented.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

##### *Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)*

- The headteacher is clear about his purpose and ambitions for the pupils and the school. It is evident from conversations with staff that his high expectations are shared.
- The proprietor and wider proprietor body offer a vast range of expertise, knowledge and experience to the school. The Witherslack Group provides rigorous monitoring of the quality of many aspects of the work of the school. The headteacher is held to account through the presentation of reports and audits to board meetings.
- The proprietor and headteacher understand the importance of ensuring that the school meets the independent school standards consistently. This has resulted in standards that are likely to be met if the material change requested is implemented.
- Pupils have complex needs. The proprietor and headteacher have put in place risk assessments to keep them safe. There are strong relationships with other professional teams within the organisation and with parents and carers. This means that potential problems can be picked up early and addressed.
- The quality of the existing curriculum planning, policies and documentation indicate that this high standard would continue into the sixth form.
- The standards in Part 8 are likely to be met if the material change requested is implemented.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a three-year accessibility plan in place. This plan sets out how the school will improve access to the curriculum for pupils with

SEND. This will be through training staff to meet particular needs, for example dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. Leaders are ensuring that the premises are accessible for all pupils by providing a ramp to the front of the building for wheelchair users.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

## School details

Unique reference number	146824
DfE registration number	808/6006
Inspection number	10166002

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Limited
Chair of Governing Body	Howard Tennant
Headteacher	Alister Sidgwick
Annual fees	£74,000
Telephone number	01539 566081
Website	None
Email address	admin@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 16	7 to 18	7 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	4	Not applicable	Not applicable

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Girls	Girls

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	4	Not applicable
Number of part-time pupils	0	Not applicable
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	4	Not applicable
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	2	Not applicable
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	2	Not applicable

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	4	4
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	2	2

## Information about this school

- This is a very small school situated in a rural location close to Stockton-on-Tees.
- The school is part of the Witherslack Group. The school meets a variety of pupils' needs. These include social, emotional and mental health and autistic spectrum disorder, in addition to other vulnerabilities.
- Pupils can access support from a mental health practitioner, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy.
- The school provides a bespoke curriculum which is based on the interests and aspirations of each pupil.
- The school considers pupils referred by the local authority for admission. The school does not take day pupils.



- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school does not use alternative education providers.

## Information about this inspection

- This material change inspection was requested by the school to increase the age range from seven to 16 to seven to 18. It is the school's first material change inspection.
- The school has had one previous inspection. This was a pre-registration inspection in July 2019. The inspector found that it was not likely that Part 5, paragraph 29 and Part 8 would be met. The school opened in August 2019.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and members of the proprietor body.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead, the lead teacher for the PSHE curriculum, pupils and the corporate parent.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents provided by the school. These included the record of staff employed at the school, safeguarding policies, documents relating to the current and the proposed key stage 5 curriculum and training records.

## Inspection team

Suzette Garland-Grimes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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