

Inspection of Oversands School

Witherslack, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria LA11 6SD

Inspection dates: 29 November to 1 December 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and sixth-form students are happy at this school. They appreciate the opportunities that they have to enjoy the outdoors. They enjoy chatting with adults at lunchtime because they have positive relationships with staff. Teachers help pupils and students to gain confidence and believe in themselves again.

Before they join the school, the majority of pupils and students in the sixth form have experienced trauma and turbulence in their lives. Pupils and students benefit from the therapy that they receive, such as mental health support. They told inspectors that they feel valued and understood by staff.

Pupils and students have trusted adults who they can talk with about any worries that they may have. They trust adults to deal with any concerns quickly. For example, pupils said that when bullying does happen, staff are quick to intervene and deal with it effectively.

Leaders expect pupils and students to work hard and try their best. All staff set high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils rise to this challenge and they achieve well.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Leaders expect pupils to be respectful, responsible and kind towards each other. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour around school is orderly. Pupils said that they are able to get on with their work without interruptions.

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

Pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum, including in the sixth form. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to know and be able to do in each subject. Leaders have carefully designed the curriculum so that pupils and students build a deep body of subject knowledge. Teachers deliver this curriculum well. Pupils and students in the sixth form achieve well.

Teachers have expert subject knowledge. They devise lessons that help pupils to absorb new information. Teachers use leaders' assessment systems well to check pupils' understanding. This helps them to correct pupils' errors or misconceptions in their learning. Teachers also adapt the delivery of the curriculum appropriately for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. They are adept at identifying any additional learning needs.

Reading is a priority across the school. All staff have received suitable phonics training to help them to support pupils who are behind with their reading. Pupils at the early stages of reading have dedicated time to read to adults. The school library is well stocked and appreciated by pupils of all ages.

Pupils and students in the sixth form achieve nationally recognised qualifications, including GCSEs and functional skills. Students in the sixth form undertake well-designed work placements to give them experience in their chosen careers. Students also access college courses to support their transition into further education.

Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils benefit from specialist therapeutic support. This helps them to overcome their difficulties and to better regulate their emotions and behaviour. Pupils are proud of the improvements that they make in their behaviour and attitudes over time.

Pupils benefit from an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils learn about intimate relationships and sex. They are taught about risks such as drugs and alcohol. Pupils are encouraged to discuss and debate challenging issues that have been reported in the news. They learn about respect for differences and what discrimination may look like in a workplace setting.

Leaders provide some opportunities for pupils to participate in enrichment activities, for example extra-curricular clubs. However, while pupils and students benefit from these activities, the range is limited. This prevents pupils from developing a wide and appropriate range of additional skills and interests.

A wide range of support ensures that pupils and sixth-form students are ready for their next steps in education and adulthood. At a recent careers fair, pupils and students talked with local employers and colleges about apprenticeships, training programmes and further education. All pupils and sixth-form students receive independent careers information, education, advice and guidance. Year 11 pupils link with a mentor who works in their chosen career.

The proprietor body has recently appointed an experienced leadership team. This team is having a positive impact on school improvement. The proprietor body supports and challenges leaders appropriately to ensure that the school provides a high-quality education.

The school meets all the independent school standards. The proprietor body understands and carries out its duties effectively. It has ensured that it complies with its statutory duties, including the provision of relationships and sex education and health education and compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders engage well with staff. There is a strong sense of teamwork. Staff reported that leaders have their well-being at heart and ensure their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding team is well trained and supported by the proprietor body. Staff are highly vigilant to any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff report any concerns immediately to the school's safeguarding team. The safeguarding,

care, clinical and education teams work closely together to support any pupils, carers and families when needed. Leaders also work closely with local authorities and external agencies to secure the support that they need for pupils and families.

The safeguarding policy complies with current statutory guidance and is published on the school's website.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. Pupils talked with confidence about how they can protect themselves from exploitation.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils and sixth-form students do not benefit from an appropriately wide range of enrichment activities to supplement the academic curriculum. This limits some pupils' opportunities to extend their learning and develop different talents and interests. Leaders should ensure the school's enrichment programme gives pupils and students a wide range of opportunities to broaden their knowledge, skills and experiences.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	112452
DfE registration number	909/6027
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10210324
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Richard Wilkins
Headteacher	Joanna Burdon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,186
Telephone number	01539 552397
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	oversands@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 to 18 January 2018

Information about this school

- The school has had a new headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school received its previous standard inspection in January 2018.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of needs, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There are currently no girls attending this school.

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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and subject leaders in school. They spoke with representatives from the proprietor body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, PSHE, science and the humanities subjects, including geography and history. 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 also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' books and spoke with leaders about a few other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that in relation to safeguarding. Inspectors also reviewed information relating to the independent school standards. They also looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. Inspectors toured the school's premises.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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