

Inspection of an outstanding school: West Oaks School

Crowther Place, Leeds LS6 2ST

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 May 2022

Outcome

West Oaks School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have continued to ensure that West Oaks provides 'excellence for everyone'. Pupils are well taught and well cared for. Leaders provide an exceptional curriculum for pupils, including for their personal development. Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps. Parents and carers feel supported. They speak highly of the school's work.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. School sites are calm. They are positive environments for pupils to learn. Pupils receive regular support and interventions. There are a range of therapeutic facilities that benefit pupils of all ages and different special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This support is well thought out by specialist staff who work closely with teachers and support staff. This ensures pupils receive the right support when they need it.

Staff know pupils well. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. As a result, pupils feel safe. Staff model the positive behaviour they expect of pupils. Pupils are happy to speak to visitors and show them their work. The curriculum is very well thought out. It is organised into pathways that run through the school until pupils move on. Ambition is high for all pupils.

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

The school is very well led and managed. Leaders are supported effectively and challenged by governors. Since the last inspection, the school has grown considerably. Further expansion is taking place to develop provision and increase pupil numbers. This expansion has not affected the quality of education and care that the school offers. It remains very high quality. All staff are dedicated and well trained. Pupils are taught well and assessed in detail. Staff are exceptionally well attuned to the needs of pupils and support them to do well. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stages in their life, education or employment.

Pupils' work, taking account of their specific needs, is of a high quality. The work given to pupils over time matches the ambitious aims of the school curriculum, which is embedded securely and consistently across school sites. The school offers a range of appropriate entry-level and functional skills qualifications that prepare pupils well for college or the school's own sixth-form provision. Pupils who are able to access GCSEs receive additional support from mainstream partner schools. This enables them to achieve highly with the personalised support that they are used to in school and the subject-specific support provided by mainstream partners.

Pupils at both school sites get a great deal. There is equality of opportunity. Both sites are well resourced to meet the academic needs and SEND of pupils. There are many common aspects to school life shared across sites, from the 'daily mile' footpath to pupil-centred planning that is both ambitious and considerate of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets.

Pupils' personal development is a high priority and is woven through the school curriculum. Leaders recognise its importance. Pupils experience many learning opportunities that support their personal development. This includes learning about fundamental British values. Pupils have access to a range of facilities in and around school. There are well-resourced outside areas with green spaces, engaging 'pod learning' classrooms, multi-use activity spaces and apparatus that contribute to developing healthy lifestyles. Pupils also access their statutory physical education entitlement with a specialist teacher.

Pupils can self-refer and seek support to manage their mental health. Leaders have provided a professional counselling service from an external provider to meet this need. 'Worry boxes' around school and 'feeling safe' areas in classrooms help to ensure that pupils feel supported. Key-worker staff know how to look for signs of distress from non-verbal pupils to ensure they too are supported.

Pupils are given the correct support and information for their next steps at post-16 and post-19. The school satisfies the requirements of the Baker Clause and measures itself against the Gatsby benchmarks. Over the past three years, all post-16 and post-19 pupils have moved on to positive destinations. To prepare for adulthood, pupils participate in the 'We Can Do' school business, that they own shares in, to sell products in the community.

There is a well-stocked library with a range of appropriate books to teach early reading and develop pupils' phonics. Each classroom has a reading area and story time is a high-profile part of the school day for younger pupils. The school has detailed and well-thought-out plans to further enhance its reading strategy for older pupils who are learning to read. This is also the case for students in the sixth form. The teaching of phonics in early years is embedded. Children in early years engage well with phonics. This is because staff ensure phonics sessions are well thought out and structured. Pupils develop their reading and comprehension skills well over time. This helps them access different subjects within the curriculum.

Pupils' personal, social, health and economic education covers a wide range of issues and is a strength of the curriculum. Pupils can explain learning from lessons about

relationships, including consent and diversity. These lessons are taught sensitively in an age-appropriate way. Pupils say it is fine to be 'different here because we are all different'. Pupils feel safe. They say that bullying or matters of sexual harassment are not an issue. If they were, pupils feel that members of staff would manage them effectively.

Staff feel supported. They describe a real team spirit and appreciate the genuine accessibility of school leaders. Staff acknowledge their workload but describe leaders' efforts to alleviate this. Staff describe leaders' supportive attempts to improve planning systems by sharing resources among staff. Staff in all roles receive development through formal and informal routes. Staff development is a part of school life. Succession is planned for, with some school leaders starting their careers in support roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out detailed checks on adults prior to their employment.

Leaders maintain a strong culture of safeguarding across the school sites. Governors prioritise safeguarding and ensure it is well resourced. Safeguarding is a high priority as a result. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They receive regular training that underpins the school's safeguarding culture. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a regular feature of staff briefings. Staff are aware of the relationship between safeguarding and pupils' SEND vulnerabilities. Leaders provide a 'Golden Thread' safeguarding newsletter for staff and parents. Staff are aware of local risks in the community.

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 November 2012.

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	108133
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10228385
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	355
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Hayton
Principal	Andrew Hodkinson
Website	www.westoaksschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- West Oaks is a special school for pupils aged between two and 19 years. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is split across two sites at Woodhouse Learning and Boston Spa Learning.
- The school makes provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the principal, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers, pastoral staff and some non-teaching staff.
- The lead inspector met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and science. The provision for teaching phonics and early reading was also considered in depth. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the school's records of checks carried out on adults who work at the school.
- The lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. He reviewed the school's safeguarding records, relevant policies and other safeguarding documentation. The lead inspector also reviewed the processes leaders use to identify and help pupils who need support.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, including pupils who receive therapeutic support.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils, and the online Parent View survey for parents

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pauline Rowland

Ofsted Inspector

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