

# Wakefield Independent School

Nostell Centre, Doncaster Road, Nostell, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 1QG

## Inspection dates

5–7 February 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The strong ethos of equality and inclusion shines as a beacon in the school. Leaders celebrate pupils' uniqueness and value the individual skills and attributes that pupils bring to the school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong partnership. They know the pupils exceptionally well and are very perceptive of pupils' needs.
- Development plans are very detailed. However, they are not linked sharply enough to the improvements desired in pupils' outcomes for them to be evaluated accurately.
- The very strong personal and social curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- Governors are committed to the school. They ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable and uses her skills effectively to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in the early years is good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to plan activities that build pupils' knowledge and skills effectively. Occasionally, some activities lack challenge, and teachers' questions fail to probe pupils' thinking sufficiently. This is particularly so for the most able pupils.
- Leaders ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points and leave school ready for the next stage of their education. However, fewer pupils reach the higher standards of attainment, of which they are capable.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and well-mannered. They show the utmost respect for themselves and others.
- Leaders have introduced a new system for tracking pupils' assessment information, which is proving to be a useful tool. However, it does not extend to all subjects and all year groups. Occasionally, some of the targets set for pupils' attainment are not wholly reflective of pupils' abilities.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that:
  - activities planned are challenging enough to enable pupils, particularly the most able, to reach the higher standards they are capable of
  - teachers' questioning is probing enough to extend and challenge pupils' thinking.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - refining assessment procedures across all subjects and in all key stages so that pupils' targets reflect their abilities
  - ensuring that actions in the school's development plans are linked closely to gains in pupils' outcomes so that their effect can be easily evaluated.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have ensured that the school continues to meet the independent school standards consistently.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a longstanding productive partnership. They epitomise the strong ethos of inclusivity and tolerance that pervades the school. Their strong commitment to valuing pupils as individuals shines through all they do.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders are committed to providing pupils with a wide selection of options at the end of Year 9 that reflect the English Baccalaureate. The curriculum is supplemented and enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities and experiences. This enables pupils to transfer seamlessly into the next stage of their education with a suite of qualifications and skills that leaves all doors open to them.
- Schemes of work reflect the national curriculum and itemise the knowledge and skills to be taught within each year group. They make the necessary reference to syllabus requirements where applicable.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have developed an assessment system that tracks pupils' attainment throughout the year in English, mathematics and science. Leaders use this information to set targets for pupils' achievement. Such information is welcomed by parents, carers and pupils alike. However, targets reflect a minimum expectation of all pupils and are not reflective of pupils' individual abilities.
- For pupils in Years 10 and 11, their assessment information is presented for all subjects and in graphical form. This is proving a useful and motivational tool that enables pupils to visualise their progress towards their targets. It is the leaders' intention to extend this process to subjects in all year groups.
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate mechanisms for staff appraisal are in place. Appraisal is supported by a strong commitment to ongoing training and support. As a result, staff feel very much valued and morale is exceptionally high.
- Leaders retain a strong commitment to excellence and have a clear plan for improvement. While their plans contain much detail, they are not linked closely to the gains in pupils' outcomes that they wish to see. This makes it difficult to evaluate the effect of leaders' actions accurately.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works diligently to ensure that all individual pupils' support plans and reports are completed and reviewed in a timely manner. She carefully monitors the assessment information of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to ensure that they make good progress. Her role does not, however, extend to quality assuring teaching and learning.

### Governance

- Governors have an enduring commitment to inclusion and to ensuring that there will be no ceiling placed upon pupils' aspirations for the future.

- Since the previous inspection, governors have increased their visits to the school. They now meet with leaders every two weeks to ensure that they have a good understanding of where the school excels and what needs to improve further. They ensure that meetings are highly focused, and that safeguarding is a standing agenda item.
- Records of governors' meetings reflect the level of challenge and support afforded to school leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All appropriate checks are completed on staff working at the school to ensure that they are fit to do so. Such checks are recorded centrally; some administrative omissions were righted during the inspection.
- Staff receive regular training and updates to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Staff know their pupils well and are quick to notice any changes in pupils' behaviour or demeanour. Those staff spoken with during the inspection were able to explain the process that they must follow to report any concerns that they may have.
- The designated safeguarding officer is vigilant in her actions. She uses the advice and support from a raft of other agencies to ensure that pupils receive appropriate and timely support.
- The most recent safeguarding policy was uploaded to the website during the inspection. It considers current government requirements.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teachers in all key stages expect pupils to take pride in themselves and their work. As a result, pupils display very positive attitudes to their learning, wear their uniforms with pride and ensure that their work is presented to a high standard.
- Exceptionally positive and nurturing relationships are the hallmark of the school. Teachers expect pupils to work collaboratively and to be respectful of others. Pupils benefit from this greatly and, in turn, their lessons are calm and purposeful.
- The teaching of reading is very effective. Pupils can interpret meaning and use punctuation to determine tone. Teachers ensure that by the time they leave key stage 2, pupils are confident to read a range of texts with expression, confidence and comprehension.
- The teaching of phonics is equally effective. It enables the very youngest children to make speedy progress in acquiring their early literacy skills of reading and writing, which they can apply confidently.
- Teachers ensure that their lessons are well resourced. Such resources are used effectively to support pupils' learning. Occasionally, when specialist equipment is required, teachers use facilities in other schools to supplement their offer.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use this to plan activities that build knowledge and skills progressively within individual lessons and within a series of lessons. Occasionally, pupils, particularly the most able, are asked to complete work that is not

demanding enough before moving on to more challenging work. When this happens, pupils' progress slows.

- Teachers use questioning to check pupils' understanding and to iron out misconceptions effectively. At times, teachers use questions to extend and probe pupils' thinking towards examination requirements and to secure deeper meaning. For example, in a Year 9 physical education (PE) lesson, the teacher used focused questions to probe pupils' existing knowledge of the effect of exercise on different muscle groups. He then extended pupils' thinking further by linking this knowledge to Year 11 examination requirements. While this was a powerful example of skilful questioning, this is not widespread across all subjects, particularly for challenging the most able pupils.
- New assessment systems to set pupils targets for their end of year achievement, and to monitor pupils' ongoing attainment, are enabling leaders and teachers to ensure that pupils make good progress. Any dip in pupils' performance is identified and additional support and intervention is used to help pupils to catch up quickly. While this is a useful tool, the targets set for achievement reflect a minimum expectation. Targets are not linked sharply to pupils' abilities, nor is the system embedded for all subjects and in all year groups.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

## **Outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Very positive relationships in every phase of the school underpin the strong sense of belonging that is tangible. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well and pupils are valued for the unique individuals they are. As one pupil told inspectors, 'Teachers let us be who we are!'
- Both the older and younger pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. A range of assemblies, bespoke lessons and regular reminders ensure that advice and support remain current and relevant. As a result, pupils understand the preventative actions that they must take to keep themselves safe and how to report any concerns. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors expressed great confidence that should an incident occur, they would be well supported by any adult in the school.
- There is a strong commitment to supporting pupils' emotional well-being. A dedicated member of staff gives generously of her time to support pupils in their time of need. This level of generosity is shared among all staff. Such high levels of care are best exemplified by a pupil, who informed the inspectors that 'I sometimes feel anxious and in my previous school they didn't care, but everyone is bothered about me here!' Consequently, all pupils, and especially the most vulnerable pupils, thrive in this setting.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' careers advice is impartial and timely. A range of professionals and entrepreneurs are used to broaden pupils' horizons and to enable pupils to have a clear understanding of the many options open to them when they leave school. This enables pupils to choose their examination options carefully. As a result, all pupils transfer on to further education courses when they leave the school.

- Pupils receive appropriate advice and support for keeping themselves mentally and physically fit and healthy. Staff access a range of training and support to help them in their role. The PE leader ensures that this aspect of personal development forms an intrinsic aspect of all PE lessons.
- Pupils initiate a range of fundraising events to support charitable causes. Some are local, and others more nationally known, but all have great meaning to the pupils and to the staff of the school. This gives pupils a deep understanding of community, and the important role they play within that.
- A strong ethos, a raft of extra-curricular activities and enhancing visits support the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development expertly.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils conduct themselves maturely in all phases of the school. They demonstrate great respect for adults and others. They are polite in their interactions and readily hold doors open and offer warm and welcoming smiles to others and visitors.
- Leaders have established a very effective behaviour management policy that is known by all pupils and staff. There are rarely any sanctions imposed. When they are, it is for very low-level incidents, following which pupils are suitably reflective and remorseful.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. They are very supportive of each other and are proud of their own and others' successes. Pupils take pride in their work and are well organised and well prepared for their learning.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. Leaders analyse pupils' absence rates and ensure that anyone away from school is accounted for to ensure that they are safe. All absences are followed up immediately and coded accurately.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- In 2017 and 2018, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11 compared favourably to the proportions of pupils nationally attaining grade 5 and above and grade 7 and above at GCSE level. This represents good progress over time from pupils' starting points.
- Over the same period, a higher proportion of pupils entered and achieved the English Baccalaureate than that seen nationally. This is reflective of the leaders' commitment to provide pupils with a well-rounded suite of examinations by the time they leave the school.
- All pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 11 go on to further education.
- Primary pupils are assessed against the national curriculum age-related expectations. Recent improvements to the management of pupils' assessment information is enabling leaders to check pupils' progress towards these expectations more easily. Should it look as though a pupil's progress is faltering, additional support and intervention is provided to ensure that they catch up quickly in their learning. As a result, current pupils' progress is good and most pupils in all year groups are already on track to reach national curriculum age-related expectations by the end of the school year.

- In 2018, a whole-school review of pupils' assessment information indicated that pupils' attainment in English was lower than that seen in other subjects. Leaders have acted to remedy this. In the secondary phase, timetabling adjustments have increased pupils' subject time to enable them to manage course requirements more easily. In both the primary and secondary phases, adjustments to the teaching of reading, spelling, handwriting and grammar are supporting improvements in these areas. An extensive review of pupils' work in all year groups indicates that leaders' actions are ensuring that pupils are making good progress overall. However, fewer pupils are working at the higher standards that they are capable of.
- In the secondary phase, pupils are make good progress overall. However, in different subjects, there is variability in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades. Some of the variability can be accounted for in the changes to course requirements, but in some subjects, activities planned do not challenge pupils to think hard about their learning and are not demanding enough, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their various starting points. Teachers identify their needs accurately and an appropriate range of support and advice is put in place to ensure that they make good progress. Individual support plans reflect both longer- and shorter-term actions and are reviewed regularly for their appropriateness. Due to the small numbers of pupils with SEND, any year-on-year comparisons of their outcomes are unsound.
- Younger pupils make good progress in acquiring their phonics knowledge and skills securely. The Year 1 phonics screening check is not accessed by pupils, but requirements within the check are used as a reference for phonics teaching.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Leaders have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards in relation to the early years provision effectively.
- The quality of teaching is effective. This is because teachers have a good understanding of how young children learn and develop. Relationships are caring and nurturing, which means that children are very settled, exceptionally happy and confident in school.
- Children enter Nursery with skills that are slightly above those that would be typically expected for their age and stage of development. Teachers plan activities that engage and interest children to enable them to make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers are very skilled in the teaching of phonics. The very youngest children get off to a great start with their early reading skills, which they acquire quickly and securely.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable and is ensuring that there are high levels of consistency between Nursery and Reception classes. She checks the quality of the provision regularly and has created a very clear plan of action to improve this further.
- Because of leaders' actions, parents are becoming increasingly involved in their child's learning. An online assessment tool is used to capture children's seminal moments of learning, which can be easily accessible for parents to view and to contribute. However, a review of this tool indicated that there were few parental contributions captured.

- Staff in the early years have created an enabling environment where young children thrive. Routines are very well established, and children are very respectful of their resources and of others. Occasionally, in planned activities, the staff are too controlling, and this inhibits the development of children's curiosity and independence, particularly the most able children who are capable of more.
- Assessments are accurate and are recorded regularly to ensure that children make good progress. A review of the children's learning journals endorses this. However, assessment commentaries are too descriptive rather than evaluative, and staff do not use assessment opportunities to reflect on several areas of learning at one time.



## School details

Unique reference number	108307
DfE registration number	384/6116
Inspection number	10061239

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	191
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietors	Mr R Field and Mr P Hardy
Chair	Mr R Field
Headteacher	Mrs K Caryl
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,250 to £7,200
Telephone number	01924 865 757
Website	<a href="http://www.wakefieldindependent.co.uk">www.wakefieldindependent.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@wakefieldindependent.co.uk">info@wakefieldindependent.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	26–28 April 2016

## Information about this school

- Wakefield Independent School is a non-selective independent day school for pupils from the ages of two to 17 years. There are currently no pupils accessing 16 to 19 or two-year-old provision.
- There are two proprietors, also known as governors.
- The school was last inspected in April 2016.
- The school does not use or provide any alternative education for pupils.

- The school is situated on the Nostell Estate and is formed of three buildings. The Rectory is home for Nursery pupils to Year 4, Wragby for Years 5 and 6 and the main building for Years 7 to 11. The buildings are of historic interest, with both the Rectory and Wragby buildings listed by English Heritage.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all year groups of the school and most subject departments. All visits were undertaken alongside the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with several pupils and spoke with many more during lessons or at playtime. Inspectors heard a group of pupils read. Meetings were also held with the proprietor, headteacher, chair of the governing body, the SENCo and the early years leader.
- A range of school documents was examined, as part of checking their compliance with the independent school standards. These documents included pupils' assessment information, schemes of work, policies, safeguarding information, records and the school's website.
- Inspectors talked to parents and took account of the 39 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with several members of staff.
- Inspectors toured the building, both inside and outside, to ensure that relevant independent school standards were met and that pupils' welfare is considered.

## Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Chaffey

Ofsted Inspector

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