

# Inspection of Warren School

Clarkes Lane, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft NR33 8HT

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Inspection dates: 8 and 9 June 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Inadequate**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Early years provision

**Inadequate**

Sixth-form provision

**Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5  
of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are keen to be kind and caring. Often, they do not get the right support at the right time. When this happens, pupils become bored, anxious, distressed or frustrated. This results in some pupils exhibiting aggressive or violent behaviours towards themselves, other pupils, or, more often than not, the staff.

Too many pupils access poor-quality learning opportunities, both in lessons and during social times. These pupils do not receive provision that considers all of their needs, abilities and interests in a coherent way. They do not develop early communication and reading skills. They are not well prepared for adulthood when they leave the school.

Older pupils say that they used to enjoy responsibilities, such as being on the school council, but have not had these opportunities for some time. They say that the school needs more money to improve their facilities, such as the playing areas and the swimming pool. They say that they really value and have good relationships with the staff. They feel that staff try their very best. However, they also say that there is a lot of staffing change.

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

Trustees, governors and leaders have been too slow to take action. New trust leaders have identified that the checks they made before they took charge of the school failed to identify the range of longstanding issues and failings. They have not acted quickly enough to address these issues.

Chronic staffing turbulence and absence persist. When staffing falls too low, leaders send pupils home. This means that pupils do not access the education and care to which they are entitled. Some pupils, especially when they have already arrived or are on their way to school, become very distressed by these sudden changes in their day. This causes angst to staff, pupils and parents and carers alike.

Leaders have established a broad outline for the curriculum, setting out what they want pupils to achieve. However, the precise plans about what pupils learn and when they will learn it are highly inconsistent and often of poor quality. Many pupils receive a disjointed set of activities that do not help them develop or learn effectively over time. This includes in their early communication and reading skills. There is a lack of any extra-curricular activities, trips and visits that help to supplement the curriculum currently.

The day-to-day curriculum planning and provision for older pupils are of a better quality. However, pupils do not receive a well-planned wider curriculum that includes the full range of opportunities to help them make informed decisions about their next steps into adulthood.

The quality of the learning environment across the school site is poor. Areas of the school building are out of use because they are unsafe, such as the swimming pool. Most classrooms and outdoor areas, including in early years, are tired and unwelcoming.

There is a lack of appropriate, high-quality resources to support pupils' learning. This includes much-needed equipment for sensory development, outdoor play or pupils' early communication. Where better resources do exist, staff are not routinely well trained or confident in how to use them effectively with pupils.

Too many pupils do not attend well, and the array of leaders since the school opened have not done enough to address this. When pupils do attend, slow starts to the day, off-task behaviour, unfocused activities and weak planning significantly reduce many pupils' learning time.

Leaders and staff do not have accurate and precise information about pupils' needs. Until recently, there has been a substantial backlog in annual reviews. Behaviour and risk management plans have been of poor quality. New leaders' efforts to produce better quality guidance to staff are lacking essential health and care needs information. Therefore, new information being provided to staff is still inaccurate.

Many staff feel that they are not adequately trained or supported. They report a high workload and little time or guidance to undertake this work. Many say that they do not get any breaks during the day. Some say that they do not feel they can report their concerns to leaders. They feel that there is a culture where staff are penalised or rebuked if they do this.

Leaders and governors do not have capacity to undertake their roles effectively. While they have developed an appropriate action plan to address the major weaknesses in the school, they cannot act on it. Leaders and governors are often undertaking day-to-day basic activities on the school site, for example by teaching classes, administering medicine, dealing with urgent issues on site, or, until recently, running the reception offices. Their actions are fire-fighting day-to-day issues, rather than bringing about sustained improvements.

A high proportion of parents are frustrated and upset at the significant turbulence in provision. Many have lost confidence in the trust's ability to address their concerns and communicate effectively. Leaders and governors feel that this is despite some of their best efforts to engage with families. Some parents are positive about the work of the new headteacher in recent months.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Trustees, governors and leaders do not have sufficient oversight of safeguarding. It is not until the last few months that they have become aware of longstanding,

significant issues in a range of areas, including recruitment, referrals to external services and on-site management.

Leaders have acted to address some of these issues, most notably in the recruitment and recording of pre-employment checks. However, there has been insufficient urgency and rigour to address other aspects of this work.

There has been a very high use of physical restraint for pupils with some of the most complex needs. Risk assessment and behaviour management over time have been of poor quality. This has not helped to reduce the high use of physical restraint. This does not create a safe and calm learning environment for pupils and staff.

Some staff do not feel that there is sufficient staff training in health, medical and intimate care needs to keep all pupils safe. Some also report that they have raised numerous concerns about pupils' safety, which have not been addressed.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Trustees have been too slow to act. They have not ensured that day-to-day leadership is sufficient to address deep-seated and wide-ranging issues quickly. Trustees should ensure that there is sufficient capacity in leadership, governance and staffing to bring about the urgent improvements required in a sustained way.
- There are wide-ranging weaknesses in safeguarding culture, including in recruitment, vigilance, understanding of statutory guidance, referrals to external agencies, site management, review of behaviour information, risk assessment, and training and induction of staff. Trustees, leaders and governors should work with the local authority to address all these areas in a sustained and meaningful way, so that all reasonable actions, in line with statutory guidance, are taken to protect pupils and staff.
- Trustees have failed to ensure that leaders and staff are sufficiently well trained or well informed to be able to support a range of pupils' needs, including their sensory, medical and intimate care, and their health and behavioural needs. Trustees need to ensure that all appropriate information is used to create a well-informed programme of support for pupils, and that staff are well trained to deliver this programme of support.
- Leaders, staff and pupils are working in a very poor-quality learning environment with limited and/or poor-quality resources. The building and resources are not supporting a high-quality curriculum, and not meeting pupils' needs. This includes all outdoor areas. Staff report that this is made worse by a near-constant changing of classrooms at very short notice. Trustees need to address these issues as a matter of urgency, so that the learning environment and resources are appropriate for pupils' learning and care needs.

- Trustees have lost the confidence of many parents and staff. The new headteacher has established some early positive relationships with some parents and staff. Trustees need to build on this work and to establish clearer systems for staff and parents to give their views and feel that their concerns are being taken seriously and sensitively. They need to work alongside staff and parents to rebuild positive relationships that, ultimately, result in better cohesive provision for pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that their intention for the curriculum is well planned and delivered. There is a lack of detailed, specific schemes of work that outline exactly what classes are going to learn and when. This includes the provision for the delivery of the communication and early reading programmes. Leaders need to ensure that staff have sufficient guidance, training and time to deliver this curriculum, and that they are mindful of staff workload in addressing this issue.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146431
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10237000
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	124
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	19
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Richard Fletcher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Hatchell (Executive Headteacher) Neil Hutchinson (Headteacher Designate)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.warrenschoo.co.uk">www.warrenschoo.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Warren School is a special school catering for pupils with a wide range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. There is also a high proportion of pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- The school offers places for pupils aged three to 19 years. There are currently no children attending the school's Nursery provision.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school opened in February 2019 under the Believe Engage Succeed Trust (BEST).
- The predecessor school of the same name was judged inadequate in its inspection in November 2017.

- The school has had four headteachers since opening: two on substantive contracts, one interim headteacher, and the current consultant headteacher.
- The current consultant headteacher has been at the school since February 2022. He is due to be appointed as the substantive headteacher, pending pre-employment checks.
- The chief executive officer (CEO) took on the role of executive headteacher in November 2021. She is on site at least three days a week.
- The current chair of the trust took on this role in January 2022.
- The current chair of the school improvement board has spent much time on the school site since her appointment trying to support the day-to-day operational work.
- There is a current staffing restructure ongoing. This started in September 2021.
- There has been a significant number of changes in leadership and staffing in the last year, including in office and administration staff. There remain a number of staff vacancies and a high proportion of agency cover staff.
- The school does not currently use alternative or any off-site provision.
- The parent–teacher association (PTA) is fundraising for an outdoor playground. Leaders are bidding for additional funding to improve the quality of the school site.

## **Information about this inspection**

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the CEO/executive headteacher and the acting headteacher. Meetings were held regarding attendance, behaviour, medical provision, safeguarding and curriculum.
- Inspectors met with the new leader responsible for special educational needs, the seconded business manager, a representative from the local authority, the chair of the school improvement board and with two trustees, including the chair of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors checked school policies, pupils’ safeguarding records and the pre-employment checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children.

- Staff did not receive the link to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for school staff. As a result, the lead inspector provided staff with the regional Ofsted email contact address for any information that they wished to provide. Inspectors also held additional meetings with a range of staff on the school site.
- Inspectors reviewed 56 responses to Ofsted Parent View, along with free-text comments submitted by parents.
- There were no responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors gathered the views of a wider group of staff and pupils in meetings and informal conversations while they were in school. An inspector spoke with some parents as they collected their children from school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in physical education, art, early reading and communication, and personal, social and health education. Inspectors visited lessons, met with teachers and teaching assistants, and looked at records of pupils’ work and learning.

### **Inspection team**

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Prue Rayner

Ofsted Inspector



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