

Inspection of an outstanding school: West Kirby Residential School

Meols Drive, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside CH48 5DH

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 December 2021

Outcome

West Kirby Residential School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high ambitions for every pupil. Many pupils arrive at West Kirby after a period of disrupted and turbulent education. Leaders and staff get them back on track. They help pupils to manage their own behaviour, to re-engage with learning and to gain qualifications that set them up well for adult life.

Pupils know that staff want to help. Staff support pupils when they find things difficult. This means that pupils can relax and enjoy their time at school. Pupils feel safe because they know staff will listen to any worries they have.

Some pupils struggle to behave well when they first come to this school. However, they soon settle in and learn how to manage their emotions. Once pupils have been at the school for a short while, they behave well. Bullying is extremely rare, but everyone is confident that staff would deal with it thoroughly if it did happen.

Leaders have thought very carefully about the strengths and interests of pupils. They offer courses and subjects that suit pupils very well. For example, leaders have introduced an animal husbandry course and a BTEC National Diploma in sports science for pupils who have an interest in these subjects.

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

Leaders make sure that pupils have the best possible chance to succeed. When pupils arrive, teachers find out what they already know and understand. They then make sure that they fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving on to new work. In this way, pupils can build on a secure foundation as they move on to learn more challenging concepts.

Some pupils find it difficult to focus in lessons. This can result in inappropriate and occasionally challenging behaviour. Leaders and staff support pupils to improve their behaviour. Staff make sure that any behaviour does not disrupt the learning of others.

Teachers make sure that they go over any lessons missed by a pupil due to their behaviour. Staff understand why pupils behave the way they do. They gain pupils' trust and skilfully help them learn to control and manage their behaviour. Over time, pupils' inappropriate behaviour decreases.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They have developed reading areas and libraries that are attractive and age-appropriate. They have invested in a wide range of books, carefully considering pupils' interests. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are given tailored support from specialist staff. Pupils' reading skills are checked regularly and an individualised programme of phonics teaching is in place. This helps pupils to become fluent readers.

Curriculum leaders have excellent knowledge of their subject. New leaders are given expert advice from well-regarded leaders in schools both locally and further afield.

Leaders have given much thought to developing a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum. Pupils study the national curriculum subjects up to Year 9. Options for older pupils are reviewed each year to make sure that they suit their interests and abilities. For example, a range of art courses are on offer including photography and 3D art. This means that pupils who find traditional art activities such as drawing difficult can experience success. This year, leaders have introduced GCSEs in classics and history as these subjects are of particular interest to some pupils in Year 10. In post-16, A levels are available alongside qualifications in life skills. Students in post-16 who have had significant disruption to their secondary education can complete their GCSE or BTEC National Diploma courses before successfully moving on to college.

Pupils are very well supported to choose their next steps. Staff take pupils to visit colleges both close by and further afield so that pupils can make an informed choice. Most pupils move on to local colleges or into apprenticeships for further study and training. A few have moved to the sixth form in a local school to study A levels.

Leaders organise a wide range of visits and sports clubs to extend pupils' horizons and expand their experiences. Staff think carefully about each pupil and they plan activities that suit their needs and interests.

Relationships and sex education is well thought through. Additional sessions have taken place for older pupils who missed aspects of this during the national lockdowns. Pupils are taught to respect everyone and are sensitive to the feelings of others. As a result, there are very few incidents of racist, homophobic or sexist language.

Staff are proud to work in this school. They enjoy their work and appreciate all that the senior leaders do for them as well as the pupils. They feel exceptionally well supported to do their job well. Leaders are always mindful of staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to identify any concerns about pupils. Leaders have a clear and well-established system which staff use to report any concerns that emerge. The safeguarding team considers these reports daily and takes swift and appropriate action. Leaders work closely with other agencies to support pupils who are at risk. Leaders and staff make sure that pupils are able to develop resilience and the ability to keep themselves safe in school, in the community and online.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2013.

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 school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	105137
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10199624
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	John Wylie
Principal	Sian Thomas
Website	www.wkrs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 February 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils aged 5 to 19 with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils have autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and/or social, emotional and mental health needs. Currently, the youngest pupils are in Year 4.
- The current principal took up her post in September 2019.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- A small number of pupils access residential provision managed by the trustees. This provision offers an extended day, weekly or part-weekly boarding.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and other staff. They also met with three trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and support staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including science and physical education.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record of checks on staff suitability. They met with safeguarding leaders and discussed their work. Inspectors looked at safeguarding records and spoke with pupils about the school's work to help them stay safe.
- Leaders met with inspectors to discuss their records and analysis of pupils' behaviour and emotional well-being. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their wider experience in the school. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Gaynor Roberts, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nell Banfield

Ofsted Inspector

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