

Inspection of Embleton View

Westgate House, Coniscliffe Road, Darlington DL3 8TF

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 March 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are valued and nurtured here. Leaders want the best for them. Pupils have a chance to succeed in education where they have previously struggled in other school settings. Staff help pupils to 'overcome barriers for learning and life'. Learning and support are matched to pupils' individual education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The curriculum is ambitious. It encompasses activities to inspire and interest pupils. There is a strong focus on pupils' personal development and preparing them for adulthood. They learn how to stay safe and make the right choices. They develop trusting relationships with staff.

Staff have high expectations for pupils. They support pupils to manage their behaviour. Pupils appreciate that staff deal effectively with incidents of poor behaviour. They say that they feel safe and that bullying rarely occurs.

Pupils enjoy their outdoor education. They relish the opportunities to go climbing and take part in visits to places such as Seaham Beach and High Force waterfall. They grow fruit and vegetables in their allotment. Pupils participate in litter picking in the local community. They volunteer at a local food bank. These experiences help to reduce pupils' anxiety. They learn vital skills which assist the development of their physical and mental health.

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

Leaders tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of each pupil. They use a range of information to assess pupils' needs when they join the school. They pay careful attention to pupils' interests and aspirations. Staff plan learning that links well with the outcomes stated in pupils' EHC plans. Rich learning opportunities encourage pupils to be resilient and achieve success. These include outdoor education.

Most curriculum subjects follow schemes of work. These schemes build pupils' knowledge over time. Teaching staff use creative techniques to engage pupils in learning. Most pupils come to the school with significant gaps in their knowledge of English and mathematics that would be expected for their age. Staff make sure that pupils practise their English and mathematics skills often. They help pupils to apply their knowledge in real-life situations. In mathematics, pupils apply their knowledge about perimeter to plan a design for a new bicycle shed. In English, pupils discuss and debate current topics of national interest, for example the Casey Review. However, on occasion, teachers let cross-curricular themes distract from the main focus of learning.

Staff regularly check what pupils know. They have a good understanding of the academic and personal progress that pupils make. They know what to provide next in pupils' learning. Leaders are quick to make adjustments to pupils' curriculums when needed. For example, leaders have recently introduced multi-skills education. Pupils who want to learn vocational subjects can now learn various skills. These

include bricklaying, plastering, carpentry and plumbing. These opportunities help pupils to develop practical skills for future life and employment.

Pupils read frequently for different purposes. Leaders provide effective phonics teaching for pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. Pupils read books appropriate to their reading ability. Leaders encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Pupils study a range of different story genres and themes.

Staff work closely with pupils to develop their character and help them to overcome barriers to learning. They help pupils to achieve a range of qualifications and awards. External professionals support pupils further when needed. All pupils have individual learning plans to support their learning. Yet these plans do not accurately reflect the good work and range of actions that staff undertake to support pupils. Targets and outcomes stated on the plans are not helpful to staff or pupils in their current form.

The curriculum to promote pupils' personal development is excellent. It is enhanced by the purposeful outdoor education provision. There is a strong focus on supporting pupils to become 'lifelong learners' and 'responsible citizens'. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum supports pupils' personal development extremely well. Pupils also learn about particular aspects of local concern, such as those related to misogyny, drugs and knife crime. They develop an age-appropriate understanding of relationships, sex and health education. Pupils learn about different faiths, cultures and beliefs. They develop an understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Pupils appreciate that they often revisit much of the personal development curriculum. They know that this is to make sure that they understand and can stay safe. As one pupil put it, 'It makes sure that the knowledge is embedded in our brains.'

There is a good-quality programme in place to prepare pupils for their life beyond school. They take part in carefully planned work experience. They receive independent advice and guidance about further education, employment and training.

Staff enjoy working at this school. Leaders offer extensive support to staff for their workload, well-being and professional development. Parents are very positive about the school. They praise the way that the school has 'exceeded their expectations'.

Governance is strong. The directors have a comprehensive understanding of the school. They ensure that the independent school standards are met. They are supported by an advisory board with relevant knowledge and skills. Appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken to ensure that pupils are kept safe across the three sites. The proprietorial body ensures that there is a suitable accessibility plan in place. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture for safeguarding. They know pupils well. They make frequent checks on the welfare of pupils who they identify as particularly vulnerable. Staff are alert to the signs that could indicate a pupil may be at risk. The curriculum helps pupils to understand potential risks and the ways that they can keep themselves safe. Pertinent local risks to pupils, such as criminal exploitation and county lines, are explicitly taught. Pupils know how to report any concerns they may have to a trusted adult. Leaders work proactively with external agencies to get families the support that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some lessons, teachers do not always clearly identify the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Teachers can get sidetracked with information related to other subjects. Pupils find it hard to distinguish the main subject-specific knowledge that they need to remember. Leaders should ensure that in all lessons, teachers focus clearly on teaching the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember.
- Individual support plans do not specify appropriate targets for pupils. Outcomes stated are ambiguous and cannot be accurately measured. This makes it difficult for staff to use the plans to inform and evaluate pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that individual support plans are purposeful and demonstrate the progress pupils make towards achieving their personal targets.

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	145127
DfE registration number	841/6008
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10254679
Type of school	Other Independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ald Group
Chair	Graeme Turner
Headteacher	Gary Robinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,718 to £82,370
Telephone number	01325 288722
Website	www.embletonview.co.uk
Email address	graeme@aldgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 September 2018

Information about this school

- All pupils have an EHC plan. Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils are placed and funded by a range of local authorities.
- A material change inspection to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll to 24 and the age of pupils to 18 took place in June 2022.
- Since the material change inspection, the number of pupils on the school roll has grown significantly. The school is currently operating outside the maximum number of pupils that is it registered to admit.
- The school utilises three sites: Embleton View, Westgate House (Main site), Coniscliffe Road, Darlington DL3 8TF; Embleton View Coundon, Coundon Industrial Estate, Bishop Auckland DL14 8NR; and Unit 21, Durham Business Park, Newton Aycliffe DL5 6ZF.
- The school makes use of one alternative education provider. This provider is unregistered.

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.

- 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, the three directors of the proprietorial body and some curriculum leaders. They met with some members of staff and some pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, mathematics, multi-skills and PSHE education. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teaching staff and spoke to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects, including science and food technology.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff about the school's approach to safeguarding pupils in school. Inspectors checked the single central record and reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures. Inspectors checked the

implementation of health and safety policies, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents, pupils and staff. The lead inspector also spoke with some parents by telephone.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrea Batley

His Majesty's Inspector

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