

Inspection of Wrenfield Learning Centre

Inspection dates: 31 January and 1 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

The school prioritises building strong relationships with pupils. Most pupils join the school having experienced significant disruption to their education prior to joining the setting. The positive, respectful school culture helps pupils to settle quickly. They are soon ready to learn. The school develops personalised timetables and curriculums for its pupils. Ambition here is high. The school effectively supports students to develop their talents and interests. Staff are determined that students leave the school well-prepared for the next stage of education or employment.

The environment in school is calm and orderly. Staff are adept at supporting students when they show signs of becoming anxious or losing focus. If any bullying occurs, the school takes swift and effective action. In the short time since the school opened, records of behaviour show that incidents of poor behaviour are decreasing. This is testament to the positive relationships that staff have formed with pupils as well as the school's high expectations.

Pupils' attitudes to learning become increasingly positive upon attending the school. Pupils explain that they enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their improving attendance. Books show that students take pride in their work. They are beginning to flourish in this safe environment.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious. Subject plans clearly set out what students will learn from Year 3 to the end of Year 11. There is a range of opportunities for students to achieve recognised qualifications, such as GCSEs. Pupils' books show that the planned curriculum is being taught consistently well.

Since opening, the school has focused on promoting reading for pleasure. As a result, pupils' attitudes towards reading are improving. Some students were seen to be choosing to read quietly to themselves during breaktime. Reading diaries show that students now read regularly at home. The school uses ambitious and engaging texts in English lessons. For example, pupils have recently studied *Romeo and Juliet* and are now embarking on a gothic theme through reading Neil Gaiman's *'Coraline'*. Students can read accurately and fluently. However, the school has a phonics programme in place should any students need this. Staff are trained in how to teach this programme.

The school checks what pupils know and remember. In some subjects, such as mathematics, assessment information is used well to identify gaps in students' knowledge and skills. These gaps are then addressed in future sequences of lessons. However, this is not the case in all subjects. In reading, the information from assessments is not used effectively. This means that those pupils who are working below the expected level for their age, do not catch-up quickly enough with their peers because targeted support is not in place.

All students have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school works with the group's clinical and therapeutic teams to ensure that purposeful support is in place. These teams provide training for staff. Pupils have comprehensive support plans. The school provides them with specialist equipment where necessary. This helps pupils to access learning at an appropriate level and achieve well. For example, pupils with sensory needs have access to resources that support them to be able to focus in order to access learning more easily. Clear procedures are in place for the identification of SEND.

Pupils' personal development is a priority for the school. Experiences are thoughtfully planned to provide students with opportunities to develop skills such as teamwork and cooperation. Pupils frequently go out into the community to work with members of the public. For example, students participated in some community gardening. This helps to prepare pupils for the world of work. Pupils receive comprehensive careers advice from both staff in school and external advisers. The school proactively seeks opportunities for students to complete work experience, such as working in another school in the group's kitchen. Students can continue to receive careers advice once they have left the school. Assemblies provide students with opportunities to debate and discuss a range of topics. Through these, they learn to respect opinions that are different to their own.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) teaches students how to lead safe, healthy lives. Pupils can talk about some of their learning in PSHE lessons. For example, one spoke about the risks associated with vaping. Through dedicated community and leisure time, pupils learn independent living skills. This prepares pupils well for adulthood. The school has identified potential risks to individual pupils. The school uses independent learning time to teach pupils about these risks. For example, pupils learn how to travel safely and how to be resilient in the face of peer pressure.

The proprietor ensures that all the independent school standards are met. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and students. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. The headteacher reports regularly to the proprietor board to ensure they have oversight of the school. The group's internal teams of professionals provide effective support to the school. Staff are proud to work here. They show commitment to the students and are dedicated to their role.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school does not use the information from reading assessments sufficiently well to identify gaps in students' reading ability. This means that students who are

working below the expected level for their age, do not catch-up quickly enough. The school should ensure that reading attainment is regularly assessed and effective support put in place where gaps exist.

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	149482
DfE registration number	805/6004
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10299273
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent Special School
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Richard Wilkins
Headteacher	Ashley Roberts
Annual fees (day pupils)	£115,674
Telephone number	01539 566081
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	WrenfieldLAdmin@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wrenfield Learning Centre is an independent special school, which is part of the Witherslack Group.
- This is the school's first standard inspection since it was registered by the Department for Education on 10 February 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs: cognitive and learning needs, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health needs, moderate learning needs and specific learning needs.
- The school is registered to take pupils from 7 to 18 years. At the time of this inspection, there were no post-16 students on roll.

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.

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

- Inspectors met with the deputy headteacher, the pastoral care manager, the regional director and the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and PSHE. The deep dive for each subject included a meeting with curriculum leaders and a review of subject documents and plans. The deep dive also involved lesson visits, scrutiny of pupils' work and meetings with staff.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans in some other subjects.
- Inspectors scrutinised school records, including admission and attendance registers.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school throughout the day, including breaktimes and in lessons. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of the school.
- 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.

- Inspectors scrutinised school documents and the arrangements to safeguard pupils. This included meeting with the designated safeguarding lead and speaking with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Philippa Kermotschuk, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Aitchison

His Majesty's Inspector

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