

Pontville School

Black Moss Lane, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 4TW

Inspection date

1 December 2022

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

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has paid attention to the current statutory guidance for safeguarding pupils and students in the sixth form. A suitable and up-to-date policy is in place. The policy is published on the school's website. Leaders have established all the necessary arrangements to keep pupils and students safe and to promote their welfare at the school.
- There are several designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) that oversee both school sites. There are always one and often more DSLs on each site. All staff receive an appropriate induction programme, safeguarding training and regular updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism, sexual exploitation, sexting and e-safety.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The proprietor body has a written health and safety policy which is tailored to the premises of the school. It complies with all relevant laws. Leaders carry out regular fire safety checks of the premises and the findings are suitably logged. The proprietor body ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- A written risk assessment policy is in place. Completed risk assessments show that leaders take appropriate actions to minimise any risks to pupils and students. This includes risk assessments for the school buildings, including the classrooms, and risk assessments for individual pupils with specific needs.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils and students are always supervised, including at breaktimes, when arriving at school and when leaving the school premises.
- All the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

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

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

- The single central record (SCR) is in place and contains all the required information. Leaders understand the need to complete all the required checks on the suitability of new staff before these staff start work at the school.
- Records relating to the proprietor body are included on the school's SCR. All the suitability checks, including those relating to the leadership and management of the school, have also been carried out.
- The proprietor body has completed appropriate safer recruitment training to support the appointment of suitable staff to work in a school. Induction documentation for new staff makes it clear that they undergo a full suite of safeguarding and related training upon appointment.
- Leaders occasionally employ agency staff. They follow all the procedures to ensure that these staff are suitable to work with children.
- Leaders may engage volunteers in future. They are clear about their responsibility for checking the suitability of volunteers who might work with children.
- All the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 28(1)–28(1)(d), 28(2)–28(2)(b)

- The main school accommodation is made up of a number of school buildings within an extensive school site. The buildings are maintained to a good standard and comprise numerous classrooms, as well as breakout and specialist rooms, for example for science, music and information technology. There are kitchen facilities, dining rooms, staff spaces and several sets of toilets for the sole use of pupils. There are extensive school grounds which include an all-weather pitch and areas for horticulture and animal husbandry. The second site is a 16 to 19 centre. It is housed in a large industrial building on an industrial estate. It is well appointed, with classrooms, breakout rooms and specialist areas for subjects such as construction, music, hair and beauty and computing. It also includes a large workshop area.
- There are appropriate toilet facilities on both sites. There are separate toilet cubicles that can be secured from the inside. There is hot and cold water. The hot water is thermostat controlled and at an appropriate temperature. There are signs indicating that the water in the toilet facilities is not suitable for drinking. However, pupils and students do have access to drinking water throughout the day.
- There are separate changing and shower facilities on both sites. These are clean and furnished to a suitable standard.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- Medical rooms have been set aside at both sites, with suitable washing facilities in each room. There is easy access to a toilet. A bed, blanket and pillow were in both of the medical rooms at the time of the inspection. The rooms are equipped with a first-aid kit and lockable medicine cabinets.

Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)

- The accommodation is of an appropriate standard. It meets all requirements for securing the health, safety and welfare of pupils and students. This includes appropriate acoustics and lighting for the purpose of the different rooms. The teaching rooms have a suitable source of natural light. There is exterior lighting installed so that pupils, students, staff and visitors can arrive and leave the sites safely in the hours of darkness.

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

- The pupils and students have access to safe outdoor areas to play in when not in lessons. The outdoor space is suitable for physical education lessons as part of the school's curriculum.
- All the independent school standards in this part 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)(c)

- The proprietor body has an excellent understanding of the independent school standards and has plans in place to monitor compliance regularly and comprehensively.
- Leaders demonstrate the knowledge required to run this independent school successfully and to accommodate the material change request. They have experience of, and a commitment to, providing an effective quality of education for pupils and students in the sixth form. They fulfil their responsibilities to promote the well-being of pupils and students.
- All the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility plan fully reflects the school's statutory responsibilities.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	133540
DfE registration number	888/6050
Inspection number	10265577

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 likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Bonnie Etchell-Anderson
Headteacher	Justine Sims
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,254 to £103,642
Telephone number	01695 578 734
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/pontville-school
Email address	pontville@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	12 to 14 March 2019

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	141	155	155

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	141	155
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	141	155
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	141	155
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	13	Not known

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	28	28
Number of part-time teaching staff	3	3
Number of staff in the welfare provision	59	59

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection was on 12 to 14 March 2019.
- The school operates over two sites. The main site is located on Black Moss Lane, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 4TW The school's second site is a 16 to 19 vocational provision called Pontville 16 to 19 Centre. It is situated on Paddock Road, West Pimbo, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 9PL.
- All pupils and students who attend this school have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils and students have social and communication needs, autism spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out this inspection because the proprietor body applied to make a material change to the school's registration.
- The proprietor body has requested to increase the school's capacity from 141 pupils to 155 pupils.
- This is the first material change inspection since the school's last independent standard inspection in March 2019.
- The inspector checked those aspects of safeguarding that were directly linked to the material change application.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and senior leaders of the school. She also met with representatives from the proprietor body. She spoke on the telephone to the chair of the governing board. The inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding lead and the manager who maintains the single central record.
- The inspector made tours of both of the school sites to check the suitability of the premises against the relevant independent school standards.
- The inspector also looked at a range of documents and policies relevant to the material change request. This included health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment documentation. The inspector also checked documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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