

Inspection of Wolfdale School

Cropston Road, Anstey, Leicester, Leicestershire, Leicestershire LE7 7BP

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **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 enjoy small group and one-to-one teaching. Leaders plan learning pathways that are purposeful and interesting for pupils. Learning is designed to match pupils' individual needs. Pupils take part in activities in the local community. They learn essential skills to prepare them for life beyond school.

Consistent routines throughout the school day help pupils to feel safe. Staff help pupils to overcome barriers to learning. They help them to develop independence and become resilient. Pupils appreciate the support staff provide. They develop trusting relationships. School is a calm environment. Staff help pupils to manage their behaviour and to understand their emotions. Pupils know they can talk to staff about their worries. Staff swiftly deal with any instances of bullying.

Pupils are mostly positive about the school. They relish the opportunity to spend time with Harley, the therapy dog. They enjoy taking Harley for walks, and in participating in organised trips, cooking meals and holding class debates.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. One parent, whose comments were typical of many, said, 'Wolfdale School has made a huge difference to our family. Our child has made positive relationships with staff. They are always available to discuss any issues. They are approachable, professional and friendly.'

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

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum. They provide educational opportunities that interest pupils and encourage them to succeed. Pupils gain in confidence. Staff teach key knowledge and skills using creative approaches. They make sure that pupils practise and apply essential English and mathematical knowledge. Pupils use this knowledge in subjects such as construction, mechanics and history.

The curriculum is ambitious. Topics of learning link across different subjects. Pupils make connections in their learning. Each pupil follows a personalised curriculum pathway. The pathways support pupils' academic, vocational, therapeutic and personal development needs. Yet, in some subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. This includes subjects such as 'STEAM' (a curriculum that combines learning from other subjects, including science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics).

Teachers assess pupils' individual needs. They identify what pupils know already when they start at the school. They link pupils' targets to the outcomes in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They use strategies such as questioning and playing games to check what pupils know and can remember. They get to know pupils well. These techniques also help to keep pupils interested and engaged in their learning.

Pupils read frequently and at every opportunity. For example, when out in the community, pupils read signs, menus and bus timetables. In lessons, overarching enquiry questions are linked to a text that pupils share in class. Pupils who struggle to read receive support to develop their skills. They use phonics to read unfamiliar words. Trained staff deliver bespoke phonics lessons for pupils. The books pupils read match the sounds they know. Pupils read with enjoyment. They discuss the books they are reading with enthusiasm.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school. The values of tolerance, perseverance, respect and listening to others underpin the ethos and curriculum. Developing pupils' life skills is a high priority. Staff prepare pupils for their next steps in life. Pupils increasingly take responsibility for aspects of their own life. Staff support them to be responsible citizens. There is a wide variety of events that help to enrich the curriculum. Pupils organise charity events. They take part in fundraising activities in the local community. They learn about equality and diversity. Pupils discuss and debate. They have an age-appropriate understanding of relationships, sex and health education. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The proprietor has a suitable programme in place to teach pupils about their options for future careers. Pupils receive independent advice and guidance about further education, employment and training.

Most pupils improve their attendance and behaviour as they settle into school. Leaders work with parents to help pupils to attend. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Skilled staff support pupils well. Pupils understand the expectations for their behaviour. When necessary, pupils have extra help for their mental health and well-being. Leaders take advice from external professionals to support pupils. Detailed records of behaviour are in place. However, records do not always contain assessments of the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' behaviour.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They receive support from leaders to manage their workload. Leaders are mindful of the well-being of staff. Those who are new to the school appreciate the training and coaching they receive.

The proprietor works with senior leaders to check the quality of education for pupils. They use the advice of an external school improvement officer to help them to improve the provision. Together, they ensure that the school meets the independent school standards. There are suitable medical rooms for pupils who may potentially fall ill. Drinking water is available and toilets and urinals have water and washing facilities. The hot water does not pose a risk of scalding. The proprietor insists that leaders carry out regular health-and-safety checks. These include electrical testing, fire safety and fire-evacuation practices. These checks help to make sure that the school buildings are safe. School policies and procedures reflect the latest statutory guidance.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school has a safeguarding policy. It meets current requirements. It is available for parents to download from the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The proprietor completes the necessary checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. There is a culture of vigilance and nurture. Staff receive relevant safeguarding training. They know what to do if they have concerns about pupils' well-being. Leaders and staff know pupils well. They communicate relevant information effectively, including with external agencies when needed.

Records for safeguarding are detailed. However, leaders do not consistently record the impact of their actions to support pupils. This makes it difficult for the proprietor to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions to support pupils and to help keep them safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear that leaders have already taken action to plan next year's curriculum and to train staff in how to deliver it. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- In some subjects, leaders have not identified well enough the key knowledge that underpins the skills teachers want pupils to use. It is unclear how pupils build this knowledge over time. Leaders must ensure that teachers know the knowledge that they want pupils to learn in each subject and when.
- Records for the logging of safeguarding concerns and incidents of poor behaviour are detailed. However, leaders do not always record the impact of their actions to safeguard pupils and support their poor behaviour. This makes it difficult for the proprietor to analyse incidents and concerns in order to check the effectiveness of leaders' actions. Leaders should ensure that the proprietor has the necessary information to be able to evaluate fully the effectiveness of the school's procedures to keep pupils safe, so enabling them to provide leaders with the appropriate challenge and support.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	142659
DfE registration number	855/6036
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10210453
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	34
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Gemma Thompson and Antony Blanchard
Headteacher	Sachin Dogra
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,500 to £64,000
Telephone number	01162 355600
Website	wolfdaleschool.leics.sch.uk
Email address	office@wolfdaleschool.leics.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 to 14 September 2017

Information about this school

- The school received a material change inspection in September 2019. The proposed changes were to increase the school's capacity from 40 to 70 pupils and to introduce new premises for 20 of these pupils. During the inspection, inspectors found a number of the independent school standards to be not met. The Department for Education (DfE) did not approve the material change.
- Following the material change inspection, the DfE required the school to prepare an action plan. Ofsted evaluated the action plan in January 2020. The DfE judged the plan to be acceptable.
- A progress monitoring inspection took place in December 2020 to check the progress the school had made in meeting the independent school standards judged to be unmet at the material change inspection in September 2019. The school met the standards that were checked during this monitoring inspection.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school is operating from a second site in addition to its registered premises. The address of this second site is 10–12 Victoria Road North, Leicester LE4 5EX.
- The school uses a third site located at Lodge Farm, Broad Lane, Markfield LE67 9BT. Currently, this site is used solely for vocational studies. In the near future, the proprietor proposes to use this site for full-time education. The inspector identified some concerns regarding this site which the proprietor put right during the inspection. The proprietor has plans to complete further building work to the premises. When completed, the site is likely to meet Part 5 of the independent school standards.
- A new deputy headteacher was appointed in October 2019.
- Since the last standard inspection, several members of staff have left the school and new staff have been recruited.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and leaders for the curriculum, health and safety, inclusion and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading, English, the STEAM curriculum and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans for these subjects, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at planning for other subjects, such as mathematics, and looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors discussed the school's approach to safeguarding pupils with leaders and checked the single central record. Inspectors reviewed records related to safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including those relating to the school's policies and procedures, school improvement, curriculum plans, information about attendance and behaviour and examples of pupils' EHC plans. The lead inspector toured the school premises. The responses to Ofsted's parents', staff's and pupils' surveys were considered.

The school's proposed change to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll to 45.

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.**
- The independent school standards in Part 3 that relate to safeguarding, health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment are likely to be met should the DfE approve the material change application. The same policies and procedures will apply. The proprietor has effective arrangements in place to identify and manage any safeguarding concerns. Leaders promptly address any health and safety issues. There is an appropriate risk assessment policy for the school. Risk assessments identify potential risks and strategies to mitigate against them. Suitable measures are put in place to keep pupils safe.
- Part 4 of the independent school standards is likely to be met. The proprietor ensures that the necessary checks are carried out on staff. Leaders keep a single central record to record the checks carried out on staff and the proprietor. New staff appointed to the school undergo the same safer recruitment procedures.
- Part 5 of the independent school standards is likely to be met. The proprietor has ensured that the school can accommodate the proposed increase in pupils across the existing two school sites without detriment to the existing pupils. The

proprietor does not propose to use an additional site to accommodate the increase in pupils.

- The independent school standard that relates to the supervision of pupils is likely to be met. The proprietor proposes to recruit new staff to provide the appropriate levels of adult support and supervision.
- Parts 6 of the independent school standards is 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.
- Part 8 of the independent school standards is likely to be met. This is because leaders have ensured that all standards are met currently. The same systems, policies and procedures will apply if the material change is approved by the DfE.

Information about the material change inspection

- The lead inspector met with the proprietor, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the health and safety manager and leaders for safeguarding. She toured both school sites with the headteacher and the proprietor.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and health and safety.

The lead inspector checked the school's single central record and recruitment procedures.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector
Janis Warren

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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