

Ofsted's accreditation visit to Wendover Online School

On 2 and 3 October 2024, Ofsted visited Wendover Online School as part of the [Online Education Accreditation Scheme](#). Through this scheme, providers of full-time online education to school-age children in England can apply to the Department for Education (DfE) for accreditation.

Ofsted visits providers to find out whether they meet the minimum standards for online education set by the DfE. This report sets out what we found during our visit on 2 and 3 October 2024. You can find out whether this provider is accredited by the DfE at [Get Information about Schools](#).

Key findings

- **Wendover Online School does not meet all the minimum standards** for online education. More information on the standards that Wendover Online School does not meet can be found in the last section of this report.
- Staff at Wendover Online School know their pupils extremely well and go the extra mile to build strong relationships. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive. They say they receive strong support from staff and that they feel heard. This reduces anxieties, builds pupils' self-confidence and enables them to re-engage with learning.
- Teachers carefully introduce pupils to an academic curriculum that is appropriately matched to their needs. Teachers adapt their planning so that, through a mixture of bespoke one-to-one sessions and small-group lessons, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, thrive.
- Leaders promote extensive opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including personal, social and health education and the promotion of fundamental British values. Older pupils receive impartial careers advice and access events such as university open days.
- For pupils of all ages, teaching is generally of a high quality. However, due to some inconsistencies in curriculum planning, it is not always clear what disciplinary knowledge pupils are expected to acquire as they move through the curriculum. Furthermore, leaders have identified that broadening the setting's curriculum offer would further strengthen its provision. This is particularly the case regarding practical activities, for example in science, and with physical education (PE).

- Since its inception, Wendover Online School has continued to grow. This has resulted in the employment of additional staff and the adoption of new procedures. Leaders recognise that this has led to a lack of coherence across its different policies and are working to ensure that all published documents align and fully reflect Wendover Online School's ethos and practices.
 - Leaders have not considered sufficiently well how to manage the risks posed to pupils by the setting's activities. The health and safety and risk assessment policies do not refer to pupils and, therefore, do not outline the actions that leaders and staff should take to protect pupils from harm. Additionally, although leaders have identified many of the potential risks that pupils face in relation to the setting's activities, they have not completed risk assessments to outline the control measures that need to be taken to reduce these risks as far as is reasonably practicable.
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Who is this online provider?

- Wendover Online School provides a British education for pupils between the ages of seven and 19 years. The majority of pupils are registered as being electively home educated (EHE) and are placed at the setting by their parents. A few pupils of compulsory school age are placed at Wendover Online School by a local authority. Some part-time pupils have been placed by their registered school, which they attend when not attending Wendover Online School.
- Pupils attend Wendover Online School for a variety of reasons. This includes: pupils who, because of their social, emotional and mental health needs, have previously been out of education for significant periods of time; EHE pupils who are studying for formal qualifications, such as GCSE and A levels; elite athletes requiring the flexibility offered by online education; and overseas pupils continuing their pathway through a British curriculum.
- Wendover Online School is organised into four phases: Primary (Years 3 to 6), Lower Secondary (Years 7 to 9), Upper Secondary (Years 10 and 11) and Sixth Form (Years 12 and 13). Pupils in Years 3 to 9 study a broad curriculum. This provides opportunities for them to experience linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. Older pupils study for GCSE and A-level qualifications appropriate to their needs, interests and aptitudes.
- The setting's philosophy centres on providing pupils with individualised, flexible programmes, taught in a supportive, collaborative learning environment. Depending on need, lessons are either one-to-one or in small groups, up to a maximum of six pupils. In addition, there are assemblies and weekly group tutorials. Timetabled lessons are mostly in the mornings. This allows pupils to pursue outside interests in the 'physical' world.

- In addition to its academic offer, Wendover Online School provides a broad range of extra-curricular clubs for its pupils. These include chess, baking, photography and mindfulness. Pupils say that they enjoy the clubs and the opportunities they provide to socialise with their peers, as well as with pupils in other year groups.
- Currently, 31 school-age pupils study with Wendover Online School full time. A small number of these pupils have an [education, health and care \(EHC\) plan](#). Twenty-three live in England. Another 15 school-age pupils study with Wendover Online School part time.
- At the time of this accreditation visit, there were no looked-after children on the roll of Wendover Online School.
- There are currently 15 post-16 learners studying with Wendover Online School.

How are pupils taught at Wendover Online School?

- Learning at Wendover Online School takes place during live timetabled sessions. However, as lessons are recorded, if pupils are unable to join a lesson they can attend at a different time. In live sessions, teachers and pupils communicate either verbally or via a chat facility. Teachers have their cameras on and, in the majority of cases, pupils do also. This face-to-face interaction provides the reassurance that many pupils require.
- Teachers know their pupils well and use pupils' interests as starting points to help engage them in learning. They plan well-sequenced lessons and make effective use of assessment so learning builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers display secure subject knowledge and skilfully ask questions that gauge pupils' understanding and, where appropriate, make pupils think more deeply about their learning.
- Teachers make effective use of the technology available to them. Lessons are interactive and require pupils to play an active part in their learning. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, pupils were working collaboratively in exploring how to solve complex algebraic equations.
- Leaders have put in place long-term curriculum plans and schemes of work. However, they recognise that there remains some variability across subjects and are working to address this, for example in PE. Additionally, some subject plans do not identify, in sufficient depth, the disciplinary knowledge pupils are expected to learn.

What are Wendover Online School's arrangements like for keeping children safe?

- **Ofsted's visits to online providers can give only a limited level of assurance on the effectiveness of safeguarding, compared to our**

inspections of schools and other providers of face-to-face education and training. However, we found that the arrangements for keeping children safe at Wendover Online School are appropriate.

- Everyone at Wendover Online School understands their role in safeguarding children. Staff know pupils extremely well and, as a result of their vigilant approach, comprehensive training and strong lines of communication, are able to identify when pupils need additional support or care. Staff have a secure understanding of the risks that pupils face and of reporting and referring procedures. These have been further tightened by the introduction of an online recording system.
- Safeguarding leaders are proactive in ensuring that the setting's safeguarding procedures are kept under constant review and in line with the latest guidance for schools provided by the Secretary of State. However, leaders recognise that, as with other areas of the setting's work, its policies do not always match its strong practice, and are working to ensure that written policies outline their expectations and procedures more explicitly.
- The setting's safeguarding and child protection procedures are strengthened by the effective implementation of other policies, including those for online safety, safer recruitment, responsible use, and tackling extremism and radicalisation.
- Leaders have ensured that the setting's recruitment processes are appropriately thorough. They have undertaken recent safer recruitment training and apply these principles assiduously when appointing new staff. Throughout the process, leaders check staff's appropriateness to work with children and that all newly appointed staff share the setting's values and ethos. Wendover Online School does not use supply staff.
- Leaders make effective use of monitoring and filtering systems to ensure that Wendover Online School is a place where pupils can learn safely. Staff and pupils use their own devices to access lessons. However, leaders have carefully considered the specific risks this poses and have taken appropriate steps to mitigate them.

What do pupils and parents and carers think about Wendover Online School?

- Pupils talk extremely positively about Wendover Online School. They feel happy, safe and well cared for. They enjoy their learning and feel that attending the setting has given them a fresh start. Pupils particularly appreciate the flexibility afforded to them. One pupil stated, 'It is flexible and caters for my academic needs whilst also giving me the time to do extra-curricular activities from outside of school.'
- Without exception, pupils feel that behaviour for learning is strong and supports their learning. They talk positively about the relationships they have forged with

both teachers and their peers. Pupils describe how their self-confidence is developing and how, as a result of this, they would now like more opportunities for socialising and meeting up in person.

- All the parents who spoke with inspectors or who completed the online survey reported how Wendover Online School had exceeded their expectations. All stated that they would recommend the setting to another parent. Parents particularly appreciate the family feel and the effort that staff have taken in getting to know their children. Many parents described how attending the setting has been transformative in re-engaging their children with education. As one parent stated, 'If it wasn't for this school, my daughter wouldn't have an education.'

About the visit

- This is Wendover Online School's first accreditation visit. Jonathan Dyer, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) was the lead inspector, accompanied by Damien Turrell HMI.

Compliance with the DfE's standards for online education

This section lists the standards for online education set out by the DfE ('the standards') that Wendover Online School does not meet. Where a standard is not listed, this is because Wendover Online School meets the standard. If any of the standards do not apply to Wendover Online School, these will be listed at the end.

The full list of standards can be found in [DfE's guidance on meeting the online education standards](#).

Section 1. Quality of education provided (curriculum)

The provider meets all the standards in section 1 of the standards.

Section 2. Quality of education provided (teaching)

The provider meets all the standards in section 2 of the standards.

Section 3. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provider meets all the standards in section 3 of the standards.

Section 4. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- Leaders have not done everything that can reasonably be expected of them to promote the welfare of pupils attending Wendover Online School. While safeguarding procedures are appropriate, leaders have not considered other risks that pupils face while attending the setting. This includes the ergonomic and physical risks posed by working on computers, and risks related to activities such as science experiments and home baking.
- The setting's health and safety policy is not appropriate. It does not refer to pupils. Therefore, leaders have not considered how they will protect pupils from these potential harms.
- Additionally, leaders have not followed the procedures outlined in their risk assessment policy. Although leaders have identified many of the potential risks that pupils face in relation to the setting's activities, they have not completed risk assessments which outline the control measures that need to be taken to reduce these risks as far as is reasonably practicable.

The following standards in section 4 of the standards are therefore failed:

- **Standard 4.6** on maintaining and implementing a health and safety policy

- **Standard 4.8** on maintaining and implementing a written risk assessment policy and managing risk

Section 5. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The provider meets all the standards in section 5 of the standards.

Section 6. Provision of information

The provider meets all the standards in section 6 of the standards.

Section 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The provider meets all the standards in section 7 of the standards.

Section 8. Quality of leadership in and management of the service

- Leaders have not ensured that the setting meets the standards. This is, in part, because they do not have a secure understanding of the relevant DfE guidance.
- Leaders' understanding of health and safety lacks depth. Leaders have not ensured that the setting's policies and procedures promote pupils' well-being securely, or put systems in place to minimise risks as far as is reasonably practicable.

The following standards in section 8 of the standards are therefore failed:

- **Standard 8.1** on those with leadership and management responsibilities at the provider demonstrating skills and knowledge appropriate to their role
- **Standard 8.2** on those with leadership and management responsibilities at the provider fulfilling their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met consistently
- **Standard 8.3** on those with leadership and management responsibilities at the provider actively promoting the well-being of pupils

Standards that do not apply to this provider

The following standards do not apply to this provider:

- **Standards 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.16, 5.17, 5.18** only apply where the provider uses supply staff
- **Standard 5.22** only applies if a proprietor lives or has lived outside of the UK
- **Standard 6.3** only applies where a provider has a governing body

- **Standards 6.5, 6.10** only apply where a report on the provider has been published under the Online Education Accreditation Scheme at the time of the visit

Contact details for Wendover Online School

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