

Inspection of Woodlands

Church Lane, Edenfield, Rossendale, Lancashire BL0 0QL

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is ambitious for what all pupils should achieve. Pupils make great strides in their personal development during their time at Woodlands. However, in some curriculum subjects, pupils' achievement is more variable. In part, this is because the school has not sufficiently clarified its ambitions for the knowledge that pupils will learn in these subjects. This prevents pupils from achieving well across the full curriculum.

Pupils develop strong bonds with staff at this nurturing school. This helps pupils to feel secure and cared about. They are safe and happy and feel content. Pupils receive highly effective individualised support to reconnect with their schooling. Over time, pupils successfully transition back into mainstream education because of the support that they receive.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. It helps pupils to manage their emotions increasingly well. Pupils conduct themselves appropriately during the school day. The school takes effective action when pupils have occasional concerns about bullying.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of trips and experiences. For example, pupils visit a beach to learn about erosion in coastal areas and go to cotton mills when they study the Industrial Revolution. Pupils also experience many enrichment activities, such as snowboarding, bouldering and skateboarding.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school caters for pupils who have suffered significant trauma in their lives. These pupils have had many disruptions to their education prior to their arrival at the school. Pupils often have a range of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs due to their previous experiences. The school works well with external agencies to accurately identify pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It quickly forms trusting relationships with pupils, which ensures that work to cater for pupils' SEMH needs begins in earnest. The positive impact of this work is clear to see. For example, pupils receive the support they need to steadily re-engage with their schooling, which leads to consistently high levels of attendance. Over time, pupils also develop more effective strategies to manage their emotions and conduct themselves well in lessons and around school.

The proprietor has taken some positive action to partly address the areas for improvement following the last inspection. For example, the proprietor has invested in published curriculum schemes for some subjects and has provided staff with subject-specific professional development. Nonetheless, the proprietor has not maintained a secure oversight of the school's curriculum offer to ensure that all curriculums are suitably designed. Several subjects are underdeveloped and some schemes of work are incomplete. In these subjects, teachers are not suitably clear

about the crucial knowledge that pupils should be taught, nor do they have sufficient guidance to deliver these subjects consistently well.

In recent times, the school has not implemented its curriculum as well as it would like. This is mostly due to a combination of previous weaknesses in teaching, turbulence in staffing and issues with curriculum design. School leaders have begun to address underlying causes, and positive improvements can now be seen. Nonetheless, many of the school's remedial actions are relatively new or ongoing, and it is too early to see a sustained impact on the quality of education that pupils receive. As a result, pupils have not learned all that they otherwise could.

The school has developed new checks to improve how it identifies what pupils know and remember. In subjects where the school has clearly identified the components of knowledge that it expects pupils to acquire, checks on learning are steadily becoming more effective and precise.

The school ensures that pupils quickly become fluent, confident readers. It delivers its chosen phonics programme well to pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read. It has a sharp focus on addressing these pupils' individual gaps in their knowledge of sounds.

The personal development offer for pupils is a strength of the school. The school ensures that pupils gain a stronger understanding of the world around them, including developing the knowledge and skills to function independently. For example, pupils plan day trips and learn how to use public transport safely. They also visit shops and learn how to budget their money. The school promotes diversity well through its curriculum. This helps pupils to develop a respect and tolerance for the differences of others. The school also ensures that pupils understand how to develop safe, healthy relationships with others.

The school supports pupils to form their own ambitions for the future. It organises independent careers advice for pupils and teaches them the skills they will need for the world of employment, further education and training. Pupils develop an awareness of fundamental British values. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

The school takes effective action to ensure that staff have a manageable workload. For instance, staff receive the time that they need to carry out additional tasks. The proprietor complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. It also carries out appropriate checks on the suitability of new staff to work with children. It ensures that fire safety and electrical equipment are maintained and in good working order. However, the proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards (the standards) are securely met because it has not addressed some weaknesses in the design and delivery of the curriculum. Nonetheless, the proprietor, along with school leaders, demonstrates the capacity to address the issues identified during this inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In several subjects, the school has not completed its curriculum thinking. By extension, it has not developed full schemes of work that identify the components of knowledge that pupils will learn and the order in which it will be taught. This sometimes hinders staff from delivering some curriculums effectively, which impacts how well pupils can learn. The school should finalise the design of the curriculum, ensuring that underpinning schemes of work are in place.
- Many teaching staff are new to their roles. Occasionally, they are not equipped to deliver curriculums well. This sometimes leads to pupils not acquiring the most important knowledge. The school should ensure that staff have the guidance and expertise to deliver subject curriculums consistently well.
- The proprietor does not have a sufficient oversight of the quality of the curriculum. This means that deficiencies in the curriculum have not been addressed as swiftly as they could. This sometimes impacts negatively on the quality of education that pupils receive. The proprietor should ensure that it gains a more robust insight into how well the curriculum is designed and delivered, so that issues can be addressed in a timely manner.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	140486
DfE registration number	351/6003
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10342092
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Proprietor	Halliwell Homes
Chair	Mathew Hargreaves
Headteacher	Emma Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,096 to £70,200
Telephone number	07747268586
Website	halliwellhomes.co.uk/woodlands-school
Email address	emma.fletcher@halliwellhomes.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 to 30 September 2021

Information about this school

- The school is overseen by an executive headteacher who has been appointed since the previous inspection. The executive headteacher oversees two other schools in the group. She is supported in her role by a head of education who has also been appointed since the previous inspection. A lead teacher typically manages this school on an operational basis. However, the substantive lead teacher was absent during the inspection. The other teaching staff in post during the inspection had only been in at the school for a short period of time.
- The previous standard inspection took place from 28 to 30 September 2021.
- The school is located at Church Lane, Edenfield, Rossendale, Lancashire BL0 0QL.
- The school is registered to admit up to nine pupils.
- All pupils who attend this school are in the care of a local authority.
- All pupils who currently attend the school have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have SEMH and a range of associated needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the proprietor body, the executive headteacher, the head of education and other members of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education (PSHE). For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, considered the curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also reviewed pupils' work in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and the standards. They also looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- As part of their checks on the standards, the lead inspector made a tour of the school's premises.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The lead inspector met with a group of carers. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their experiences of school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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