

Inspection of Welburn Hall School

Kirkbymoorside, York, North Yorkshire YO62 7HQ

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Welburn Hall School is a warm and caring school. All staff want the very best for the pupils who attend. As such, ambitions are high.

Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, know their pupils well. Strong bonds have been forged between staff and pupils. Relationships are at the heart of the school. As a result, pupils feel safe in school and inspectors agree that they are safe. Bullying is not a problem at Welburn Hall. Staff are quick to spot when pupils might be falling out, or acting unkindly, and they step in to straighten things out.

Behaviour overall is good. The school is an ordered community. At times, due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), some pupils present very challenging behaviours. However, staff understand their pupils, and they act with care and skill to support pupils at these times.

At Welburn Hall School, expectations are high. Leaders expect staff to do their jobs well, which they do. Governors expect leaders to fulfil their roles effectively, which they do. Staff expect pupils to achieve, which they do. Not least, this is because pupils are understood, treated and respected as individuals.

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

Leaders' curriculum is ambitious and is well-matched to the needs of pupils. Programmes of study are in place for subjects across the age range of pupils who attend the school. These programmes set out with clarity what is to be taught. Importantly, leaders have thought carefully about how best to organise class groupings. This means that teachers and teaching assistants use curriculum plans effectively to meet the needs of pupils. In some subject areas, such as English and mathematics, subject content and skills are mapped out in precise detail. In other subject areas, such as food technology and history, the main curriculum aspects to be taught are set out in plans, but sometimes, the detail is not quite as exhaustive.

Assessment is used effectively by staff to ensure that leaders' aspirations for what pupils can achieve are well realised. Teachers, supported by teaching assistants, use 'Welburn-ised' national curriculum aims to assess how well pupils have grasped the learning. Staff adapt their planning in light of this assessment. As a result, work is suitably matched to pupils' abilities.

The teaching of reading is an important aspect of the leaders' curriculum and is a reflection of their ambition for pupils. Opportunities for pupils to enjoy books are threaded through school, including for those pupils with profound SEND. Phonics teaching is in place for pupils who are cognitively able to access it. Leaders' plans to introduce a root-and-branch change to the teaching of phonics were substantially delayed by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the plans are back on track, with training and resourcing secured for the start of the forthcoming academic year.

As a special school, pupils' behaviour is sometimes challenging. However, staff are adept at managing such situations, acting in line with the school's behaviour policy. As a result, school is calm and settled most of the time. To a very high degree, this is because of the strength of the relationships which have been carefully built between pupils and staff.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. School is a tolerant and respectful environment where pupils value the contribution made by the school council. The curriculum for personal development is a wide one, including a range of therapies such as hydrotherapy and speech and language therapy. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, access animal care and horticulture at the school's 'The Orchard' setting to further widen their personal development. Leaders have placed particular emphasis on pupils' skills for preparation for adulthood.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive independent careers advice in line with the Baker Clause. In the sixth form, students access employability courses and visit further education providers. Sixth-form leadership is effective, but it could be even more so if there was strategic oversight of the provision. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to align work experience placements with actual career aspirations.

Leadership is principled, ambitious for all pupils and fully focused on pupils' best interests. Leaders engage well with staff so that any concerns about workload or staff's well-being are picked up and dealt with. Governors have a clear understanding of the school. They know where it is especially strong and where there are areas for further development. Governors take appropriate steps to provide themselves with assurances that leaders' information about the school's performance is accurate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. Leaders are keenly aware of the additional vulnerabilities presented by pupils with SEND. For example, leaders keep their relationships and sex education and health education policy and programme of study under ongoing review, adapting it to meet pupils' needs. Additionally, while staff know their pupils well and are attuned to any changes in how the pupils are feeling, no single member of staff has absolute 'trusted adult' status with any pupil. As a result, pupils are able to communicate concerns to more than one member of staff. Leaders have ensured that staff are trained in safeguarding matters.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Programmes of study are in place across the curriculum, setting out what is to be learned and in what order. In some subjects, the detailed information which

describes the precise subject content and skills to be taught is less developed than in others. Leaders should ensure that the current curriculum work they are doing in consultation with the local authority is completed on schedule so that all curriculum plans are of comparable precision.

- Leaders should ensure that the planned introduction of their chosen scheme of systematic synthetic phonics is completed as anticipated, including the planned associated training for staff from the scheme's trainers and the purchasing of scheme-specific resources.
- The effectiveness of the sixth-form provision is limited in achieving its full potential because its leadership is shared between several people. This means that there is no overarching strategic leadership of the sixth form. As a result, there are occasionally missed chances to fully seize the opportunities presented by the sixth-form curriculum. Leaders, including governors, should take action to bring the strategic leadership of the sixth-form provision into sharper focus.

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	121766
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10212216
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Morgan and Alan Payne (Co-chairs)
Headteacher	Marianne Best
Website	www.welburn-hall.n-yorks.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Welburn Hall School caters for pupils with a wide range of SEND. These include moderate or severe learning difficulties, physical difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, profound and multiple learning difficulties, sensory impairment, speech and language difficulties and complex medical conditions. A residential setting is on the same site as the school. Currently, the local authority has an open consultation for increasing the number of residential places at the school.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- A small number of pupils attend a construction course at York College, YO23 2BB.
- The school provides some alternative provision for a small number of pupils from other schools at the on-site 'The Orchard' setting.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical

education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met the headteacher and the inclusion manager. They also met leaders of curriculum subjects.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (including reading), mathematics, history and food technology. Inspectors also considered curriculum information about geography and vocational subjects such as catering and animal care. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's records of the checks it makes on the staff employed at the school. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed examples of the school's work to identify when pupils may be in need of help and what the school does to provide and manage this help. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors met the co-chairs of governors. An inspector spoke on the telephone with the school's adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff, parents and pupils and one letter submitted to the inspection team.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Durand

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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