

Wakefield Independent School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	384/6116
Unique Reference Number	108307
Inspection number	331360
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

Information about the school

Wakefield Independent School is a non-selective, Church of England, co-educational school providing Early Years Foundation Stage, primary and secondary education for pupils aged 3-16. The school's stated aim is to bring out the very best in pupils and provide a sound education based on a well-balanced curriculum. The school sees the importance of a nurturing ethos to foster pupils' emotional wellbeing as essential to the development of well-rounded individuals.

Although some pupils remain at the school for their entire education up to the age of sixteen many pupils leave and join the school at different stages of their schooling. Over the previous two academic years there has been a significant change in the population with up to a third of pupils leaving or joining the school. The abilities of pupils are wide and varied. Approximately one tenth of pupils have a learning difficulty and/or disability, including one pupil with a statement of special educational need. Almost all pupils are White British, with a very small number from minority ethnic groups and few who do not have English as their principal language.

The school is housed in three relatively close buildings within the Nostell Priory Estate, although separated by a road. The three buildings form the bases for the three phases of education in the school. They are: -'The Rectory' (Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1-4); Wragby (Years 5-8) and 'The Nostell Centre' (Years 9-11). The school was previously inspected in November 2006 and the most recent inspection of Early Years Foundation Stage provision was in March 2005.

¹ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

Wakefield Independent School successfully meets its aims. It provides a good quality of education for its pupils. As a result of the strong nurturing environment, the good curriculum and effective teaching, pupils make good progress overall from their individual starting points. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as is pupils' behaviour. The school now meets more of the regulations for independent schools than at the time of the previous inspection but there remain areas of non compliance.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good overall because individuals are well cared for and effectively supported in a nurturing 'family' environment. The good curriculum has a clear focus on developing the basic skills of English, mathematics and science with particular strengths in the provision for developing public speaking skills. It is broad and balanced and reflects all subjects of the National Curriculum. There are appropriate subject policies and schemes of work in place and teachers endeavour to select activities to interest pupils. For example, in a Year 6 design and technology lesson pupils were very keen to complete the name plates that they had designed. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed appropriately but the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is underdeveloped. Pupils are enthusiastic about sport and music and are justifiably proud of the school rock band and the concerts that have been performed for parents.

Pupils say that they appreciate and enjoy the good range of after-school and lunchtime clubs such as sports clubs providing golf, football and athletics for example. All pupils are able to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and have the opportunity to train as sports leaders. Visits are a particular strength and good use is made of the school's minibus to facilitate trips to local places of interest such as outdoor education centres, as well as further afield to London and the Fulham football ground.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. However, there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school and some is no better than satisfactory. There are some pockets of particularly good practice which is effective at securing good progress for all levels of ability within a group. For example in design and technology lessons pupils are routinely expected to set themselves targets for their work within the available time and these are always reviewed by the pupil and the teacher. In some lessons, pupils are told explicitly what they are expected to know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson and the teachers' marking criteria are made clear ensuring that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. However, these practices are not found consistently across the school.

Teachers and support staff know pupils well and establish good relationships. While clear routines and expectations are a strong feature in most classrooms and effectively contributes to pupils' learning, this is not an established feature in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching builds on pupils' previous learning and often enables them to apply and extend their understanding and skills successfully. The impact of the small class sizes is such that each pupil benefits from the individual attention that is provided. Pupils value this and are not afraid to ask for additional help; they report that it helps them to make good progress with their work.

Teachers mark pupils work regularly: mostly indicating by ticks when pupils are being successful in their learning. Comments are positive and encouraging; this is particularly effective where the next steps are identified to help pupils produce better quality work in the future. Pupils' progress during their time at the school is good overall, but this varies from year to year and between subjects. By the time they leave the school pupils reach broadly average standards overall. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C in both English and mathematics is usually above average. Since the previous inspection, a structured system of regular assessments to track the progress of pupils has been introduced. This is now being used more effectively to identify any pupils who are not making the expected progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As a direct result of the nurturing 'family' environment pupils develop greatly in their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is evident in the exemplary behaviour of almost all pupils in lessons and around the school. Pupils, in particular in the senior school, are respectful of each other, of the school staff and visitors. They learn to distinguish right from wrong through their daily routines, the curriculum and through assemblies. They are encouraged to think about current affairs and topical issues such as immigration and the right of settlement in citizenship lessons. Pupils' attendance is very good; they enjoy coming to school and have a very positive attitude to their learning. In lessons they are well motivated and keen to learn. Many talked enthusiastically about their enjoyment of lessons particularly the good relationships with the staff. This is a strength of the school as it enables pupils to experience a supportive learning environment where they feel safe to ask questions and learn. They feel well supported and say they feel they have good opportunities to develop their skills and talents. Pupils co-operate very well in lessons and are keen to help the teachers to hand out books or tidy up. Pupils who are new to the school say that they are made to feel very welcome and they find the support of a 'buddy' pupil helps them settle very quickly.

As well as contributing very well to the school community pupils have strong links with the local church and a local care home. They raise money for charities such as the NSPCC and Guide Dogs for the Blind. They are keen to take on responsibility and volunteer for roles as monitors and prefects. Most pupils are confident speakers and this contributes greatly to their personal development and enables them to

participate articulately in discussions in lessons. One pupil took the initiative to ask if the school could apply for 'Healthy Schools' status and is being supported to pursue this by first of all talking with the catering team. Others volunteer to write articles for the school magazine. Pupils gain a secure knowledge of English public institutions and services through history, geography and citizenship lessons; this is strengthened by visiting speakers and trips to parliament, army bases and navy vessels for example. Pupils acquire a good understanding of their own and other cultures, which was supported by a very successful International Week that gave pupils experience of other cultures through a range of interesting activities.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Effective procedures are in place to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety, which are good overall. Pupils say that they feel safe and very well cared for; they are very confident that any concerns they have are listened to and that if bullying were to occur it would be dealt with swiftly. Satisfactory routines and practices are in place to ensure that pupils are supervised across the extensive site. An appropriate number of staff hold first aid qualifications and update them regularly. The school has satisfactory risk assessment procedures for a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities including off-site visits. There is an appropriate policy in place for child protection and there is a designated member of staff identified for the purposes of child protection. However, the required training for this role has not been undertaken. The school is committed to ensuring that the relevant action will be taken to redress this area of non-compliance. Pupils know the importance of regular physical exercise and a healthy diet. The school's code of conduct is well understood and ensures that pupils' behaviour is exemplary; if any sanctions are used to check the behaviour of pupils this is recorded appropriately. Arrangements for the registration of admissions and attendance are good. Although the school is aware of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, it has not produced a detailed written plan that shows how it will fulfil its obligations.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Effective safeguards are in place to ensure that pupils do not encounter unsuitable adults. Prior to appointment appropriate checks are made and records are kept in an electronic form to provide a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school has appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of pupils in its three buildings and temporary modular buildings. Outside, a suitable hard-surfaced area and extensive grassed areas are used well for outdoor physical education lessons, sporting events and playtimes. However, there are limited facilities for indoor sport, with changing and showering facilities only available on the Rectory site. Although the accommodation is satisfactory and some progress has been made in addressing areas of non compliance since the previous inspection, there remain some

weaknesses. There have been detailed plans drawn up and approved to provide additional rooms in the Nostell building which would have dealt fully with these weaknesses. However, this building work has not yet taken place. One previously non compliant area has been addressed by careful timetabling to limit the size of groups using the specialist rooms to ten pupils for practical work. The school does not provide a dedicated room for the care of pupils who are ill which meets the required regulations for the age of pupils. Within the Wragby building there remain too few toilets for the number of pupils who use the building and pupils in this building have commented that they are unhappy with the available facilities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school website has recently been updated and now provides adequate information for parents and prospective parents about the school, the curriculum, and the policies. It meets the regulations and the school prospectus is in the process of being rewritten. Parents receive an annual report about pupil progress and attainment in addition to mid-term effort checks.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear procedure for handling complaints that meets the regulations. However, a small number of parents reported in the questionnaire responses that they were unaware of this procedure.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children join the school with skills that are broadly in line with the expectations for their age. Learning and development opportunities in both the Nursery and Reception are satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress overall, so that they begin Year 1 working at broadly average levels. This varies from year to year, and last year the majority of pupils had attained levels above those normally found. Children's personal development is satisfactory. They are happy, enjoy the company of their peers and generally behave appropriately. Some of the routines within this area of the school are relatively new and consequently, some children are not clear about the expectations of the adults and their opportunities to work independently are underdeveloped. Relationships are warm and the welfare of the children is promoted adequately. The outdoor area has recently been improved through the addition of a covered area. However, daily opportunities to learn outdoors are limited. The recently appointed leader provides satisfactory leadership and management and is keen to bring about improvements. For example, he is keen to improve procedures for assessment and to use the information fully to match activities to what individual children need to learn next. He has yet to produce an overview of the progress children are making and to share this with the next class teacher.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below (*delete if not applicable*)

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- ensure that there are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- ensure that there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended (DDA) the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- establish routines throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage so that expectations are clear to all children
- improve the use of the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- improve the use of ICT across the school and in all subjects

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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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?			✓	
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?			✓	
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?			✓	
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?			✓	
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?			✓	
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?			✓	

School details

Name of school	Wakefield Independent School		
DCSF number	384/6116		
Unique reference number	108307		
Type of school	Day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1980		
Age range of pupils	3–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 93	Girls: 93	Total: 186
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 5	Total: 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees	£4,452 - £6,183		
Address of school	Nostell Centre Doncaster Road Nostell Wakefield West Yorkshire WF4 1QG		
Telephone number	01924865757		
Fax number	01924865757		
Email address	headatwis@fsmail.net		
Headteacher	Mrs K Caryl		
Proprietor	Wakefield Independent School Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali HMI		
Dates of inspection	29–30 April 2009		