

Holdsworth School

Park Hill, Padiham Road, Burnley, BB12 6TG

Unique reference number (URN): 152515

Pre-registration inspection report:

28 May 2026

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered

The purpose of this inspection was to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the proposed school's likely compliance with the independent school standards and associated requirements that are required for registration as an independent school.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out pre-registration inspections of proposed independent schools, we report on the provider's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

The proprietor, chief executive officer (CEO) and wider executive team demonstrate a secure and thorough understanding of the independent school standards (the standards). Leaders have put in place effective systems to ensure that the proposed school will likely consistently meet these standards over time. The range of skills and expertise will ensure that leaders will have secure oversight of the school's effectiveness. They have well planned monitoring system and evaluation processes.

The proprietor, CEO and senior leaders have a clear vision for the proposed school. This vision ensures that the needs of the pupils admitted are met well so that they can thrive in a positive, ambitious environment. The proprietor has established an inclusive and pupil-focused ethos. There is a clear emphasis on promoting pupils' wellbeing. Through appropriate training, staff will adopt a trauma-informed

approach to support the pupils, enabling them to respond effectively and provide timely, appropriate support.

The proprietor has ensured that standards are likely to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

Leaders have put in place a carefully structured and sequenced curriculum that clearly outlines the knowledge that pupils will learn and when they will learn it. They have thought carefully about selected appropriate qualifications, ensuring that the programme of study equips pupils with the essential knowledge and skills needed for future success. The curriculum provides a suitably wide range of subjects. In addition, there is a direct focus on developing pupils' reading abilities, with phonics support where required.

Pupils will receive appropriate relationships and sex education. Furthermore, the proprietor has established a variety of opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of the workplace, helping them to explore different pathways and make informed choices and decisions about their future careers.

Teaching

Leaders have in place a well-developed professional learning programme to ensure that all staff, including early career teachers, gain the knowledge and skills required to deliver the curriculum effectively. Resources from the selected curriculum are appropriate and good quality.

In the proposed school, pupils will be taught in small groups, benefiting from the support of both teachers and teaching assistants. Staff will receive detailed information through the 'understanding me' documents. This will allow them to gain a deep understanding about their pupils who will all have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The training package will also support staff to have a range of strategies so that they can adjust their teaching approaches to support pupils effectively in lessons.

Assessment

Leaders have in place a clear, focused assessment framework to support teachers if the proposed school opens. This would allow staff to routinely check understanding during lessons and to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Staff will check pupils' starting points, including their reading ability, on entry. This will

enable leaders to target support effectively and will enable staff to shape teaching and curriculum adaptations more successfully.

The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme covers a wide range of topics aimed at preparing pupils for life beyond school and within modern British society. It is carefully designed to develop pupils' knowledge progressively over time. Leaders recognise that pupils will have varied starting points and therefore have built flexibility into the provision. The proprietor will ensure that pupils explore any issues, such as political views, in a fair and impartial way.

The proposed curriculum also enables pupils to develop an understanding of a range of faiths and religions. A range of visits, such as those to local churches, will enhance this further.

The proprietor has plans in place to ensure that pupils gain a thorough understanding of fundamental British values. Staff will support this through planned lessons and everyday routines and expectations. Furthermore, the school has appropriate arrangements in place to promote pupils' moral, social and cultural development. For example, carefully designed series of 'drop down days' support curriculum content well.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The proprietor understands how to create and sustain a culture of effective safeguarding. The proprietor has considered the proposed safeguarding arrangements carefully. The designated safeguarding lead holds the appropriate qualifications. Staff will benefit from a comprehensive range of training to give them the necessary skills to be vigilant. Reporting systems for safeguarding concerns are well placed. Where necessary, leaders demonstrate clearly how they will work with a range of external agencies to support pupils. This demonstrates the proprietor's capacity to ensure that staff keep pupils safe.

The proprietor has proposed a robust induction programme for incoming staff, which will include comprehensive safeguarding training. In addition, clear plans are in place for ongoing professional learning which will ensure that staff remain informed about wider safeguarding concerns, including contextual risks and online safety.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Behaviour, anti-bullying and supervision of pupils

Leaders demonstrate a well-defined and consistent approach to behaviour management. This is clearly outlined in the proposed school's behaviour policy. It would allow staff to have confidence in applying these expectations effectively. There is a clear reward system in place. Where necessary, appropriate sanctions are in place. This includes suspensions when required. Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of maintaining accurate records, particularly when serious incidents of behaviour occur.

There are clear arrangements in place to ensure that pupils are appropriately always supervised. Staff will have a clear outline of their roles and responsibilities, supported by defined staff-to-pupil ratios.

The anti-bullying approach, as outlined in an effective anti-bullying policy, will ensure that staff know how to reinforce the message that bullying is not acceptable and deal with any potential incidents promptly, to prevent them from reoccurring.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The proprietor has taken steps to ensure the premises comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. A fire risk assessment has been completed, and fire safety equipment is accessible across the school site. The proprietor makes regular checks to ensure that this equipment is in a suitable condition. Routine inspections and record-keeping cover fire doors, emergency lighting and the fire alarm system.

The first aid policy provides suitable guidance for staff to administer care when required. There will be a suitable number of qualified first aid trained staff. First-aid supplies are well maintained. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure the safe storage of medicines. When required, there is a medical room for pupils to receive short-term care. This is near a toilet and contains washing facilities.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Admissions and attendance

The proprietor will ensure that staff record all mandatory information on the school's proposed admissions register. Leaders understand their obligations to maintain accurate records. The proprietor has ensured that a well-developed attendance policy is in place which takes account of statutory guidance. Leaders understand the importance of high attendance. They have clear strategies in place to support more regular attendance for those pupils who do not come to school regularly.

Risk assessment

There is a structured policy in place that guides staff with how to identify, assess and manage risks. A range of risk assessments show that appropriate control measures are in place to reduce the identified risks. Risk assessments undergo regular review and revision when needed.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

The recruitment checks made on staff, supply staff and the proprietor, and the single central record of these recruitment checks

Leaders, including those responsible for oversight of the school, have undertaken appropriate training to meet their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding. The proprietor has ensured that at least one member of staff has the necessary safer recruitment training. Leaders have the knowledge they need to ensure that all relevant pre-employment checks are carried out before staff begin at the school. This includes checks such as prohibition from teaching or section 128 checks for relevant staff.

The proprietor has put in place an electronic single central record. They ensure that leaders check the single central record regularly and record these checks accurately.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities, water supply, changing accommodation and showers

The school will provide toilet facilities with both hot and cold running water, with safeguards in place to ensure that the temperature is safe to use. Separate toilet and washing facilities are available for boys and girls. Staff have their own facilities to use separate from pupils. Pupils will have continuous access to drinking water through cooling stations throughout the school. Water that is not suitable for drinking is clearly marked throughout the school. Shower facilities are available for pupils to use, with changing facilities available.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

There is a well-presented medical room. It is located at a convenient position in school so that all pupils can access it. It contains a bed, pillow and blanket for pupils. It has washing facilities within the room and a toilet is located nearby.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

The proprietor has invested significantly to ensure that the school premises are maintained to a very high standard. There is no damage or potential danger to pupils presented by the building or surrounding grounds. The spaces designated as classrooms are appropriate for their purpose. Classrooms have 'breakout' spaces within or nearby to support pupils who need time to regulate their emotions. These are also well designed and fit for purpose. There is sufficient space for the intended number of pupils, taking into consideration their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Fire exits are clearly indicated and not obstructed by any hazards. Outdoor lighting is in place to ensure that pupils and staff can leave the building safely in an emergency. The proprietor and leaders have ensured that clear procedures will be in place when pupils arrive by transport so they are not placed at any unintended risk.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

The proprietor has ensured that the classrooms which pupils will use are fit for purpose. They have ensured that the lighting is appropriate for both staff and pupils. They are well lit. The proprietor and leaders have considered classroom acoustics well. For example, they have lowered some ceilings to prevent as much noise as possible.

Outdoor space

The proprietor and leaders have modified the school environment to ensure that pupils have plenty of outdoor space to play in. Older pupils have a separate play space from younger pupils. There is sufficient space for physical education to take place on site. There is a well-designed designated area for pupils to engage in an experiential outdoor learning programme.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proprietor has put in place a website for the proposed school, which follows the format of other schools which they run. It includes all necessary information expected such as behaviour, anti-bullying, admissions and the school's safeguarding and child protection policies. It also contains contact details for the proprietor during and outside of term time.

The proprietor recognises the requirement to publish the number of complaints previously received. There is also a commitment to work alongside external agencies to monitor and review pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. The proprietor will ensure that they share any information about looked-after children and those with EHC plans with commissioning local authorities whenever required.

The proprietor has a format to ensure that parents and carers receive a yearly written summary outlining their children's progress.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school has put in place a complaints policy that meets requirements. It clearly outlines the different stages, consideration and management of complaints. This includes an informal stage in the first instance and a panel with an independent member in the final stage. Leaders have appropriate systems in place to record complaints.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

The school's accessibility plan

The school has an appropriate accessibility plan in place which will meet schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The plan identifies how leaders intend to improve pupils' access to the site, information and the curriculum.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. Inspectors checked the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspector spoke with the director of education, executive headteacher, head of safeguarding and the chief executive officer (CEO). They checked a range of documentation including various policies, curriculum information and the single central record. The inspector also conducted a tour of the premises with the executive headteacher.

The school is located at Park Hill, Padiham Road, Burnley, Lancashire, BB12 6TG.

The school intends to offer education on a full-time basis for up to 70 pupils. Pupils will be aged between 5 and 18 years old. They are likely to have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including autism and/or social, emotional, mental health needs (SEMH).

Lead inspector

Stuart Perkins

His Majesty's Inspector

About this proposed school

Proprietor

Chair of the proprietor body

Headteacher

Type of school

Capacity

Polaris Children's Services Limited

Joanne August

Sarah Chadderton

Other independent special school

70

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's current position: 0
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's proposal: 70
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll	Provider's current position: 0
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	Provider's proposal: 0
Age range of pupils	Provider's current position: 0
Gender of pupils	Provider's proposal: 70
Total hours operating as a school per week	Provider's current position: 5–18
Total hours of teaching provided per week	Provider's proposal: 5–18
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Provider's current position: Mixed
Number of part-time teaching staff	Provider's proposal: Mixed
Annual fees for day pupils	Provider's current position: 32.5
Email address	Provider's proposal: 32.5
	Provider's current position: 26
	Provider's proposal: 26
	Provider's current position: 0
	Provider's proposal: 10
	Provider's current position: 0
	Provider's proposal: 0
	£65,000
	schooloffice@polriscommunity.co.uk

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