

Wynstones School

Church Lane, Whaddon, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL4 0UF

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2020

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i)

- Considerable turbulence, a detrimental culture and a lack of capacity have prevented leaders from addressing inherent weaknesses in the quality of education. Leaders report that changes are being blocked by a group of resistant teachers. Most middle leaders have stepped down from their roles due to frustrations at the pace of improvement or in order to fill gaps in staffing.
- The curriculum is not demanding enough for pupils. It does not meet the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). At the last progress monitoring inspection, leaders had introduced new curriculum plans for English and mathematics as a first step to increase rigour. These plans have still not had a discernible impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The school's action plan proposed to improve the curriculum, introduce a new reading scheme and ensure that teachers plan age-appropriate learning for all pupils, including those with SEND.
- Leaders have not developed a curriculum that builds pupils' learning effectively over time. They do not yet fully understand all of the weaknesses that underpin the curriculum. There is no connection between the three main phases in the school to ensure that pupils are ready for the next phase in their education.
- There is still no reading strategy in place. The leader for SEND recognises that this significant weakness may be leading to the high numbers of pupils requiring additional support with basic literacy skills.
- Strategies to enable pupils with SEND to access the curriculum are seriously deficient. Pupils with emotional and learning needs are customarily removed from class activities. Plans to support pupils with SEND do not identify specific barriers to learning or set out how to address these. There is a lack of expertise in SEND.
- Recent appointments, with some expertise in English and mathematics, recognise some of the weaknesses in the curriculum. However, they have not yet had an impact on the quality of education.

- These standards remain unmet.

Paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)

- The provision for careers guidance does not meet current requirements. At the last progress monitoring inspection, pupils in Classes 6 to 8 (Years 7 to 9) still did not receive any suitable guidance. The upper school careers programme did not include a broad enough range of advice.
- The school's action plan set out to appoint a careers leader who could develop a programme for Classes 6 to 12 (Years 7 to 13).
- Leaders have only just recently appointed a new careers lead with suitable knowledge and experience. The leader has taken some small steps so far to improve provision. For example, a range of speakers have visited Class 8 (Year 9) to talk about their work. However, a longer-term plan of review and improvement is in its infancy.
- These standards remain unmet.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a)–(g), 4

- Teaching continues to be dogged by low expectations, a lack of subject knowledge, weak curriculum planning and poor assessment of pupils' learning. As a result, pupils apply little effort in their work and do not make good enough progress.
- Leaders' proposed actions to improve teaching and assessment were contingent on using middle leaders to monitor teaching and learning to check that training had led to improvements. They also proposed to strengthen the curriculum and implement a new framework for assessing pupils' learning. At the last progress monitoring inspection, this work had only just started.
- There has been almost no progress since the last inspection. Most middle leaders have stepped away from their roles. There is no culture or system to hold teachers to account. Consequently, teachers continue to do as they please, and weaknesses persist.
- Assessment strategies have been introduced in the lower school. However, there is no oversight of this. Any assessment that is in place has not been moderated for accuracy. Ongoing assessment of pupils' learning is weak at best and absent at worst. Pupils' books show that teachers fail to assess pupils' work or provide them with feedback. As a result, learning does not build on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils' different needs are rarely taken into account.
- Reading is poorly taught and promoted. Teachers do not know how to teach phonics or identify gaps in pupils' reading skills. This, coupled with a lack of books to support pupils' development of reading skills, puts pupils at this school at a significant disadvantage compared to others.
- These standards are unmet.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The principal summed up inspectors' description of the school's culture as 'toxic'. Relationships between staff and parents and carers have led to a situation where children's safety is secondary to vested interests. The staff body is divided and those

who want to change are intimidated by other staff and a body of parents who want to retain control over the school. Children are at risk of serious harm and are not protected when they should be.

- Child protection issues are not dealt with in line with statutory safeguarding requirements. Some staff have not reported serious safeguarding concerns relating to pupils' worrying behaviours. These members of staff have been allowed to continue teaching without disciplinary action to address this dangerous performance.
- Leaders do not address or challenge staff behaviour that is unacceptable and places pupils at significant risk. They do not complete internal investigations into such conduct when required to do so by the local authority designated officer (LADO).
- Child protection records are not kept effectively so leaders are unable to explain the actions they have taken or describe the outcomes. In several cases, the designated safeguarding leads could not confirm the action that they took in response to welfare concerns.
- The school's single central record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children meets current requirements.
- These standards are unmet.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a)–(c), 10

- There are behaviour and anti-bullying policies published on the school's website. However, these policies do not promote good behaviour or prevent bullying among pupils. There is little evidence to suggest that staff follow, implement or understand these policies well enough.
- Records of complaints show that some parents have little confidence in the school's approach to reducing bullying. Many families leaving the school have cited safeguarding concerns or bullying as the reason. Some parents report that they have not been able to share concerns that their child is being bullied due to the relationships that exist between other parents and/or staff.
- There are recorded incidents of poor behaviour and bullying from September 2019, when a new system was introduced. There is no evidence that leaders have oversight of these or that sanctions have been applied in accordance with the school's policies. Leaders have not analysed these incidents to support improvements to pupils' behaviour over time. There is little in place to support pupils with challenging behaviour.
- Leaders have provided pupils with some external guidance to try to reduce bullying. However, there is no evidence that this has led to fewer bullying incidents.
- These standards are not met.

Paragraph 13

- Staff are trained to administer first aid and there are records of accidents and injuries to children. However, accident records do not always confirm how an injury was obtained, nor describe in detail the nature of the injury. This could lead to concerns about recurring injuries, unexplained injuries or non-accidental injuries being missed.

- Staff did not act to ensure that a child was not injured following an accident. This lack of first aid may have left a child with an untreated injury from when the accident occurred in the early morning.
- This standard is not met.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders have not challenged staff who have put pupils at serious risk due to a lack of supervision. This means that this unacceptable practice can continue and the recent training in supervision that staff have had is undermined.
- At breaktimes, staff do not supervise pupils effectively. It was not evident to inspectors what boundaries were in place or what the agreed expectations of pupils' behaviour are. Although staff are located in the right places to monitor pupils, unsafe behaviour remains unchallenged.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The risk assessment policy is not fit for purpose. It does not make clear that staff always need to be vigilant and proactive to safeguard pupils and promote their well-being.
- The scope of risk assessments is too limited. Risk assessments are not in place for some vulnerable pupils to help reduce their dangerous behaviours or safeguarding risks. These pupils continue to be at significant risk of harm.
- The designated safeguarding lead was unable to confirm what action had been taken to respond to welfare concerns about children. As a result, potential risks for children have not been reduced and require urgent attention.
- These standards are not met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a)–(k)

- There is a written complaints procedure on the school's website but it is not followed. There is no transparent procedure to manage complaints.
- There is a lack of independence in dealing with concerns. Relationships between staff and parents prevent this. These also compromise confidentiality. Furthermore, the published complaints procedure does not show that leaders understand the need to make provision for an independent person to act as a member of any complaints panel.
- Parents do not feel able to raise concerns formally or informally. The high number of parents removing their children from the school this academic year – particularly those that cite safeguarding and bullying as the reason for this – demonstrates this.
- Even if leaders or trustees consider a complaint, no timescales are followed. Some complaints have continued over years. Complaints records are incomplete. They do not show how a complaint was resolved, the action taken by the school or the findings of any investigation.
- These standards are not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34, 34(c)

- The school's culture is detrimental, prohibitive and damaging to any work to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare and well-being. There are fundamental failings that place children at risk of serious harm.
- Leaders have not ensured that standards relating to welfare, health and safety and complaints continue to be met. There are no systems in place to ensure effective oversight and implementation of this most essential work.
- There is no impartial oversight from trustees. They are all directly connected to the school, staff or parents. There is no one who can consider complaints or allegations against staff with any objectivity as they are all – in the word of school leaders – 'contaminated'.
- This standard is not met.

Paragraph 34, 34(a), 34(b)

- Leaders and trustees have still not provided effective leadership and management. Pupils do not receive an effective standard of education or attend a safe, well-functioning school.
- The school's action plan provided no detail as to how these independent school standards relating to leadership and management would be met. It is not clear how leaders are supported to develop the expertise that they need.
- There is little capacity for internal self-improvement. Senior leaders are under significant pressure and have a substantial amount of work to do. The principal works only three days per week. The deputy principal is spending much time dealing with incidents and concerns and is unable to do much else. The resignation of middle leaders has exacerbated this situation.
- There has been little progress in addressing the standards that remained unmet at the last inspection. The action plan and school improvement plan lack the necessary detail to support improvements. There has been insufficient focus on the right priorities. A lack of systems to address poor staff behaviour and underperformance has allowed unacceptable behaviour to persist and hamper attempts at improvement.
- Trustees have not held leaders to account. Minutes of trustees' meetings show that very basic, essential systems are not in place. It is not clear what trustees expect of leaders. When agendas show that there are opportunities to challenge and support leaders, these are passed over or delayed to future meetings. Trustees have not gathered the information that they need to gain suitable oversight of the school's work.
- These standards remain unmet.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- The arrangements to keep children in the kindergarten safe are not effective. Child protection issues are not dealt with in line with statutory safeguarding requirements. Children are at risk of significant harm.

- Failures in the way complaints are handled, in the administration and recording of first aid and in risk assessments are replicated in the kindergarten. Provision for children with SEND is seriously deficient.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	115793
DfE registration number	916/6031
Inspection number	10143170

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Wynstones Limited
Chair	Ted Yates
Headteacher	Stephen Holland
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,001–£10,225
Telephone number	01452 429 220
Website	www.wynstones.com
Email address	reception@wynstones.com
Date of previous standard inspection	26–28 March 2019

Information about this school

- Wynstones School is located on the outskirts of Gloucester. It follows the Steiner Waldorf principles of education. It is operated by the board of trustees of Wynstones Limited.
- At the start of September, a new leadership team was introduced. The principal and the deputy principal appointed phase leaders for the kindergarten, lower school and upper school. Since that time, all but the phase leaders for the kindergarten have resigned.

- The school previously provided boarding accommodation for a few pupils from overseas. This stopped in November 2019.
- Over a third of the pupils are identified by the school as being pupils with SEND. Two have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The last standard inspection of the school took place in March 2019. At that time, the school was judged to be inadequate. The last progress monitoring inspection took place in October 2019.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards (ISS) and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- At the same time, the Department for Education (DfE) asked inspectors to carry out an emergency inspection. This was in response to serious complaints and concerns relating to safeguarding, the management of complaints, bullying, and leadership and management. Inspectors checked the school's compliance with ISS relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils and the management of complaints.
- The inspection took place with no notice.
- This was the second progress monitoring inspection. At the last progress monitoring inspection, a number of independent school standards relating to the quality of education and leadership and management remained unmet.
- The DfE required leaders to prepare a statutory action plan. Ofsted evaluated this action plan in December 2019. The DfE rejected the action plan.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and trustees. They also spoke to the LADO for safeguarding on the telephone.
- Inspectors visited lessons in most classes. While they were there, they spoke to pupils and looked at work in their books.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school's action plan, minutes of trustees' meetings and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors took into account 75 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Caroline Dulong, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Philippa Darley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paula Lahey	Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;

- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupils' performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Standards that were met at the previous inspection but are now judged to not be met at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour among pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, among other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils' misbehaviour;
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.

- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 13 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first-aid policy.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which-
 - 33(a) is in writing;
 - 33(b) is made available to parents of pupils;
 - 33(c) sets out clear timescales for the management of a complaint;
 - 33(d) allows for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis;
 - 33(e) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with subparagraph (d), establishes a formal procedure for the complaint to be made in writing;
 - 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with subparagraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;
 - 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
 - 33(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;
 - 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is-

- 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
- 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher;
- 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with subparagraph (e) and-
- 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
- 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school must meet the following requirements of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage

Safeguarding and welfare requirements: paragraphs 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.20, 3.22, 3.64, 3.67, 3.68, 3.74.

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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