

Wemms Education Centre

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

Inspection date

2 December 2020

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding were judged to be effective.
- The safeguarding policy has been updated to reflect the latest statutory guidance. The link to policies on the new school website is not yet working. However, the safeguarding policy is available to parents on request. New parents are provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.
- Designated leaders for safeguarding and all members of staff have had recent safeguarding training. They are aware of the risks that pupils face out of school and are particularly vigilant and supportive around pupils' mental health.
- New staff have joined the school since the previous inspection. The correct background checks have been completed following safer recruitment guidelines. The checks are recorded accurately on a single central register.
- Leaders work productively with other professionals to support the most vulnerable pupils, including those looked after by the local authority.
- There are suitable processes in place for the safe administration of medicines to pupils. This is normally restricted to paracetamol, with the permission of parents or carers. However, during residential visits, staff also administer prescription medication, keeping careful records of the doses given.

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

- The risk assessment policy is fit for purpose. There are clear processes in place to assess risks associated with the school site, off-site activities and visits, and the needs of individual pupils.
- Each September, leaders usually organise an annual residential visit for all pupils. The visit is a compulsory part of the curriculum, and is included in the annual school fees.

Leaders see this annual visit as an essential part of preparing pupils for future life as is required by many of the pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

- In 2020, the residential visit for all pupils was delayed and took place in October 2020. The visit took place against the published government COVID-19 (Coronavirus) advice for schools which stated, 'We continue to advise against domestic (UK) overnight educational visits.'
- Leaders were aware of the government advice and understood its status as advice, rather than a legal requirement or essential for health reasons as determined by Public Health England.
- Following extensive risk assessment, leaders went ahead nonetheless, assessing that the benefits of the visit outweighed the risks. Nearly all pupils attended, with only a very small number of parents exercising their right to withdraw their child. Staff to pupil ratios were extremely high.
- Risk assessments for the October 2020 residential visit were extensive, detailed and highly personalised. Leaders had thought about nearly all eventualities and how to mitigate them. Separate risk assessments were prepared for safe travel, residential accommodation, COVID-19 prevention and management, and individual pupils' needs. There were separate risk assessments for visits to museums and a cathedral at the start and end of the week-long visit.
- Risk assessments were drafted by leaders and adapted after online meetings with parents. The final risk assessments were checked and signed off by the advisory board.
- The standards in this part are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c), 34(2)

- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards have continued to be met since the previous full inspection in February 2020.
- The principal's strong, deeply held vision, described in the previous inspection report, continues to guide all that the school does. It is clear that the principal is not afraid to make difficult or potentially controversial decisions if she feels they are in the best interests of the pupils attending the school.
- The principal, supported by other leaders, went to great lengths to plan and risk assess the residential visit in October 2020. The benefits of the visit were carefully weighed up against government advice. The advisory board were appropriately consulted about the visit.
- The visit was planned to help pupils develop their independence and begin to prepare them for adult life. However, the visit also gave pupils the opportunity to be in a different and safe environment, following a period of lockdown and restricted activity. For some families, the visit gave parents and siblings a short period of respite following a difficult six months.
- Leaders explained that the visit has helped new staff and pupils to settle very quickly into the routines of the school. This was very evident during the inspection. The principal and other leaders continue to actively promote the well-being of pupils.

- The standards in this part are met.

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 that were checked during this inspection. 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	10171802

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 status	Independent 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	50
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	11
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Joy Wemms
Headteacher	Joy Wemms
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000
Telephone number	01372 276499
Website	www.wemms.co.uk
Email address	joy@wemms.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	25–27 February 2020

Information about this school

- The last full standard inspection of the school took place on 25–27 February 2020. The school was judged to be good and all of the independent school standards were found to be met.
- Wemms Education Centre offers education to pupils who have been unable to cope in mainstream education. Pupils typically have social, emotional and mental health needs. Almost all pupils have an EHC plan to support their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- The number on roll has continued to increase since the previous standard inspection. A number of new staff have joined the school since the previous inspection.
- The principal is the sole proprietor of the school. An advisory board with three members has been established.

Information about this inspection

- This emergency inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because of concerns about a residential trip.
- The inspection focused on the effectiveness of leadership and management. I also looked specifically at the approach the proprietor and leaders take to safeguarding and risk assessment.
- The inspection was conducted with 30 minutes' notice.
- I met with the principal (who is also the proprietor) and the senior leadership team. I toured the school to observe pupils and staff at work. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to safeguarding and risk assessment. I held telephone conversations with two representatives of Surrey County Council.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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