

# Meadowcroft School

24 Bar Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 4AD

**Inspection date**

8 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

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

- Leaders have updated the safeguarding policy so that it refers to the latest government guidance. It is available on the school's website and is well signposted.
- The policy clearly outlines what procedures to follow if there are concerns about a pupil's safety. There are detailed sections about the risks of peer-on-peer abuse, especially being groomed by gangs.

#### *Paragraph 8, 8(a), 8(b)*

- Leaders have worked closely with directors from the proprietorial group to strengthen many aspects of safeguarding. Those areas identified as weak in the previous monitoring inspection are now more effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) formally took up her post in March 2020 and has since then developed the school's safeguarding team, which she oversees. This team consists of the senior leader responsible for behaviour and attendance, behaviour support staff and family liaison officers.
- The team members work closely together to make sure that pupils' welfare needs are met. For instance, members of the team visit pupils at home to check on their welfare.
- The DSL has also developed mechanisms for collating information about vulnerable pupils from different sources. For example, for each pupil identified, information on behaviour and attendance, as well as more general concerns, are recorded in the same place. This record provides a detailed overview of each pupil's needs.
- Members of the safeguarding team analyse this overview. They use it to identify interventions and support, including external support where necessary.
- Leaders have placed more emphasis on supporting pupils' mental health over the last few weeks and months. Pupils receive mental health support from therapists within the school and also from external agencies. The DSL and safeguarding team keep close tabs on pupils receiving this support to ensure that it is having the intended impact.

- Pupils that were spoken with during the inspection said that they feel safe at school and well looked after. They know whom to turn to if they have a concern.
- The school makes detailed checks on staff when they are appointed, which are recorded on the single central register (SCR). Directors from the proprietorial company check that the SCR complies with guidance.

*Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10*

- There is a written behaviour policy in place. It outlines rewards and sanctions, as well as the school's approach to managing behaviour. The responsible leader keeps an up-to-date record of behaviour incidents. The leader carefully checks this record to identify patterns, hot-spots and types of concerns that occur more frequently.
- The responsible leader uses his analysis of behaviour records to identify any additional support that individual pupils might require. This includes specific programmes to assist pupils in managing their own behaviour, as well as support for families.
- Some pupils have found it hard to settle down after having returned from isolating at home due to COVID-19 (coronavirus). Staff are working closely with individuals to assist them in settling back into school life and following routines.
- At the end of every school day, staff on each site meet to share updates about pupils' behaviour. These updates enable any pressing issues to be dealt with rapidly.
- Leaders and teachers assist pupils in making positive relationships with their peers. The school has a written policy outlining approaches to prevent bullying.
- Pupils say that there has been a strong focus on the prevention of bullying that has raised awareness of this issue and reduced incidents.

*Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- Leaders review and amend policies and procedures for health and safety in the light of any changes to the school's environment. For example, these have been updated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The school has carefully considered the risks associated with the central location of some of its sites and put additional measures in place to keep pupils safe.
- There are detailed procedures in place for internal checks on fire safety equipment such as fire extinguishers. These checks are made on a regular basis and recorded. External consultants have undertaken the necessary statutory fire checks.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well looked after. The responsible leader monitors the daily register of attendance very closely. Absences are followed up by phone calls to pupils' homes in the first instance. Staff visit pupils' homes if the initial calls are not answered.
- Staff-to-pupil ratios take account of the high needs that some pupils have and are appropriate. On occasion, the school uses supply staff to maintain staffing ratios when members of staff are absent. Supply staff are given easy-to-digest information about each pupil, which supports them in developing positive relationships with pupils.
- The school has a well-developed risk assessment policy. There are written risk assessments in place for some practical lessons, such as joinery. Risk assessments take

into account the particular needs that individual pupils may have, as well as any potential risks posed by the planned activities.

- The standards in this part are now met.

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

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

- Leaders have ensured that all previously unmet standards are met. Leaders have developed and modified improvement plans, including the action plan sent to the Department for Education (DfE).
- Leaders carefully monitor the school's work using the independent school standards as a basis for their checks.
- The chair of governors has worked closely with school leaders to review the structure of the senior leadership team. Subsequent to this, changes have been made to the structure of the team, including changes to senior leaders' roles and responsibilities.
- Following the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher and leaders reviewed a number of the school's existing systems, and made improvements. For example, they introduced more rigorous systems for checking that pupils are safe when they are not in school.
- The director of safeguarding for the proprietorial body has visited the school to check on the school's safeguarding arrangements. Similarly, the director of compliance and auditing for the proprietorial body has reviewed the quality of a wider range of the school's systems and procedures.
- Written reports, following these checks, recognise that improvements have been made and also suggest some areas for further development. They show that oversight from the proprietorial body is detailed and rigorous.
- From these visits, a number of approaches implemented by the DSL were evaluated as strong. They have subsequently been shared across the whole organisation. For example, the wide range of information about vulnerable pupils, which the DSL carefully collates, has been shared as effective practice.
- The standard is now 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. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

### **The school now meets 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;
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State

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

- 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)(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.
  - 34(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(c) 'well-being' within the meaning of section 10(2) of the Children Act 2004

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## School details

Unique reference number	135216
DfE registration number	384/6348
Inspection number	10162268

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	19
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Ann Henderson
Headteacher	Darren Singh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,972
Telephone number	01924 366242
Website	<a href="http://www.meadowcroftschoo.com">www.meadowcroftschoo.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@meadowcroftschoo.com">info@meadowcroftschoo.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	21–23 May 2019

## Information about this school

- The school had its last standard inspection in May 2019, when it was judged to require improvement. The first monitoring inspection was carried out in December 2019. At the first monitoring inspection, some standards that were not met at the previous inspection remained unmet. In addition, some standards that had been met at the previous inspection were judged not to be met.

- Meadowcroft School is an independent day school catering for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) relating to social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. Some have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and associated learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is located on three sites around the centre of Wakefield. The two other sites are located at The Works, Garden Street, Wakefield WF1 1DX and The Gallery, Wentworth Terrace, Wakefield WF1 3QW. Pupils are referred to the school from a wide range of local authorities and are funded by those authorities.
- The school is part of Meadowcroft Residential Schools Limited, which is a fully owned subsidiary of Acorn Education and Care Limited (AECL). AECL provides children's services throughout the United Kingdom and is part of The Outcomes First Group.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the school's second monitoring inspection since the full standard inspection in May 2019. The first monitoring inspection was undertaken in December 2019.
- The DfE requested that the school prepare an action plan to address unmet standards from the December 2019 inspection. This plan was subsequently deemed to be acceptable in March 2020.
- The inspection was carried out over one day by one inspector, without notice.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and considered documentation relating to the safety and welfare of pupils, including recruitment checks and the recording of recruitment checks.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher responsible for behaviour and attendance, and the designated safeguarding leader. She attended a staff meeting held at the end of the day.
- She held online meetings with the outgoing chair of governors and with the director of auditing and compliance for AECL.
- The inspector held a telephone call with the local authority designated officer.

## Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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