

Inspection of Wakefield Independent School

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

Inspection dates:

5 to 7 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Wakefield Independent School is a school spread across three different buildings: The Rectory for the youngest pupils, Wragby for the juniors and the Nostell Centre for secondary pupils. All pupils, across all parts of the school, say that they are proud to attend here. They develop a sense of belonging. They say it feels like being part of one big, happy family and the inspectors had a real sense of this.

Politeness and good manners are highly valued. Staff and pupils show respect for each other. Pupils feel safe and know that staff will listen to any concerns that they may have. Behaviour, at all times of the school day, is exceptional. Pupils say that there is no bullying here.

The school offers pupils, from the early years to Year 11, a positive, well rounded education. Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their achievements. The school's aim to develop resilient, independent pupils who are ready for the next stage of life is well met. Pupils have many opportunities to explore their musical or sporting talents. They take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, drama and music festivals. Enrichment activities are many and varied. Pupils talk with excitement about trips abroad, geography and science field trips and going to the theatre. Opportunities to play a wide range of musical instruments are offered to pupils. Talents and interests are recognised and truly valued.

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

Since the pandemic, the school has developed a clear vision for future development and improvement. They are clearly focused on developing the curriculum further. Leadership roles, for those with subject responsibilities, are being developed and staff are positive about the changes they are making.

The curriculum in most subjects is ambitious and well sequenced. Staff ensure that learning is progressive for the youngest children in the early years to the oldest pupils in school. Cross-curricular learning is valued. Pupils are encouraged to make links between subjects, while still focusing on gaining the key knowledge and understanding of important subject-based concepts. In some subjects, the curriculum is still relatively new and not yet fully embedded. In these subjects, assessment systems are being developed to ensure that learning is tailored to help pupils remember and revisit prior learning. The school recognises that further development of these systems is needed to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make the best progress that they can.

Reading is central to the teaching in school. It underpins all learning. Staff are determined to ensure that all pupils can read well, knowing that this enables them to access knowledge beyond English lessons. Teachers carefully consider the rich and interesting texts that are used across the school, for example to develop knowledge of different writing styles, support learning in different subjects, or to help pupils understand difference and diversity in the world.

The school has identified a programme for the teaching of phonics. They use it to ensure that pupils read books that contain the sounds they learn in lessons. However, some staff are not yet confident in using the school's chosen programme. There is a lack of consistency in the teaching approaches used. In lessons, staff do not always spot pupils who are finding learning too easy or too difficult. Despite this, pupils try hard in reading lessons. They benefit from regular opportunities to read to adults and enjoy the daily story time sessions.

The curriculum for the teaching of mathematics is well embedded. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Pupils benefit from the opportunities that they are given to revisit mathematical learning across the year. Teachers are developing expertise to use resources to support pupils to learn. Adaptations to the curriculum are used well to ensure that all pupils can achieve.

Pupils are seen as individuals in this school. The school is using new systems to ensure that any pupils with specific needs or SEND are quickly identified and supported effectively. Teachers receive helpful information which supports them to adapt learning. This enables pupils to access learning alongside peers.

Children in the early years are well cared for. They have a calm, happy introduction to school life. The curriculum helps to prepare children for the next stage of learning through exciting cross curricular topics such as 'Dangerous Dinosaurs' or 'Marvellous Machines'. However, while the school is determined to ensure that every minute counts in the early years, sometimes activities do not build on what children already know or can do.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The school supports them to understand the importance of working hard within lessons. Aspiration is valued. Careers advice is given through well-planned lessons and visits. Older pupils value the support that they are given to write applications and identify possible issues they may face when pursuing future goals. The talents and interests of all pupils are celebrated and encouraged. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in sports, music and the dramatic arts. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their strengths and pursue their interests. Parents value this.

The school's determination to ensure that pupils celebrate difference and show high levels of respect for adults and each other is realised. Pupils, across all age ranges, show a strong understanding of important values such as democracy, tolerance and liberty. They talk with confidence about different faiths and cultures. The schools' teaching of relationships and sex education and health education is exemplary. Pupils have a secure understanding of important topics such as puberty and healthy or unhealthy relationships. The school fully complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Pupils learn about, and are respectful of, the characteristics protected by this act.

The proprietor and director share the headmistress's vision and passion for the school. However, they are still developing their understanding of their role. While they work closely with the headmistress, to ensure that the independent school

standards are met, they do not have sufficient oversight of some important practices and procedures. They are aware of the importance of rectifying this and ensuring that they develop their knowledge of important areas of practice and procedure, such as safer recruitment of staff and the safeguarding of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are safe in this school. However, during the inspection, it was necessary to ensure that omissions on the single central record, linked to the safer recruitment of staff, were completed. Risk assessments linked to pupils' safety in the grounds of the school were also required to be put in place. These issues were addressed swiftly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, the school has not clarified how teachers will check if pupils are remembering learning and building knowledge from the early years onwards. This means, that in these subjects, teachers cannot plan learning which aids all pupils making good progress. The school should ensure that teachers can assess pupils' knowledge of the curriculum accurately and use this information to plan subsequent learning.
- Staff do not have sufficient understanding of how to implement the school's chosen phonics programme. This means that practice in the classroom is inconsistent, and some pupils are not making the progress that they should. The school should ensure that staff are trained and supported to teach phonics effectively.
- The proprietor's oversight of systems and practices in the school is not as robust as it should be. For example, some important record-keeping is not maintained effectively, and while all the correct checks had been carried out on staff's suitability to work in the school, some aspects of the single central record were required to be updated during the inspection. The proprietor must ensure that they have oversight of all aspects of safeguarding and record-keeping.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

School details

Unique reference number	108307
DfE registration number	384/6116
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10286380
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	P Hardy
Chair	P Hardy
Headteacher	K Caryl
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,600 to £8,700 per annum
Telephone number	01924 865757
Website	www.wakefieldindependent.co.uk
Email address	officeadministrator@wakefieldindependent.com
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 February 2019

Information about this school

- Wakefield Independent School is a non-selective independent day school for pupils from the ages of three to 17 years. There are currently no pupils accessing two-year-old or 16 to 19 provision.
- There are three proprietors, also known as governors.
- The school operates from three different buildings, all within a close proximity of each other on the Nostell Estate. The Rectory building is where the Nursery children to Year 3 pupils are taught. The Wragby building is where pupils from Year 4 to Year 6 are taught and The Nostell Centre where pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 are taught.
- The school operates a breakfast club for all ages.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the proprietors during the course of the inspection. Meetings were also held with the headmistress and other senior and middle leaders in the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.

- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. They met with groups of staff and pupils and considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Andrea Batley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stuart Voyce

His Majesty's Inspector

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