

Inspection of Wathen Grange School

Church Walk, Mancetter, Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1PZ

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have not demonstrated the capacity to make the necessary improvements. When the school was inspected in July 2021, the inspector identified some significant weaknesses in the quality of leadership and management. The proprietor has not done enough to tackle weaknesses. This means some of the independent school standards remain unmet.

Despite pupils saying they feel safe in school, they are not protected well enough. There is not a consistent approach to managing behaviour. Disruptive behaviour and swearing are common across the school. Many members of staff are temporary and have not been offered sufficient training to support them in their roles. Some pupils have concerns about bullying and the behaviour of other pupils.

Leaders do not make sure pupils learn enough. The curriculum is poorly organised and narrow. Its content is patchy. Lessons are often disconnected. Many lessons are taught by staff who do not have the right knowledge and expertise.

Pupils come to this school because they need extra help. Many have significant gaps in their learning prior to arrival at the school. Most receive the nurturing and emotional support they need from a team of caring and committed staff. Leaders organise many activities to support pupils' personal development. However, there is not enough attention given to their academic learning.

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

The proprietor has not ensured that there is sufficient leadership capacity to improve the school. Leaders have not acted quickly enough to improve the quality of education provided at the school. Plans for improvement have, to some degree, been paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite this, there has been insufficient focus on meeting all of the independent school standards.

Leaders' checks on the quality of education lack rigour. Their self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement is weak. As a result, the proprietor does not have an informed understanding of the quality of education the school provides.

The development of pupils' reading skills is not given enough priority by leaders. No one has a clear overview of how pupils will learn to read, or how well staff teach reading.

Pupils do not have access to the full range of curriculum subjects. For example, religious education and geography have not been taught in the last year. There are no long-term plans in place for the subjects that are taught. The curriculum is typically limited to the requirements of awards syllabuses. Many staff have not had training in the subjects they are asked to teach. In several subjects, staff do not

have the basic resources they need to support their teaching. As a result, pupils' learning is not well planned and does not meet their needs.

In personal, social, health and economic education, some pupils cover a range of topics including relationships and sex education, healthy lifestyles and applying for jobs and courses. Pupils are taught to be respectful to other faiths and cultures. They are encouraged to understand fundamental British values. However, pupils' ability to recall their learning is variable, and often not good. Currently, the careers guidance and support provided to pupils are weak and does not enable pupils to make informed choices about their career options. Pupils are not well prepared for their next steps.

The proprietor has not ensured that all the required information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is made available to local authorities. This includes details about how the school meets the educational and welfare needs of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Pupils with SEND do not receive effective support with their learning. Leaders and staff do not use EHC plans to tailor learning and help meet pupils' needs. Some staff were unfamiliar with pupils' EHC plans.

Pupils' behaviour frequently disrupts learning due to pupils not being focused on their work. The use of physical restraint and exclusions is rare. The school uses de-escalation techniques to avoid confrontation. However, inspectors saw examples where poor behaviour was not addressed effectively, and swearing was not challenged.

Overall, most pupils' attendance improves during their time at this school. Some pupils are on agreed part-time timetables. However, some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should.

Staff at the school want to do their best. They are keen to improve things but are not given the clear direction, support and training to do this. Staff say they are proud to work at the school. Leaders ensure that the school complies with the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders make all the necessary pre-employment checks before staff start work at the school. However, they have not ensured that there are enough experienced staff to help pupils behave safely. Attendance registers are not maintained accurately.

Leaders provide training for staff in most key aspects of safeguarding. There is a safeguarding policy in place. This is made available to parents. However, some staff are unclear about what they should do if they have a safeguarding concern about a pupil. This potentially leaves pupils at risk of harm. Some concerns are reported

verbally to safeguarding leads but are not always written down. Record-keeping is not organised well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not ensured that safeguarding processes are tight enough to keep pupils safe. Leaders need to implement systems for safeguarding to ensure that all staff know how to act when a child may be at risk, and how to record these concerns effectively.
- Attendance registers are not maintained accurately. Therefore, leaders do not have a clear picture of attendance at the school. Leaders need to manage attendance correctly, use the correct Department for Education (DfE) attendance codes, and ensure that pupils who are persistently absent attend school more regularly.
- The quality of education is poor. Consequently, pupils are not achieving well. The proprietor should take immediate action to strengthen leadership and staff capacity, including providing training to equip staff with the necessary subject knowledge and behaviour management strategies so that pupils are taught effectively.
- The teaching of reading is inconsistent. Some staff lack expertise in teaching pupils at the early stages of reading. Leaders should introduce a suitable approach, supported by appropriate training, that helps staff teach pupils to read well. Leaders need to ensure that teachers match reading resources to the abilities of pupils.
- In many subjects, curriculum plans are poorly devised and lack coherence. Leaders have not set out the key knowledge that pupils should know, or when they should be taught it. Leaders do not give staff enough support in identifying what pupils should learn, taking into account their EHC plans. Teachers do not have the necessary resources to support the teaching of their subjects. Leaders must identify what key concepts and knowledge pupils need to learn. They should set this out for teachers and teaching assistants and ensure that there are enough resources to help them teach well.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils are provided with a broad range of curriculum subjects. Careers advice and guidance are weak. Leaders should improve the quality of education by ensuring that the curriculum is suitably broad and adequately prepares pupils for the world of work.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	134614
DfE registration number	937/6104
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10205088
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	Viron Mangat
Headteacher	Rob Maddox
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,925
Telephone number	01827 714 454
Website	www.wathengrange.com
Email address	contact@wathengrange.com
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2021

Information about this school

- Wathen Grange is a small independent day school situated in Atherstone. The school offers up to 20 places for boys and girls who have social and emotional difficulties. Pupils are placed at the school via a number of local authorities, including Warwickshire, Coventry and Staffordshire. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is housed in a former church school building. It contains several classrooms, a large dining area and a secure outdoor space.
- The school was last inspected in July 2021. This was an emergency inspection. At that time, it was found to have several unmet standards. The school submitted an action plan outlining how it would address these. Prior to this the school's last full inspection was in July 2018 and was judged to require improvement.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was not making use of alternative providers. Pupils do take part in a number of off-site activities.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During this inspection, inspectors focused on the following subjects: English, history, art and PSHE. In these subjects, inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined teachers' plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were organised and taught.
- Inspectors met with staff and pupils to discuss their views about the school, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors met the proprietor and headteacher and scrutinised a range of policies and documents. They checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's policies and procedures, including attendance registers and safeguarding records. They also talked to leaders, staff and pupils.
- The school is operating beyond its registration agreement with the DfE, as it is recorded on Get Information About Schools, and had not notified the DfE until the

time of the inspection. The school has admitted two pupils above the registered age range.

The school's progress in meeting previously failed standards

During the inspection we checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at its previous emergency inspection on 21 July 2021.

The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school continues to not meet some of the previously failed standards.**

- *Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1c)*
- The arrangements for safeguarding remain ineffective. Leaders have not taken the necessary steps to address previously failed standards. Not all of the independent school standards have been met.
- These standards continue to not be met.

The school's proposed change to the age range of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school meets the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school does not meet the independent school standards relevant to the material change. The material change has already been implemented.**

- The school does not offer an adequate quality of education for current pupils.
- Leaders do not demonstrate the capacity to meet the educational needs of post-16 students.

The school is unlikely to meet the following standards

- (2)(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs.

Inspection team

Heather Phillips, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tim Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress; and

- 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

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; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State; and
 - 32(1)(i) where a pupil with an EHC plan wholly or partly funded by a local authority or other body through public funds is registered at the school, such information as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the EHC plan is provided to the responsible local authority.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) 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)(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.

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