

Inspection of Westmorland School

Weldbank Lane, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 3NQ

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have the highest of expectations for pupils at this school. There is no limit to what pupils can achieve. They are immersed in a culture of excellence where they flourish and thrive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) catch up with their learning, often after periods of considerable absence from school. They make remarkable and often life-changing personal and academic progress.

Pupils are happy. They told inspectors how teachers make learning fun. Staff teach topics that bring learning to life. Pupils use technology with confidence and are proud to show their work and discuss their learning and achievements.

Pupils enjoy playing outside with their friends. They take part in sports clubs and learn to ride bikes. Outside areas are filled with play equipment that pupils use. They enjoy taking part in many team games.

Pupils love their school. They have very positive attitudes to their learning. The staff know every pupil extremely well. They support them to manage their emotions and behaviour. This helps pupils to feel safe. Sometimes, pupils fall out with one another, but staff help them to understand each other and to say sorry. Leaders deal very well with the very rare instances of bullying.

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

Leaders have developed a highly ambitious and carefully designed curriculum. They make certain that pupils' learning is planned in a logical order, so pupils build on what they already know. This has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are hooked into an exciting curriculum where they develop an enquiring mind. Leaders have carefully mapped out where key knowledge, including vocabulary, can be revisited in the curriculum. Consequently, pupils' knowledge is deepened and they can apply their learning in different contexts. Pupils know more and remember more of the essential knowledge that they need in a wide range of subjects.

The highly skilled staff team consists of education and clinical staff. These include occupational therapy, speech and language, educational psychology and counselling experts. They work together seamlessly to assess each pupil's needs on entry to the school and throughout their time at Westmorland. This allows teachers to plan clear next steps for each pupil's development and learning. Leaders make certain that pupils with SEND get the precise support that they need.

Staff very effectively support pupils who are non-verbal to use signing and visual symbols so they can communicate well with adults and peers. Staff also work successfully with families, so that pupils have a consistent approach to supporting their needs in school and at home.

Leaders have established an ambitious culture of reading at the school. All staff are well trained and skilled in teaching phonics. Pupils are immersed in stories, poems and books during many aspects of daily life at school, including on the transport home. The pupil ambassador recommends books in school assemblies. Pupils are taught a special 'word of the week' that helps to develop their use of vocabulary. Pupils enjoy using the well-stocked school library that suits all abilities, including early readers. This whole-school approach set by leaders helps to ensure that many pupils leave school as fluent and confident readers. They are ready to take their next steps in education.

There is a calm and supportive culture in school. The consistent routines applied by staff throughout all areas of the school support pupils to manage their behaviour. Staff are quick to notice if a pupil becomes anxious or is not managing. They gently intervene. As a result, any disruption to pupils' learning is rare.

The school's provision for personal development is exceptionally strong. Many pupils' experience of education was disrupted before they joined Westmorland School. Leaders ensure that a focus on pupils' well-being is central to the curriculum. Staff help pupils to gain confidence and to take pride in themselves. They celebrate pupils' individual efforts and successes.

The way in which leaders and staff develop pupils' character is exemplary. Staff help pupils to respect other people and to understand different points of view. Pupils learn to listen, take turns and work together. Pupils keenly take part in activities to raise money for charity. They support their local community in a variety of ways, including by litter-picking.

Staff raise pupils' aspirations for their future with a belief that they can aim high and achieve their ambitions. Pupils are immersed in a wide range of activities to understand different jobs and career options, including in engineering, retail, art and technology.

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums give pupils a secure understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils staying safe online is a priority. Leaders make certain that all statutory guidance has been followed when implementing the RSE curriculum.

Leaders are constantly evaluating, refining and improving the school. They have a clear and passionate vision to ensure that every child in school gets the best possible education. They have established a strong partnership with parents and carers, who appreciate the support they receive from school and the positive impact that this has at home.

The proprietor body is highly effective in holding leaders to account and meeting all statutory obligations. This includes ensuring that the school's accessibility plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. The proprietor body knows the school well. The

provision of staff training and development by the proprietor body develops staff as expert subject and pastoral leaders. The school meets all of the independent school standards and goes even further to provide pupils with a first-rate education.

Leaders have a high level of engagement with staff. When workload has been a concern, leaders have listened and worked with staff to resolve any issues.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are highly vigilant for any behaviour or other sign that may indicate a safeguarding or welfare concern. They report any concerns quickly to the safeguarding team.

Leaders and staff are well trained in safeguarding. Leaders are highly experienced and act swiftly to secure appropriate help for pupils, including by making referrals to the local authority.

Leaders follow all national guidance around safeguarding, including for training, policies and procedures. The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school website.

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	132828
DfE registration number	888/6048
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10210338
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Jayne Carter
Headteacher	Susan Asher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,372 to £87,621
Telephone number	01257 278899
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/our-locations/our-schools/westmorland-school
Email address	westmorland@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 to 22 March 2018

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on the school roll has increased from 50 to 56.
- The school received its previous standard inspection in March 2018.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school caters for pupils with an education, health and care plan, mainly for the following needs: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and social, emotional and mental health needs.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils about school life. They spoke with the headteacher and several other leaders. They met with staff, including those involved with speech and language and occupational therapy. Inspectors also spoke with members of the proprietor body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and literacy (including reading), science, humanities and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum and spoke with leaders about some other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, and information relating to the independent school standards. They also looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors checked the quality and safety of the school's premises.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Simon Hunter

Her Majesty's Inspector

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