

Cumberland School

Rivington Lane, Rivington, Bolton, Lancashire BL6 7RX

Inspection dates

11 and 12 December 2024

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

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

- The school has a safeguarding policy that has regard to the latest appropriate statutory guidance. This policy is published on the school's website. There are secure and robust procedures in place for staff to report any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare.
- When necessary, the school makes timely and appropriate referrals to external agencies in order to keep pupils safe. The arrangements for doing so take into account that places at the school are commissioned by numerous local authorities.
- The proprietor has ensured that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. This helps staff to recognise when pupils may be at risk of harm. Several staff are trained as designated safeguarding leads and deputy designated safeguarding leads. This means that there is always at least one suitably qualified professional available at either of the school's sites.
- All new staff receive an appropriate induction programme, ongoing safeguarding training and regular updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism, and criminal and sexual exploitation.
- The school operates an online single central record that meets the requirements of the independent school standards ('the standards'). It includes all staff, proprietors and governors and is checked by leaders on a regular basis.
- These standards are met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b) and 9(c), 10 and 14

- The school's behaviour and restraint reduction policies aim to promote a positive culture of behaviour support. It is intended that restrictive physical intervention be used as a minimum. All staff receive regular training in the group's approach to restraint reduction. The school has a rigorous system to log and record all incidents of physical intervention. These records are reviewed regularly. This is used to inform pupils' individual plans.

- The school has developed a comprehensive approach to preventing bullying. Visitors, including 'Rob the Rapper' help to bring the school's anti-bullying aims to life. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that staff are always available if support is needed.
- There is appropriate supervision of all pupils. The school has deployed staff effectively in order to ensure pupils' welfare and safety. This includes clinical and pastoral staff with the required expertise to meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities successfully. As a result, the school is calm and pupils report that they feel safe at the school.
- These standards are met.

Paragraph 15

- Leaders comply with their duty to make the admissions and attendance registers available for inspection. These registers contain the information required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Evidence provided during the inspection showed that absences and late arrivals are recorded appropriately. There are clear procedures in place to check that pupils are safe when they are not in school. Leaders work well with pupils, parents and carers and local authorities to promote high attendance. As a result, pupils attend well.
- This standard is met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The proprietor has prioritised pupils' welfare. It has ensured that the school has taken the necessary steps to reduce risks. For example, the school has drawn up an appropriate risk assessment policy. This includes considering how risk assessments may need to change and adapt for the changing needs of pupils. Dynamic, individual pupil plans are reviewed very regularly. This means that emerging needs are well understood and supported.
- These standards are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a) to (k)

- The school has adopted the Witherslack Group complaints policy. This policy is in writing. Parents can access it via the school's website. The policy details how complaints can be made on a formal and informal basis, including the timescales for the management of these complaints. The school keeps a log of all complaints that have been made to the school.
- However, at the time of this emergency inspection, the proprietor had failed to put in place a sufficient level of independence when complaints reach the final stage of investigation. The independent school standards require formal complaints at stage 3 to be considered by a panel, one member of which should be independent to the leadership and management of the school. Inspectors found that the Witherslack Group's complaints policy did not include this requirement. This meant that if a complaints panel was ever convened at stage 3, the complaint may not have been considered by anyone impartial to the leadership of the school.

- Prior to the publication of this report, the Witherslack Group updated their complaints policy. The school has adopted it. It now ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school.
- These standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- Leaders continue to demonstrate high standards to support the most vulnerable pupils. The headteacher and other senior staff have the knowledge and expertise to fulfil their responsibilities. They operate robust systems and procedures to ensure that they promote the welfare of pupils.
- Leaders have a strong understanding of the standards. By the end of the on-site inspection, leaders understood that they must amend their complaints policy to ensure complete impartiality. The school's policy now directs that one 'stage 3' panel member is independent of the management of the school and company. Evidence confirms that the school had not received complaints in the two preceding academic years. Therefore, complainants have not been prejudiced.
- These standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (the standards) and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	135541
DfE registration number	888/6104
Inspection number	10377202

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Pauline Rowland
Headteacher	Christopher Newiss
Annual fees (day pupils)	£81,469 to £103,515
Telephone number	01204 324446
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/our-locations/our-schools/cumberland-school
Email address	cumberland@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	18 to 20 January 2022

Information about this school

- The last full standard inspection was in January 2022. This was a standard inspection carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. At this inspection, the school met all of the independent school standards that were checked. The school was judged to be good at this time.
- Cumberland School is an independent, specialist day school. Pupils with a range of complex learning needs, social and emotional difficulties and challenging behaviours attend the school. All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school operates from two sites. Younger pupils attend the Rivington Lane campus at Rivington Lane, Rivington, Bolton, Lancashire BL6 7RX. Older pupils attend the Station Road campus at Station Road, Blackrod, Bolton BL6 5BN.

- The school uses four unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school is registered to admit up to 96 pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) as a result of a number of concerns raised about the school and the Witherslack Group in general. This was one of a number of inspections carried out at the same time.
- This inspection was conducted with no notice.
- Inspectors focused on the school’s safeguarding procedures and how pupils are kept safe; behaviour and how the school manages behaviour; how complaints are managed and leadership and management.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the pastoral managers and members of the clinical team.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the school’s board, national operations director and the regional director.
- Inspectors made a tour of the Rivington Lane site and the Station Road site.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons and in other less structured times.
- Inspectors spoke with seven groups of pupils and individual pupils about their experiences at the school.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and their deputies.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included the checks leaders make prior to employment on staff’s suitability to work with children.
- Inspectors reviewed documents relating to pupils’ behaviour, restrictive physical intervention and anti-bullying.
- Inspectors considered the school’s policy for dealing with complaints.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for school staff.

Inspection team

Marcus Newby, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Simon Rowe	His Majesty’s Inspector
Clive Close	His Majesty’s Inspector

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