

Westmorland School

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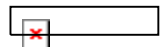
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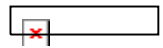
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Introduction and summary

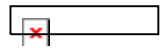


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



Westmorland School is a co-educational special school for pupils aged 5 to 11 years of age with special educational needs related to social, emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. The school opened in May 2000 and is part of the Witherslack group of independent special schools. The school is housed in a primary school building previously owned by the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Pupils attend from a number of local education authorities including Lancashire, Blackburn and Darwin, and Blackpool and Fylde. All pupils are brought to school by transport provided by their local authority. There are 31 pupils on roll and each has a statement of special educational needs.

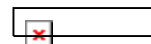
Westmorland School endeavours to create a culture in which pupils feel secure enough to:

'commence exploring the reasons underpinning their difficulties as well as make academic progress'.

This is to be achieved through a school curriculum which aims to:

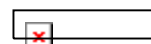
'serve the individual needs of every pupil in the school and prepare them for the realities of the adult world'.

Summary of main findings



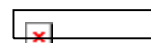
Westmorland School is a good school with a number of outstanding features. It provides excellent care and very good teaching for its pupils. Over the past two years the school has been increasingly successful in meeting the wide range of needs of its pupils. Comprehensive assessments monitor their progress very effectively. The school has a strong, well-supported staff team who know their pupils well and strive to provide for their differing requirements. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The building and outdoor area have been developed appropriately to accommodate fully the breadth of pupils' learning and care needs.

What the school does well



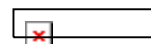
- it has developed a very broad and enriched curriculum which is relevant to the pupils' needs ;
- it has very good systems in place for assessing pupils' attainment and excellent record-keeping procedures for monitoring their progress;
- it provides high quality teaching and support which enables pupils to achieve well across all areas of their development;
- it provides very effectively for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and emotional development, with excellent provision for their welfare, health and safety;
- it ensures very good induction and professional development opportunities for staff; and
- it makes very good use of the accommodation to provide flexible facilities for teaching and learning

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- ensure that parents and other partners are provided with all the necessary items of information, as identified in section 6 of this report.

Next steps

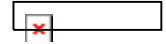


Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

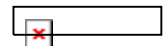
- review and develop information and communication technology (ICT) resources to meet more fully the learning needs of the pupils; and
- develop the range of practical activities provided to encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own work; and
- ensure the consistency of use in planning of the very good assessment procedures

throughout the school.

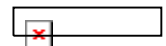
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



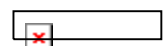
The quality of the curriculum is very good and integrates successfully the National Curriculum with individual care and behaviour plans for each pupil. Well-devised curriculum policies are implemented effectively and are supported by comprehensive schemes of work and detailed teaching plans. The school makes appropriate use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and other publications for other subjects. These are adapted skilfully by subject leaders to match pupils' individual requirements. Although staff plan creatively for ICT and its use across the curriculum, the school is aware of the limitations of existing resources.

The curriculum is very well organised. There is appropriate emphasis on pupils developing a breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding, including taking responsibility for their own behaviour and raising awareness of the needs of others. This focus on social awareness and skills begins as soon as pupils start at the school. The curriculum is designed effectively to suit the needs of pupils transferring at different times throughout the year and offers them a range of relevant experiences to help them learn and make progress. The requirements of their statements of special educational needs are incorporated successfully into the curriculum planning.

The curriculum is enriched by a number of themed days, such as the recent World Book Day when pupils and staff dressed as their favourite story-book character. Full use is made of specialist staff to provide weekly music and drama sessions, and representatives of Bolton Wanderers football club lead regular training sessions at the school. The school is creative in the way it organises the interesting programme of extra-curricular activities at break-times. These include football, badminton and guitar sessions, with the gardening club re-starting soon. Pupils make educational visits to places of interest, for example Wigan Pier, giving them a range of high quality experiences across many curriculum areas.

Pupils are prepared very effectively for adult life through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. These are complemented by the excellent social, emotional and behavioural programmes, which are integrated into the wider curriculum.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



well and have established strong relationships which support pupils, especially when they are experiencing particular difficulties. There are very effective systems in place to motivate and encourage pupils to work hard and improve their own performance including house-points, stickers, grades for achievement and targeted praise. Most pupils focus their attention for concentrated periods and appreciate the praise and rewards given. There are regular opportunities to share their achievements and to recognise how they can improve through the assembly at the end of every day.

Pupils have a varied educational programme which helps them to use their knowledge, to develop new skills and make good progress. The highly skilled staff work very effectively to provide a cohesive and consistent approach to teaching and the management of pupils' behavioural needs. The school benefits greatly from having two full-time care staff who complement the work of the teaching staff by providing specialist support. Pupils' behaviour is good. The very clear structure of the day and established routines provide pupils with security, order and consistency. This is evident in the daily session when pupils share their concerns and ask the group for advice on sorting out problems.

In the most successful lessons, pupils have a clear understanding of the aims of the lesson and expectations of their learning and behaviour. These lessons have good pace, build on prior learning and engage pupils in tasks which are interesting and motivating. Pupils are also given carefully planned, individual, short-term goals. In a Year 6 class observed, pupils were working on a science fiction text and writing for particular audiences. Supported by the teacher's very effective questioning, pupils discussed the structure of the text they had worked on the previous day and demonstrated a high level of recall and understanding. After further discussion, this highly motivated group went on to write the next section of their story.

In all classes, there is a wide range of abilities and often pupils of different ages, but teachers are adept in matching the lesson content and objectives to pupils' individual learning and behavioural needs. An example of this was observed in a Year 6 class where a science task was extended effectively to develop further a pupil's skills and confidence in alphabetical order. Once a group of living things had been classified into vertebrates and invertebrates, the appropriate challenge was to sort the lists alphabetically. This provided an effective spur to pupils' learning and engagement in the task.

Following the more structured nature of the morning sessions, the most successful afternoon lessons include opportunities for pupils to work on practical tasks where they have to make decisions. In an art lesson, pupils had to decide on the features of a chair to be designed and made for a specific character. The teacher provided appropriate guidance to support them in making their own sensible decisions.

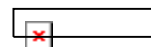
The very effective teamwork and the complementary way staff work together were demonstrated in a group session led by a skilled support assistant. She used the teacher's programme extremely well to develop pupils' personal and social education through an exciting and thought-provoking series of fast-paced activities which were enjoyed by all. This gave the teacher an opportunity to observe the pupils and assess their progress carefully.

The quality of assessment and record-keeping is very good. Staff make detailed regular assessments of each aspect of pupils' development to monitor their progress. The existing process is to be reviewed to ensure its continued effectiveness and consistency of use in planning by all staff. Assessments are recorded meticulously to provide an accurate, cohesive set of data which is shared with the professionals who work with the pupils and with their parents. The careful organisation of all assessments and records demonstrates clearly the interrelationship between pupils' social, emotional, behavioural and intellectual development. Parents are kept fully informed and are provided with regular updates on their children's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is enhanced by a very effective system of pastoral care which is overseen by the two experienced care staff, and through the well-structured programme of PSHE. Pupils are given opportunities to explore issues such as behaviour, relationships and feelings, as well as guidance on how to look after themselves and the environment. On admission, each pupil is allocated a key worker who acts as a mentor and liaises with parents and carers and other staff.

Religious education, art, music, history and geography lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about their own culture and the faiths, cultures and beliefs of others. Multicultural awareness is good, for example, the pupils in Year 6 have been looking at art from different cultures. The younger pupils have been studying life in an Indian village and comparing the school day of an Indian pupil with their own. The school prepares the pupils appropriately for life in a multicultural society. Lessons in citizenship provide pupils with a developing awareness and knowledge of public institutions and services. The school has recently held a World Book Day and other events to raise pupils' awareness of issues beyond the school.

The provision for pupils' moral development is supported effectively by the school's system of sanctions and rewards, which helps them to distinguish between right and wrong. A spirit of mutual respect exists between pupils and staff. Despite their difficulties, pupils' attitudes toward staff and visitors are generally good. Pupils are well aware of the problems they have with their behaviour and are able to discuss these in confidence with their key worker or a member of the care staff, who are readily available during the school day.

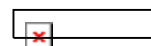
Provision for pupils' social development is promoted effectively through the taught curriculum and the good range of extra-curricular activities. These opportunities are provided for pupils to work co-operatively in groups within the school at break-times. Pupils are encouraged to take part in initiatives in the wider community including football competitions, shopping trips and fund-raising activities for charities as well as visits to historical sites and museums. Staff reported that some of the pupils gave their rewards for achievement to the tsunami disaster. Daily assemblies provide opportunities for sharing and celebrating pupils' successes.

Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through assemblies, which provide them with good opportunities to discuss topical issues and celebrate specific religious festivals. The assembly observed enabled the pupils to reflect on their behaviour and its impact on others and contained an effective act of collective worship.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is a major strength of the school. There is an extremely consistent and supportive approach to helping pupils overcome their difficulties within a safe and caring environment. This work is considerably enhanced by the care staff who complement

promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils both in school and when on visits. Staff prepare thorough risk assessments and activity forms for every visit. The head of care is the trained child protection officer and ensures that all adults are fully aware of the issues by sharing information, using the detailed school policy and building on the very good staff induction training. Staff also receive a range of opportunities for continuing professional development to enhance their expertise.

All staff have a First Aid qualification which is updated regularly. The school maintains thorough accident, incident and First Aid records as well as keeping information on particular health needs of pupils. There is a clear fire safety procedure in place which includes detailed risk assessments. A satisfactory report has been received from the fire officer. Regular fire drills are held and documented accurately. All fire appliances are checked annually and alarms and fire exits monitored weekly. The emergency fire exit points are clearly signposted.

Pupils are always properly supervised in the classrooms, at lunch and when using outdoor play areas. The school employs a range of supportive strategies to prevent bullying, including a contract with each pupil and guidance for them to use if they feel vulnerable. Full records are kept of sanctions, rewards and commendations, which are supported by the detailed behaviour management policy.

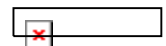
Attendance is satisfactory with few incidences of unauthorised absence. The school's admission register complies fully with the regulations.

The school has a satisfactory policy on disability and is accessible via ramps. There is appropriate washroom provision and plans for reorganising teaching rooms if required.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

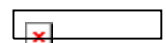


The school is owned by the Witherslack Group of Schools. There is a rigorous staff appointment process in place where staff have their professional expertise checked through evidence from previous employers, character references and professional qualifications. All staff complete a medical questionnaire and are checked to ensure their suitability to work with children.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The accommodation is very good. Despite being located in an old primary school, it has been adapted imaginatively and fully meets the needs of the pupils. The standard of decoration and general maintenance is very good and this makes it a very pleasant place in which pupils can learn and teachers can teach. The provision is further enhanced by the attractive displays of pupils' work in rooms and corridors. The upper floor of the building, in which the four classrooms are located, is

sufficiently wide to allow for pupils to pass each other in comfort. Washrooms are located on both floors and satisfy all requirements. There are separate facilities for staff.

Classrooms are appropriate in size when compared to the number of pupils who use them at any one time. They are bright, clean and cheerful places where pupils' work is celebrated. Elsewhere, the accommodation fully supports pupils' social development, for example, there is a well-equipped games room, a large hall and a number of outdoor play areas including a hard-surface area which is used for football and other sports. There are a number of grassed areas with benches and picnic tables and an adventure playground. The school has access, by arrangement, to the sports field at a local primary school.

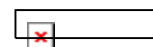
Specialist rooms include a refurbished kitchen, a large hall, a games room and an ICT suite which is used for a range of practical subjects, including design and technology and art. There is also a new medical room, which has shower and washroom facilities, and is suitable for nursing pupils who are ill. There is no library, but books are stored in classrooms and a temporary library area has been set up at both ends of the corridor outside the classrooms.

The outside of the building is in a good state of repair. The playground is separated from the car park with a fence so that pupils can play in safety from any traffic.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



Almost two-thirds of parents returned their completed questionnaire. They feel well informed about their children's progress and are comfortable about contacting the school.

Detailed information concerning each pupil is gathered before admission and following an initial settling in period an individual care and education plan is drawn up which includes behavioural and academic targets. These targets are shared with parents and carers and reviewed on a termly basis. The communication between school and home is very good. There are effective procedures for daily contact which keep parents and carers informed about their children's progress, and issues or difficulties that arise during the day are reported to them at an early stage. Parents receive more detailed information about their children's progress and development through the annual review and end-of-year reports. These reports are of good quality and reflect what pupils know, understand and can do, and how they have improved. This information is shared with those who work or are connected with the pupils.

The school's prospectus includes a handbook for parents and one for pupils. It gives parents and prospective partners a good deal of information about the care and education provided by the school. Although it meets many of the regulations, there are a few omissions. The handbook for parents does not include information about the child protection procedure, health and safety procedures or let parents know under what circumstances a pupil may be temporarily excluded from the school.

Whilst the recently revised complaints procedure meets requirements, the school does not provide parents with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

The school responds to requests from local authorities for information about the expenditure for each pupil. However, it does not routinely provide an account of income and expenditure to all

placing authorities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

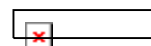
The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- o provide to parents and parents of prospective pupils particulars of the school's policy on exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e));
- o ensure that parents and other partners are made aware of policies relating to child protection, health and safety and that they are available on request (paragraph 6(2)(h));
- o make available details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)); and
- o submit to local authorities an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of pupils placed by them at the school (paragraph 6(7)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

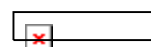


The procedures for handling complaints have been revised recently and are fully satisfactory. A simplified version is available for the pupils.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Westmorland School		
DfES ref number:	888/6048		
Type of school:	Primary Special		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 27,	Girls 4,	Total 31
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 27,	Girls 4,	Total 31
Annual fees (day pupils):	£26,154 - £48,558		
Address of school:	Weldbank Lane Chorley Lancashire PR7 3NQ		
E-mail address:	office@westmorlandschool.co.uk		

Telephone number: 01257 278899
Fax number: 01257 265505
Headteacher: Mr Martin Hayhurst
Proprietor: Mr James Bowers
Lead Inspector: Mrs Susan Wheeler HMI
Dates of inspection: 7 - 10 March 2005

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