

Inspection of Wemms Education Centre

Woodstock Lane North, Long Ditton, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 5HN

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are known and cared for at this school. Pupils have had difficult and sometimes traumatic school experiences prior to joining here. For most pupils, attending this school has improved the way they feel about and engage with education.

A strength of the school is how well staff build warm relationships with pupils. Pupils trust that adults here will help them if they have a problem. Pupils know that staff have their best interests at heart and will keep them safe. Pupils recognise the high expectations the school has for how well they will behave, and they meet these well. Pupils describe the school as a kind and positive place to be. While they know that sometimes other pupils may become anxious or upset and subsequently exhibit challenging behaviours, they are confident that bullying, including the use of discriminatory language, does not take place.

The new leadership team is ambitious for pupils to achieve well both academically and personally. Pupils are mostly well supported with their personal development. However, they are not learning as well as they should through the curriculum. This is because some parts of the curriculum do not match what pupils need to know. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are not clearly known or filled.

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

In each of the three school phases, there is a planned curriculum in place. However, the school has not considered the important knowledge pupils need to learn or the order in which they will learn it. The curriculum in some phases is driven by the age of pupils as opposed to the stage of learning that is right for them. Consequently, pupils are not learning as well as they could through the curriculum.

Teachers have expert curriculum subject knowledge. They make some checks on how well pupils are learning. However, in most subjects, teachers do not identify accurately how well pupils understand what they have been taught.

Students in the sixth form are motivated to study. They demonstrate a willingness to succeed beyond their time in the school. Some students progress well through their programmes of study. However, sometimes students take part in accreditation programmes that do not meet their needs or are not right for them. This is because when students arrive at the sixth form, staff do not know precisely what is important for each student. As a result, sometimes students have to change programmes mid-year.

The school knows and understands the special educational needs and/or disabilities that pupils have. Short-term outcomes are created to help pupils achieve the long-term aims written into their education, health and care plans (EHC plan). However, many staff do not have the expertise to use this information to make effective adaptations to learning activities. Therefore, pupils' needs are not consistently met,

and they are not supported well enough to achieve the outcomes set out in their EHC plans. In some parts of the school, this support is better. For example, the middle school has implemented an effective approach to how pupils will be taught. Placed in nurturing groups, pupils have their needs met well by class teachers. This approach helps pupils to be active and enthusiastic participants in lessons.

While most pupils are accurate readers, some pupils need extra help. Teachers do not check whether pupils have gaps in their phonics knowledge. This limits the effectiveness of the support the school gives to struggling readers.

Pupils behave well throughout the school. They are polite and respectful and show kindness and care to each other and adults. The school has embedded a clear vision for behaviour. Staff are well trained to support pupils with their regulation and conduct. Following any incident, staff use supportive conversations with pupils to help them understand the impact of their actions. Classrooms are calm and purposeful learning environments. Pupils are motivated and engaged learners. They listen to adults and work together well. Low-level disruption is extremely rare. When a pupil becomes upset or anxious, staff rapidly spot this and support pupils well and in line with the school's expectations.

The school has extensively developed its personal development provision for pupils. Through clubs such as the diversity group, pupils have a safe space to share their views and concerns. They learn about protected characteristics and show a secure understanding of them. In tutor times, pupils learn about diversity. They are provided with opportunities to debate and discuss a wide range of topical issues. In doing so, they develop recognition of their own opinions and learn to listen to and respect those of others. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. From Year 7 to the sixth form, pupils learn about various education, training and careers options. They take part in a range of rich workplace experiences.

New school leaders have ambitious intentions for the provision pupils should receive. They are at the earliest stages of establishing a vision for the school. They recognise the need to train staff to support pupils effectively to achieve their outcomes. While the school has identified the right things to improve, they haven't finished thinking about how they will do this. However, staff are positive about the level of support they receive from the school. They feel that their well-being is prioritised. Most are inspired by the ambitions of the new senior leadership team.

The trustee board is also new. There is an increased number of trustees with educational expertise. The board provides effective challenge and support through visits to the school and meetings with leaders and staff. Trustees, led by the chair of the proprietor body, ensure that all the independent school standards are met, including ensuring the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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 provide sufficient information for staff to act on when supporting pupils to learn. Currently, the support some pupils receive is not as precise as it should be, and pupils are not prepared well for their next stage. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise to identify and put in place the most precise support for pupils.
- The school has just started to develop their vision. Consequently, school systems and approaches are not consistent and do not have as positive an impact as they could on pupils' experience. The school should continue its work to define the vision and use monitoring to oversee the impact of changes made.
- The curriculum does not provide a coherent education experience for pupils throughout the school. Currently, pupils are not learning as well as they should. They do not build knowledge that will help them access future learning. The school should prioritise the design and sequencing of these subject areas and ensure that staff have the knowledge and training to implement the curriculum consistently well.

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	142416
DfE registration number	936/6006
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10342104
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	8 to 20
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	29
Proprietor	Wemms Education Unlimited Limited
Chair	Megan Booth
Headteacher	Adam Cochrane
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000 to £79,000
Telephone number	01372 276499
Website	www.wemms.co.uk
Email address	info@wemms.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 to 15 May 2023

Information about this school

- Wemms Education Centre offers education to pupils with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. All have EHC plans.
- The school is currently using one registered and four unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school operates from one address, Woodstock Lane North, Long Ditton, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 5HN.
- Since the previous monitoring inspection, there is a new board of trustees, including a new chair of the proprietor body. There has also been extensive change to the senior leadership team. This includes the appointment of a new interim headteacher and a director of operations.
- Since the last standard inspection, the school has had two progress monitoring inspections in February and September 2024.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the interim headteacher, the director of operations and other members of the leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body and five members of the board of trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, art and personal, social, health and economics education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during playtime and lunchtimes.
- The lead inspector considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan and minutes from trustee committee meetings.

- Inspectors considered parents and carers responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors took into account the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christopher Toye

Ofsted Inspector

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