

Inspection of Wolfdale School

Cropston Road, Anstey, Leicester, Leicestershire LE7 7BP

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend this school have often had a negative experience of education previously. When pupils join the school, staff take time getting to know them. This helps to build a rapport between pupils and staff. Many pupils settle quickly and attend school well. Other pupils take longer to transition, but they steadily increase how often they come to school.

Routines at the start of the day are well established. Most pupils arrive promptly. They enjoy sharing their experiences with staff over breakfast. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils' views and opinions matter. They know that staff won't give up on them and want them to be successful.

Bullying is not common. Staff deal with it effectively. Pupils who struggle to manage their emotions and feelings are supported well. They know how to spot the triggers that affect their behaviour. Parents and carers notice the difference. As one parent explained, 'My child has learned better ways to deal with situations they find difficult.' This comment was typical of many.

Pupils enjoy a range of enrichment activities. From simple tasks such as shopping locally for groceries, to outdoor activities such as archery and boating, pupils are keen participants. They learn that staff trust them to act safely and responsibly.

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

Pupils value learning subjects that they know will help them in the future. They study a balance of academic and vocational courses. They enjoy a range of activities in the local community, as well as outdoor pursuits. They also receive therapeutic support to build their self-esteem and resilience. This helps pupils engage positively with their learning.

Pupils study suitable qualifications and accreditations in order to secure their next steps. However, the breadth of these awards is relatively limited. Leaders are beginning to identify extra qualifications that are suitable for pupils to study. However, pupils do not gain as much external credit for their work as they should. Despite this, most pupils secure an appropriate education, employment or training placement when they leave school.

The curriculum is well thought out in most subjects. Leaders identify what they want pupils to know and the order that pupils should learn new content. There are opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning. This helps them build their knowledge and develop their skills. Leaders take pupils' education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets into account.

Pupils follow a well-sequenced curriculum when studying construction or mechanics. They learn how to use specialist equipment with increased skill. There are opportunities for pupils to revisit what they know. Staff check pupils' learning often.

They use this information to set small-steps targets for pupils. They adapt the curriculum to take pupils' learning needs into account. Pupils enjoy visiting local construction sites to see how their skills could help them build a house.

Staff are knowledgeable about the subjects they deliver. In English, teachers use their specialist knowledge to discuss characters in 'Romeo and Juliet'. In science, teachers encourage pupils to use correct scientific terms to describe key processes. Teachers use targeted questions to check pupils' learning and prompt deeper thinking. They provide clear guidance about how pupils can improve their work. Occasionally, pupils are not challenged enough and find the work too easy.

There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to read across the curriculum. However, a small number of pupils are not getting the help they need to improve their reading. Staff knowledge of how to teach phonics is not secure. Any support these pupils get is disjointed and poorly sequenced. This also has an impact on how well these pupils write. Leaders have clear plans in place to help all pupils become accurate and fluent readers.

There are opportunities for pupils to develop their character, confidence and independence. Pupils learn about relationships and sex education and health education at an appropriate level. They understand the importance of being physically and mentally fit. They practise being active citizens, for example, by selling Christmas gifts and seed books at a local supermarket. Pupils understand diversity and respect differences in others. However, their understanding of different cultures and faiths is less secure. Pupils benefit from a well-developed careers programme that helps prepare them for the world of work. Their memorable school experiences include a recent visit to the National Space Centre and the care shown to them by staff.

Most staff are positive about working at the school. They value the support they get from leaders to improve their practice. However, some staff are concerned about the impact that frequent staff changes have on their workload.

Leaders and the co-proprietors have a shared vision for what the school offers pupils and how best to achieve this. They work together closely in the day-to-day running of the school. However, they do not use the information they collect about different aspects of the school well enough to support their plans for improvement.

The co-proprietors make sure that the independent school standards are met. Regular health and safety checks ensure that the premises at each site are maintained to a good standard. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. School policies are up to date and reflect the latest statutory guidance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk of potential harm. Leaders keep detailed records of the actions they take to keep pupils safe. They work closely with a wide range of external agencies to get pupils the right support.

Pupils know that staff will take any concerns they have seriously. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For instance, pupils at key stage 4 have recently discussed the impact of sexualised and misogynistic behaviour.

During the inspection, leaders made sure that their systems to check on pupils who do not attend school regularly are secure.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- A few pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read do not get the right support. Leaders do not check carefully enough that the support for these pupils is based on their knowledge of phonics. These pupils do not become accurate and fluent readers as quickly as they should. Their handwriting is often of a poor quality. Leaders must ensure that support for pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read is matched closely to these pupils' reading knowledge and skills. Leaders must make sure that staff who support these pupils with their reading have the necessary expertise to do so. They must ensure that these pupils get the help they need to improve their handwriting.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are occasionally too low. They sometimes set pupils work that is too easy and lacks ambition. Pupils are not always encouraged to achieve as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum is always ambitious and provides pupils with sufficient opportunities to be challenged to do their best.
- Key stage 4-age pupils study a range of different academic and vocational subjects, as well learning valuable life skills. However, leaders have not ensured that these pupils gain suitable external validation for all their work. Some pupils do not gain the range of qualifications or accreditations that they could. Leaders need to ensure that, where possible, curriculums delivered to key stage 4-age pupils provide these pupils with the opportunity to gain appropriate qualifications or accreditation, to help them move on to their next steps.
- Leaders collect a range of information about pupils relating to, for example, pupils' behaviour, their attendance, their progress and any safeguarding concerns. However, leaders do not analyse this information precisely enough to track and monitor the quality of each aspect of the provision. They do not use this information sufficiently well to inform their plans for improvement. Leaders need to make more strategic use of the information they record about pupils to inform their plans to improve the school.

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 (DfE) has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	142659
DfE registration number	855/6036
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10262445
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Wolfdale School Limited
Chair	Anthony Blanchard and Gemma Thompson (co-chairs)
Headteacher	Sachin Dogra
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,500 to £74,000
Telephone number	01162 355600
Website	www.wolfdaleschool.leics.sch.uk
Email address	office@wolfdaleschool.leics.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 to 9 December 2021

Information about this school

- Woldale School is an independent special school.
- The school operates from four sites. The registered site is at Cropston Road, Anstey, Leicester, Leicestershire LE7 7BP. It provides education for primary-age pupils and some key stage 3-age pupils. The second site at 10–12 Victoria Road North, Leicester LE4 5EX educates mainly key stage 3-age pupils. The third site at Lodge Farm, Broad Lane, Markfield LE67 9BT is only used for vocational and environmental studies. No pupil attends this site full time. The fourth site at Ratby Sports Club, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0JN has been purchased by the proprietor since the previous standard inspection. Since September 2022, mainly key stage 4-age pupils have been educated at this site.
- The school provides education for pupils aged between seven and 16 years. The number of pupils on the school's roll has increased since the previous standard inspection.
- Pupils attending the school have behavioural needs or social, emotional or mental health needs. Many have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school uses two off-site providers for pupils to receive some of their education. The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- Since the previous standard inspection, a number of staff have left, and several new staff have joined, the school.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 7 to 9 December 2021.

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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher. The lead inspector met with the co-chairs of the proprietor board.

- The lead inspector met with safeguarding leaders to examine safeguarding records, the school's system for recruiting staff and the school's single central record. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: reading, vocational studies, including construction and mechanics, science and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors visited lessons, met with teachers of the subject to discuss the curriculum, looked at evidence of pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils during social times and spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, a variety of policies, information about pupils' attendance and behaviour, examples of pupils' EHC plans, and individual risk assessments and positive support plans for a sample of pupils.
- Inspectors took into account responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also noted responses to the staff survey.
- In order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors considered relevant documentation and reviewed facilities at each of the school's site.

The school's proposed change to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll to 60.

The school has applied to the DfE to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, inspectors checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

The outcome of this part of the inspection is: the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.

- Part 1 of the independent school standards that relate to the curriculum are likely to be met. Pupils benefit from a well-planned and effectively implemented curriculum that prepares them well for their next steps.
- Part 2 of the independent school standards are likely to be met. Pupils experience a strong personal development programme.
- Part 3 of the independent school standards that relate to pupils' welfare, health and safety are likely to be met. There are effective safeguarding arrangements in place. Policies and procedures relating to health and safety, fire, first aid, admissions and attendance, and risk assessments will remain the same. Leaders respond swiftly to any concerns that may put a pupil at risk of potential harm.
- Part 4 of the independent school standards is likely to be met. The single central record notes all the safer recruitment checks that leaders carry out before adults start working at the school.

- Part 5 of the independent school standards is likely to be met. The school has space across the four sites to accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. The sites are well maintained. Leaders intend to employ additional staff to teach and supervise the pupils.
- Parts 6 and 7 of the independent school standards are likely to be met. The school's relevant policies and procedures are published on the school's website. They are available for parents on request when necessary. The school's complaints policy is suitable and is also on the website.
- Part 8 of the independent school standards is likely to be met. The co-proprietors have ensured that all the standards are met currently. Existing policies and procedures will remain in place if the DfE approves the material change request. The co-proprietors do not intend to admit more pupils until the school's leadership has been restructured. This restructure will allow the headteacher to have a secure strategic oversight of the provision as it grows.

Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Davies

His Majesty's Inspector

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