

# Westmorland School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	6048
Unique Reference Number	132828
Inspection number	330045
Inspection dates	15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## Information about the school

Westmorland School was established in May 2000 and is an independent day special school for children with significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties aged from 5 to 11 years. It is located near the town centre in Chorley, Lancashire. The school is part of the Witherslack Group of independent special schools. The school is housed in a Victorian building, formerly a primary school owned by the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Pupils attend from a number of local education authorities in the North West region. All pupils are brought to school by transport provided by their local authority. There are 19 pupils on roll and each has a statement of special educational needs. Westmorland School seeks to '*develop the child's self-esteem, improve social skills and develop positive behaviours*', as well as '*encourage pupils to achieve their potential*'. The Witherslack group of school's vision statement is '*promoting resilience: developing independence*'. The school's vision statement is '*We learn to live together, together we live to learn*'. The school was previously inspected in March 2005.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided at Westmorland School is good with some areas which are outstanding. The quality of teaching and assessment are good and enable pupils to make good academic progress. The curriculum is outstanding, takes account of the National Curriculum and provides personalised programmes for individual pupils to enable them to make good academic progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and their behaviour is good. Arrangements for the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of pupils are outstanding. The school has a very caring ethos. Very good leadership has enabled the school to tackle successfully the areas for improvement identified by the last inspection. The school meets all the regulations.

## Quality of education

The quality of education provided is good and enables the pupils to make good academic progress. The outstanding curriculum is supported by clear policies and detailed planning based on the National Curriculum. There is a strong focus on the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy through the Primary Strategy. Every effort is made to plan activities which use skills learned in some subjects in other areas of the curriculum, for example, pupils use their mathematical and information and communication technology skills in science. There is a four-year rolling programme which is topic-based enabling cross-curricular teaching to take place. A major strength of the curriculum is the use of personalised learning programmes, particularly for those pupils below the expected levels of attainment, to ensure their individual needs are met. There are very good records of achievement which pupils value greatly. Each area of the curriculum has a subject leader who produces differentiated medium-term plans and monitors the curriculum closely. Some subjects have effective action plans to promote pupils' learning, following detailed curriculum audits.

A very good range of additional clubs takes place at lunchtimes which enrich the curriculum. These include badminton, drama, table tennis, guitar and recorder. Other extra-curricular activities include a two-day residential visit to the Lake District, geography and science fieldwork, history visits and opportunities to visit the theatre, which greatly enhance pupils' learning. There are very strong links with the local community and with other schools.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Evidence in lessons shows there are very good relationships between teachers and pupils. Consequently, there is a pleasant and purposeful working atmosphere where pupils feel confident to ask questions. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons progress at a brisk pace. Planning is thorough and a wide variety of activities are provided to address individual learning styles. In all lessons, teachers and teaching assistants ensure that learning is effective because of the good support they give to individual pupils. Each child has an individual care and education plan which is used well to identify and set targets for pupils. Pupils 'wear' these targets on a badge and are fully involved in setting them, which makes them more relevant and achievable. Clear learning objectives are shared with pupils so they know what they are expected to learn. Marking and feedback indicates how well pupils have met the learning objectives and often includes comments on how work can be improved. The headteacher and senior leaders monitor classroom practice regularly and good practice is shared amongst staff. The school is in the process of improving assessment procedures to help learning become more relevant for pupils.

Teachers assess pupils' learning in a variety of ways. Small class sizes ensure that teachers get to know individuals well and can plan accordingly to meet their individual needs. Pupils are assessed on entry to the school and the progress of each pupil is tracked on an individual basis. However, although much improved, systems for monitoring these results do not yet make best use of this information for analysing progress over time across the whole school.

Pupils make good progress overall. They make better progress in mathematics and science than in English, but the school is taking appropriate steps to address this by introducing a variety of new strategies. Regular reports to parents and carers give good detail on each pupil's academic achievements and personal development.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. There is a relaxed, friendly environment which enables pupils to feel accepted. Highly effective teamwork between care and education staff contributes greatly to the outstanding personal development of pupils. Pupils' behaviour is good because of the excellent support they receive from both care and teaching staff to manage their significant behavioural and emotional difficulties. Pupils are polite and courteous towards visitors and display very positive attitudes to their work. Pupils appreciate the system of rewards which acknowledge effort and achievement, including certificates, vouchers to spend and house points. Appropriate behaviour is reinforced by staff providing good role models and treating pupils with respect. Pupils develop their self-confidence and understanding of others by participating in drama, including performances such as a play based on the story of the 'Ugly Duckling' entitled 'There's no-one quite like me'.

Most pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and moral issues are discussed in assemblies and through the personal, social and health education curriculum. The school follow the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme which contributes greatly towards pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils' spiritual awareness is promoted through opportunities for prayer in assemblies and through learning about world religions. Pupils are keen to learn about the customs, values and beliefs of those from other cultures and their involvement in World Education Week and sponsoring a child in West Africa help to promote racial harmony and tolerance. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously as members of the school council and 'Eco' council and enjoy taking part in fundraising activities for charity. Pupils develop their skills effectively for their future lives through developing their basic skills, confidence and self-esteem, particularly through participating in an annual 'Business Awareness Challenge' entitled 'Hamster's Den' and through growing their own flowers, fruit and vegetables in the school grounds. They learn about future possibilities for employment through a variety of guest speakers. Recent visitors include the police, fire service and a paralympic athlete. The attendance of the majority of pupils is very good. Parents have very positive views of the school and are very appreciative of the high level of support and care provided for their children.

## Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Staff have been trained and two members of staff have received enhanced training. Very thorough checks are completed prior to the appointment of new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Detailed and comprehensive policies are in place for all aspects

of health and safety, child protection, first aid and fire safety in addition to appropriate risk assessments which cover all aspects of the school's work. Fire drills are held regularly and all fire-fighting equipment is checked by a specialist company. The building and grounds are exceptionally well cared for and create a very pleasant and safe environment for pupils. Staff are appropriately trained and well aware of procedures in a number of areas including first aid, working safely, food hygiene, fire safety and 'Team Teach' procedures. There are extremely rigorous and detailed records in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils are closely monitored and information is shared with parents and carers to promote continuity of care between home and school. Staff are very vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety around the school and there are high levels of staffing in each classroom. The school has excellent working relationships with a wide variety of other agencies, including an educational psychologist, psychotherapist and speech and language therapist to ensure that the specific needs of pupils are met.

Pupils are very aware of how to live healthy lifestyles. Lunch menus are designed to give pupils a healthy, balanced diet and pupils are encouraged to eat fruit at break times. Dental inspections and eye tests are carried out at regular intervals and improvements in oral hygiene have been reported. There are opportunities for counselling sessions at lunchtime, twice weekly. Pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of physical education activities including swimming, badminton, trampolining and football. Pupils are also involved in a 'Bikeability' programme led by a member of staff. The school achieved Healthy School status in April 2008.

The school has planned well to increase accessibility to its current premises and the curriculum, fulfilling its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- Improve the use of whole-school data on pupil progress to inform school priorities.

# Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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## The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

## Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils		√		

## Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	√			
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## School details

Name of school	Westmorland School		
DCSF number	6048		
Unique reference number	132828		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent day special		
Date school opened	May 2000		
Age range of pupils	5-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 18	Girls: 1	Total: 19
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 18	Girls: 1	Total: 19
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,625 - £48,036		
Address of school	Weldbank Lane Chorley Lancashire PR7 3NQ		
Telephone number	0125 7278899		
Fax number	0125 7265505		
Email address	sasher@westmorlandschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Asher		
Proprietor	Mr James Bowers		
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI		
Dates of inspection	15 October 2008		