



Additional Inspection Report

Westholme School

January 2024

School's details

School	Westholme School			
DfE number	889/6000			
Registered charity number	526615			
Address	Westholme School Wilmar Lodge Meins Road Blackburn BB2 6QU			
Telephone number	01254 506070			
Email address	secretary@westholmeschool.com			
Principal	Dr Richard Robson			
Chair of governors	Mr Brian Marsden			
Proprietor	Westholme School Limited			
Age range	4 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	749			
	EYFS	10	Years 1 to 6	166
	Seniors	445	Sixth Form	128
Date of inspection	23 January 2024			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Westholme School is a co-educational day school in a semi-rural setting near Blackburn in Lancashire. The school is organised into: the prep school for pupils aged four to eleven, which includes the early years; the senior school for those aged eleven to sixteen; and a sixth form. The school has ninety-three pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils have an education, health and care plan. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors who act as trustees. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in October 2021.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs)

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7, (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 15 (admissions and attendance)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (handling of complaints)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (quality of leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 The school supports the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. It promotes principles and values which encourage pupils to develop as responsible, tolerant and law-abiding citizens. This is achieved through the implementation of a suitable personal, social and health education [PSHE] policy, associated scheme of work, and assemblies,. In particular, the school promotes principles which enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. The school places appropriate emphasis upon the importance of respect for all, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act, including gender and religion. Pupils revisit such topics in more detail and complexity year on year, so encouraged to build up a deeper understanding of these issues. In discussions, pupils confirmed that the school helps them to develop their understanding of respect for all as well their self-knowledge, esteem and confidence.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.3 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.4 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 Implementation of all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective and provides appropriate support for the needs of pupils, including those in early years.
- 2.7 The school safeguards children at risk and those in need. It has good links with the local children safeguarding board (LSCB) which is contacted readily for advice. Staff show a thorough understanding of their responsibilities, including with regard to child-on-child abuse. The safeguarding policy includes suitable definitions of abuse and appropriate guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying. The physical and mental health of all pupils involved in any incident are given a high priority, and the school liaises effectively with external agencies, including with regard to children missing in education. Individual risk assessments are produced for vulnerable pupils or those about whom the school has particular concerns, including those with SEND. The school places suitable emphasis upon pupils' mental wellbeing and employs a trained counsellor whom pupils may see if they so wish.
- 2.8 Those with specific safeguarding responsibilities receive training which is in line with local requirements and statutory advice. This is kept up to date. Teaching and non-teaching staff receive safeguarding training of sufficient quality and frequency. In discussions, staff showed an appropriate knowledge of whistleblowing and safeguarding procedures and confidence in using them. They have a suitable knowledge of the thresholds for reporting issues. Staff are aware of who to go to if they have a concern or receive a disclosure. They understand that they can make a direct referral to children's services if necessary. They take appropriate action when needed.

- 2.9 Safeguarding leaders act on and refer the early signs of risk or need and ensure the school listens to the views of individual pupils as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. They monitor any potential for radicalisation. This is confirmed in written evidence from safeguarding records. Pupils confirmed that if they have a concern, they can approach an adult confident of receiving a response. Records confirm that this happens in practice and that, when necessary, suitable action is taken. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe and show understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety. Use of technology is monitored and filtered effectively.
- 2.10 Suitable arrangements for handling allegations against adults working with children, and potential misconduct, are included in safeguarding procedures. They include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO). Records show that procedures are followed effectively, and the school follows up actions promptly. The school understands its role in reporting any person to relevant regulatory bodies if circumstances require it.
- 2.11 Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding and conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements. They work closely with senior leaders, and with the local authority safeguarding team and other external professionals. This includes discussing individual cases and strategies which may best support pupils. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff, which include appropriate checks that staff are suitably qualified, are outlined within the safeguarding policy and detailed in a separate recruitment policy.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.
- 2.13 There is a suitable behaviour policy which sets out expectations of pupils, and rewards and sanctions. This policy is implemented effectively, promoting high standards of behaviour. Pupils were observed to be well behaved and courteous during breaks and moving between lessons. They were seen chatting together happily at break times. Staff and pupils say there is very little poor behaviour, including misogynistic behaviour. This view is supported by the detailed records of misbehaviour kept by senior leaders. These allow trends to be identified and the effectiveness of sanctions to be evaluated. Staff liaise effectively with parents when behavioural concerns arise. There is a clear code of conduct for pupils which promotes respect for others, including those with protected characteristics. Sanctions are applied by staff appropriately and proportionately. Appropriate adjustments are made for pupils with behavioural or other needs.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]

- 2.14 The school meets the standard.
- 2.15 The school has a suitable anti-bullying policy which is available to parents from the school office. This policy is implemented effectively. Pupils say there is very little bullying and that when incidents do occur, senior leaders treat them with due seriousness and act swiftly and robustly. This is corroborated by written records of bullying incidents. Staff provide support for both the alleged victim and perpetrator in any incident and monitor the effectiveness of any action taken. They are given effective training and pupils are given suitable guidance about bullying. Detailed recording enables pastoral concerns to be logged for each pupil. Incidents of misbehaviour between pupils are considered as potential bullying and/or safeguarding issues, and trends analysed. Subsequent behaviour is closely monitored. Documentation shows that parents of both alleged victim and perpetrator are involved at the earliest stages of any incident.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 A suitable supervision policy is implemented effectively to ensure that pupils are kept safe throughout the school day. Appropriate ratios of staff to pupils are adhered to, and all areas of the school are covered. Frequent registrations ensure that staff know the whereabouts of individual pupils while they are on the school site. Office staff follow up any unexplained absences effectively. Pupils in the sixth form are allowed off site during the lunch break but must sign out using a personal swipe card.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission and attendance registers [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]

- 2.18 The school meets the standard.
- 2.19 The governors ensure that the school maintains suitable admission and attendance registers. A register is taken at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions and in addition at the start of every lesson. These frequent registrations ensure that the school knows where pupils are throughout the school day. Detailed records of attendance allow the school to identify patterns and so be aware of any possibility that a pupil is missing education. The school informs the local authority when pupils leave the school, in accordance with local protocols. The school is alert to the absence of any pupil which may suggest they are missing education.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]

- 2.20 The school meets the standard.
- 2.21 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy. This sets out when, and for what reason, risk assessments are required. It describes clear and appropriate lines of responsibility and the approaches to be taken to identify and mitigate risk. The policy is implemented effectively. There is an effective culture of assessing risk to pupils, in particular, regarding pupils about whom behavioural or safeguarding concerns exist. Pupils deemed to be at risk have a thorough personalised risk assessment, shared as appropriate with staff and reviewed regularly. In this way, leaders ensure that staff are aware of issues and appropriate measures are put in place to safeguard vulnerable pupils.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.22 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33]

- 2.23 The school meets the standard.
- 2.24 The school's complaints policy is suitable and includes appropriate timescales for the handling of complaints. It is effectively implemented, including adherence to the given timescales. It allows for complaints to be considered on an informal basis as well as via a formal written process. Parents may also opt for a hearing before a panel. This includes a suitably independent member. The process allows for a parent to be accompanied; for the panel to make findings and recommendations; and for a confidential record to be kept of findings. Records of complaints are suitably detailed and confirm that the school follows its own procedures closely. This included undertaking a review of procedures

whether or not a complaint is upheld. Appeals against exclusions are also dealt with under this process and handled appropriately.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

2.25 The school meets the standard.

2.26 The school is currently led by the senior leadership team in the head's absence, under the direction of the commercial director. Current arrangements allow the governors and senior leaders to manage safeguarding and welfare arrangements effectively. They monitor compliance with standards and other statutory advice appropriately. Leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and the wellbeing of the pupils is promoted.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.