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10 May 2021

Marc Peart  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Peart

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Wennington Hall School**

Following my remote inspection with John Nixon, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 23 and 24 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to have serious weaknesses.

This monitoring inspection was initially carried out remotely. However, the inspection moved on site on 24 March due to concerns about leadership and safeguarding.

During the inspection of your school, serious concerns were identified. These related to the school's culture of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. Due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and the suspension of routine inspections, we have not treated this inspection as a section 5 inspection, as would be our usual practice. The safeguarding concerns identified have been reported to the local authority and the regional schools commissioner. The school will be prioritised for a further inspection as soon as possible.

The inspection took place because the school was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in July 2020.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are not taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.**

**Safeguarding is not effective.**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- immediately ensure the safety and well-being of pupils
- ensure that curriculum plans in all subjects identify the knowledge that pupils need to know and remember
- ensure that teachers in all subjects adapt their curriculum plans so that pupils can catch up with the learning that they have missed or forgotten as a result of national restrictions
- rapidly improve the quality of leadership and the effectiveness of governance.

**Context**

- Wennington Hall School is a small, specialist provider for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The primary needs described in most pupils' EHC plans are relating to social, emotional or mental health needs. A considerable number of pupils have autism spectrum disorder or experience difficulties when communicating with others.
- Over the last 18 months the senior leadership team has been reconstituted. A leader for teaching and learning and a deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, have been appointed. Two governors have resigned and two new governors have been appointed. Four vacancies remain on the governing body.
- Four out of five pupils did not attend the school at the start of the spring term 2021.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils at the school were attending on site.

## Main findings

- You and other leaders do not ensure the safety and well-being of pupils when they are on site. Numerous staff reported concerns about how well pupils are supervised during the school day, including at social times. Although many staff were on duty at breaktime on the day of the inspection, they allowed pupils to access large areas of the school unsupervised. These included areas where pupils could leave the site without being noticed. The lack of rigour in checking that pupils are kept safe on site is a particular concern given the vulnerabilities and special educational needs of the pupils at Wennington Hall School.
- You and other leaders have not taken enough action over the last 18 months to ensure that the curriculum helps pupils to build up their knowledge in all subject areas. Pupils' learning and progress across the curriculum have suffered considerably. This situation has continued throughout the pandemic. Leaders' actions have not helped pupils to learn during the current challenging circumstances.
- Since September 2020, the local authority has provided extensive support to help you to understand how to develop effective curriculum plans. The local authority has enabled you and the governors to identify the actions required to improve the quality of education for pupils. However, most of the tasks that you agreed to do have not been completed on time. This means the improvements to the curriculum have been unnecessarily delayed. This has negatively affected pupils' education.
- The curriculum lacks ambition across the school. Despite the support provided by the local authority, only a minority of subject leaders have considered the key knowledge that pupils need to know. For example, the leader for personal, social, health and economic education has developed well-thought-out curriculum plans to support pupils' learning. The key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember in most other subjects has not been identified.
- In most subject areas in key stage 4, teachers use the examination specifications as their curriculum plans. Teachers do not deepen pupils' knowledge of the subjects that they are studying. They do not tailor the examination specifications to meet pupils' specific learning needs. Due to the poor quality of the curriculum, pupils are not able to build on their prior learning so that they can be successful in the next stage of their life.
- Although there are endemic weaknesses in curriculum planning, the leader responsible for English has made sure that pupils have kept up with their reading during the latest national restrictions. Pupils from Years 9 and 11 talked with enthusiasm about the books that they were reading. They read to me fluently and demonstrated a clear understanding of the texts.

- Many pupils did not attend school during the start of the spring term, despite being entitled to a place. Added to this, a considerable number of pupils did not routinely access the remote education on offer. Consequently, they missed crucial parts of their education. Despite knowing that pupils' learning has suffered during the pandemic, some teachers have not checked what pupils know and remember of their previous learning. You have not ensured that teachers focus on the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn in order to catch up and overcome the impact of the pandemic. The curriculum has not been suitably adapted to enable pupils to make up for lost ground.
- You and other leaders focus well on pupils' personal development. The pupils we spoke to told us that you provide plenty of opportunities for them to try out new things. Staff are increasingly successful in supporting pupils to understand and manage their own behaviour. Staff use targets written in EHC plans to help pupils to develop effective strategies for minimising conflict. This helps pupils to be more confident in social situations, despite them finding this difficult. Pupils also told us that they benefit from form time. During this time, pupils discuss their aspirations and hopes for the future. They are also confident to share with staff any worries that they might have.
- As pupils progress to post-16 education or training, you provide appropriate pastoral support to help them to settle into their new settings. The pupils we spoke to value the careers education, information, advice and guidance that staff provide. This support has continued throughout the pandemic. That said, endemic weaknesses in the curriculum mean that pupils are not academically well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Governors are growing in confidence in fulfilling their role, but they have not held you and other leaders to account rigorously enough for the slow development of the curriculum. Pupils' learning has suffered as a result. In addition, governors have not ensured that pupils' safety, when on the school site, is of paramount importance. Governors do not receive the information that they require to accurately evaluate the work of the school.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was initially conducted remotely but moved to an on-site visit due to concerns about safeguarding and leadership and management. During the inspection, we spoke with you and other senior leaders; pupils and staff; parents; representatives of the governing body, including the vice-chair of governors; and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also considered a range of documentation. We looked at curriculum plans. We reviewed minutes from meetings of the governing body. We also considered samples

of pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including five free-text responses, and 45 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the vice-chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Cropper  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**