

Pontville School

Black Moss Lane, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 4TW

Inspection dates

11 September 2018

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are thorough and consistent with government guidance. The safeguarding policy is detailed and comprehensive. It is supported by a wide range of additional policies. Supporting policies, such as the equality policy, online safety policy and policies on extremism, child sexual exploitation and gang involvement, are clear and accessible. All groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act are highlighted in policies.
- Staff are vigilant and understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders ensure that staff receive relevant training and are up to date with the latest guidance. Staff are provided with additional training to ensure they are aware of any safeguarding concerns associated with pupils' individual needs. All staff are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. There are thorough induction procedures to ensure that new and temporary staff are fully informed.
- Record-keeping is exemplary. Safeguarding incidents and follow-up actions, including referrals to other agencies, are logged and monitored closely. The safeguarding team ensures that all concerns are followed through to an appropriate conclusion to minimise risk.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school. They feel able to talk to staff about any concerns and feel well supported. The school provides a calm, constructive environment, where pupils develop effective personal and life skills. Pupils are well informed about potential risks to their well-being, including, for example, risks associated with extremism, grooming, and online activity.

Paragraphs 11, 12

- A detailed written health and safety policy ensures that the school site, buildings and staff comply with health and safety laws. Leaders and managers conduct frequent health and safety checks to ensure that regulations are adhered to. They draw on

external expertise to support their reviews.

- Leaders and site managers are vigilant in ensuring the safety of school premises and equipment. Health and safety checks are conducted at the start of each day. There are detailed checks on electrical installations, appliances and tools.
- Curriculum areas and classrooms are well maintained, clean and orderly. For example, workshops supporting the teaching of motor vehicle maintenance, construction, decorating, health and beauty, and catering have high-quality appliances and tools that are stored safely. Staff and pupils are well informed about the safe use of tools and use appropriate safety equipment.
- The proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Thorough fire-safety audits and risk assessments are carried out at least annually, ensuring that the premises meet the required standards. Fire safety is ensured through weekly alarm tests and fire drills each half term. Firefighting equipment is well maintained and accessible. There are several evacuation routes that are clearly signed, free from clutter and visible.

Paragraph 14

- Staff are deployed appropriately and pupils are well supervised. The high staff-to-pupil ratio ensures the close supervision of pupils in classes and around school. Leaders plan to appoint additional staff when the number of pupils on roll increases. Leaders adapt staffing effectively to ensure that pupils receive a personalised curriculum that fully meets their individual welfare, academic and personal needs.

Paragraph 16

- There is a written risk assessment policy which is effectively implemented and ensures that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks. Comprehensive risk assessments have been completed for all curriculum and extra-curricular activities. For example, in the farm area, effective action has been taken to ensure the grounds are well maintained and promote the welfare of the animals and safety of pupils. In a designated outdoor learning area, pupils are well informed about how to manage risk and behave safely.
- There are detailed risk assessments relating to individual pupils' behavioural and safeguarding needs. The school's positive behaviour strategies support staff to minimise triggers that cause anxiety and help pupils to manage their behaviour. Risks associated with extremism, online activity and other safeguarding concerns are analysed and minimised effectively.
- The standards in Part 3 are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

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

Paragraphs 17, 18(1), 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(2)(f), 18(3), 19(1), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(2)(e), 19(3), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1),

21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)

- All of the standards relating to the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors are met. The single central record contains details of all the required employment checks on staff and supply staff, and further checks on managers, trust board members and proprietors. It is up to date and maintained in electronic form.
- Thorough checks are completed on teachers, supply staff and other staff members before appointment. Personnel files are well kept and contain further details of staff's qualifications, references and training.
- Therapists are employed by the Witherslack Group, and have had all the appropriate checks completed centrally. The school has all the relevant details recorded in the single central record. The required checks have also been completed centrally on trust board members and proprietors.
- The school uses one agency for supply staff. The agency sends details of checks to the school and these are included in the single central record.
- The standards in Part 4 are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)

- There are suitable, age-appropriate toilet and washing facilities for the sole use of pupils. Pupils who are aged 11 years or older have access to changing rooms and showers for use after physical education and outdoor education. Older students can also access showers after activities, such as construction, engineering, painting and decorating.
- There is well-equipped medical room on each of the two sites. It includes a bed and washbasin, and is near to a toilet facility. First-aid kits are well stocked. There are several rooms to support pupils' therapeutic needs, including sensory rooms.

Paragraph 25, 26, 27

- The school premises and facilities are well maintained. The various teaching spaces and communal areas meet the learning and pastoral needs of pupils exceptionally well. The main school has extensive grounds and outdoor teaching areas, as well as a range of classrooms.
- Classrooms are carefully designed to provide the right amount of stimulus for pupils' learning and communications needs. All rooms have suitable acoustic conditions and lighting. Teaching and learning areas are well designed and fully equipped to support specialist teaching, for example in early years, art, sciences, food technology, computing and physical education. Pupils' therapy needs are catered for well in the sensory and 'chill out' rooms.
- The outdoor areas are exceptional. The extensive gardens, farm and forested areas are maintained to a high standard to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils.

- The school opened a second site in September 2017. This site has specialist teaching areas for vocational studies and life skills development. It includes a fully equipped professional kitchen, a living area, an indoor construction site, motor-vehicle workshops, painting and decorating facilities, and a hair and beauty salon. These areas are extremely well equipped and well maintained.
- External lighting around both buildings ensures that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.

Paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)

- Pupils have access to drinking water at all times from water dispensers placed around the school. They are clearly labelled.
- Washing facilities are available for all pupils, with hot and cold water. Hot water is of a suitable temperature for handwashing and does not pose a scalding risk.

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- Pupils have a wide range of outdoor space to play outside and for physical education. There are large grassed and hard areas, as well as the extensive gardens and wooded areas.
- The standards in Part 5 are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- The school's website is accessible and has all required policies, including the child protection policy and other safeguarding policies, which promote the welfare of pupils in school. The school's complaints procedure and equality policy are also on the website.
- The standards in Part 6 are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- Leaders and managers are knowledgeable and well informed. They are focused on continual school improvement and ensure all the independent school standards are met consistently.
- Pupils' health, welfare and safety are actively promoted in all aspects of the school's work. Leaders ensure that all staff are highly trained to support pupils' particular needs and ensure their safety well-being. All staff are extremely vigilant in safeguarding pupils and promoting their learning.
- The integration of therapy, care and education meets pupils' needs precisely. The personalised, high-quality curriculum helps pupils to develop effective personal skills and make excellent progress in their learning. Pupils are prepared exceptionally well

for their next steps.

- Leaders have completed thorough impact assessments related to the material change application. They have taken appropriate action to ensure that the change does not have a detrimental effect on current pupils. There is ample space, good-quality resources and sufficient staffing to effectively facilitate the change.
- The standards in Part 8 are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- The statutory requirements for the early years are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	133540
DfE registration number	888/6050
Inspection number	10077539

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Independent special day and residential school for pupils with social and communication difficulties
School status	Independent residential special school
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Jude Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Justine Sims
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,743–£85,266
Telephone number	01695 578734
Website	https://witherslackgroup.co.uk/pontville-school
Email address	office@pontville.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	5–7 July 2016

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 19	5 to 19	5 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	98	130	130

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	98	130
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	98	130
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	98	130
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	98	130

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	21	24
Number of part-time teaching staff	2	2.5
Number of staff in the welfare provision	10	11.5

Information about this school

- Pontville School is part of the Witherslack Group of schools. It provides day places and boarding for boys and girls aged five to 19 years, who have social and communication difficulties. Pupils enter the school at various ages and not all stay until they are 19 years old.

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and their places in school are funded by their local authority. Most pupils attend daily. A small number of pupils are in residential provision.
- The school employs speech and language therapists, an educational psychologist, occupational therapists and mental health practitioners.
- The school has acquired an additional site at Paddock Road, West Pimbo, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 9PL. This site opened in September 2017.
- The school was last inspected in July 2016.
- The residential provision was inspected in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The material change inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) because the school requested an increase in the number of pupils it is registered for, from 105 to 130.
- The DfE requested that Ofsted conduct a material inspection to report against parts 4 and 5 and paragraphs 7, 11, 12, 14, 16 and 34 of the independent school standards.
- The inspector toured both school sites with the site manager and checked the suitability of the premises against the relevant independent school standards.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documents and policies to promote the health, well-being and safety of pupils, including the school's safeguarding policy. She examined the single central record.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and regional director for the Witherslack Group to discuss all aspects of the material change proposal.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, the site manager and administrative manager to discuss safeguarding and provision in relation to the material change.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke with others during lessons, to gain their views on the school.
- The inspector examined the school's website to ensure that proprietors are complying with the requirements to publish information.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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