

Meadowcroft School

24 Bar Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 4AD

Inspection dates

18 December 2019

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), Part 6, 32(1)(c)

- School leaders have ensured that a safeguarding policy is available to download from the school website. This policy clearly informs the reader of procedures to follow and what to look for if anybody has concerns surrounding pupils' safety and well-being. The policy considers current government guidance.
- During this inspection, I considered aspects of pupils' welfare, for example the use of restraints, exclusions and taxis to transport pupils to and from school. These were issues raised in complaints made to Ofsted. I found that appropriate checks and procedures were in place regarding the taxi service provided. Records for the use of restraints and exclusions were sound. Pupils spoke to me about why they had been excluded or restrained. All of them said they had never seen anything that concerned them, and they understood why they had been restrained or excluded and it had been reasonable.
- During this inspection, I considered the role of the designated safeguarding lead in keeping pupils safe. I found that senior leaders had not taken appropriate steps to monitor the safety of some pupils, particularly those who are not attending school. Records for these pupils were too brief, actions taken were not timely and information was not shared between school staff or with external agencies.
- Therefore, these standards are not met.

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

- Inspectors at the previous standard inspection in May 2019 identified that pupils were being allowed to smoke on the school site. Risk assessments were not available to assess the risk of this practice. Inspectors were also concerned that there was little evidence that pupils were being supported or encouraged to stop smoking.
- The school's action plan details several steps that have been taken to address issues that were identified at the inspection in May 2019. Pupils are no longer allowed to smoke on site and facilities to do so have been removed. Staff and pupils have been advised about the new behaviour toolkit and how this relates to new rules around smoking.

- The action plan proposed that there would be a new facilities manager, and training around risk assessments and health and safety should have been undertaken by all senior staff.
- The action plan notes the more rigorous monitoring of risk assessments and health and safety issues.
- During this inspection, I found that smoking is prohibited at the school and all its satellite sites. Risk assessments and guidance are now clear. Pupils are supported if they need it to transition to non-smoking. Staff act as good role models by ceasing to smoke. Pupils who were spoken to during the inspection said that although initially they did not want to stop smoking, they feel much better for having done so. They said that the support they received from staff was good.
- Therefore, these standards are now met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18, 19, 20, 21

- During this inspection, I checked that appropriate recruitment checks had been made and recorded for all staff and senior leaders. The school's recruitment checks and records of checks are appropriate.
- Therefore, these standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34 (1), (1)(a), (1)(b), (1)(c), 34(2)

- Inspectors at the previous inspection in May 2019 evaluated that the proprietor had not ensured that leaders and managers had fulfilled their responsibilities effectively by actively promoting the well-being of pupils. They had not carefully evaluated the risks surrounding pupils being allowed to smoke on the school premises.
- The action plan received by the Department for Education (DfE) detailed several strategies to remedy these weaknesses. According to the action plan, a new facilities manager, a family liaison coordinator and a personal, social, health and education coordinator have been appointed.
- According to the action plan, the proprietor has made changes to the admissions and induction process for pupils. This is to ensure that new guidelines around smoking and pupil well-being are clear for pupils, parents and staff.
- The action plan notes that more rigorous monitoring for all aspects of health and safety will take place.
- During this inspection, evidence gathered showed that all aspects of the school's action plan had been carried out appropriately. Senior leaders promote the well-being of pupils appropriately in making the school a no-smoking site and supporting pupils in ceasing to smoke.
- However, when considering the safety of all pupils I was not able to confirm that senior leaders were fulfilling their responsibilities effectively. Senior leaders have not acted swiftly on identified weaknesses among staff with senior responsibilities. I found that appropriate action had not been taken to ensure that pupils are safe, records were too

brief, and information was not shared with other staff or, when appropriate, external agencies, including the local authority.

- Therefore, these standards were unmet in May 2019, and remain unmet.

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	135216
DfE registration number	384/6348
Inspection number	10127667

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Meadowcroft Residential Services Ltd
Chair	Lynette Edwards
Headteacher	Darren Singh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,000
Telephone number	01924 366242
Website	www.meadowcroftschoo.com
Email address	info@meadowcroftschoo.com
Date of previous standard inspection	21–23 May 2019

Information about this school

- The school was last inspected in May 2019, when it was judged to require improvement.
- Meadowcroft is an independent day special educational needs school, catering for pupils with social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. Some have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and associated learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is located on three sites within the centre of Wakefield. The two other sites are located at The Works, Garden Street, Wakefield WF1 1DY and The Gallery, Wentworth Terrace, Wakefield WF1 3QW.

- The school serves a much wider geographical location, with pupils referred from and funded by several local authorities.
- The headteacher is now Darren Singh. It is not clear if the DfE has been notified of this change.
- Senior leaders consider that the school has been approved by the DfE to increase its capacity to allow them to accept up to 96 pupils. This differs from information found on the government's 'Get information about schools' webpage.
- The school is part of Meadowcroft Residential Schools Limited.
- Meadowcroft Residential Schools Limited is a fully owned subsidiary of Acorn Care and Education Limited, which is part of the National Fostering Association (NFA) Group, a provider of children's services in the UK. At the inspection in December 2019, the lead inspector was informed that the NFA Group had merged with the Outcomes First Group (OFG) and therefore Meadowcroft Residential Schools Limited was fully owned by OFG Limited. Senior leaders are unsure if the DfE has been informed of this recent change.

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 and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous full standard inspection in May 2019.
- The inspector also considered issues around pupil welfare which were raised in complaints received.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since the full standard inspection in May 2019.
- The DfE requested that the school prepared an action plan to address unmet standards from the May 2019 inspection, which was subsequently deemed to be acceptable in September 2019.
- The inspection was carried out over one day by one inspector, without notice.
- The inspector spoke with several pupils during a tour of the school.
- The inspector considered documentation relating to the safety and welfare of pupils, including recruitment checks and the recording of recruitment checks.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, designated safeguarding lead and the family liaison officer. She held a telephone conversation with the chair of governors.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

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

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.

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

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 role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards:

Part 3: Welfare, health, and safety of pupils

- 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.

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