Martha H School

Downall Green Road, Wigan WN4 0LZ

Inspection date	28 May 2025
Overall outcome	**The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens**

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b)

- The proposed school has an appropriate curriculum policy in place that covers a broad range of subjects. The schemes of work match the national curriculum in their ambition. The intended curriculum will be adapted to the needs of each pupil, all of whom are expected to have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including autism and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. The proposed school intends to admit pupils who will be working well below the expectations for their chronological age. It has taken this into account in its curriculum plans.
- The proposed school intends that pupils will study all national curriculum subjects. Curriculums will be adapted to meet pupils' abilities and aptitudes. There is a clear scheme of work in place for the teaching of phonics and early reading. For students in the sixth form, there will be a focus on developing pupils' independence and preparing them for adulthood, including by studying for functional skills qualifications.
- The systems to assess pupils' learning needs on entry to the proposed school are comprehensive. The proposed school aims to use these checks to determine pupils' next steps in learning, both academically and in their personal and social development.
- The proposed school's policy for assessment clearly indicates how it will check pupils' progress through the curriculum. The proposed school intends to have individual plans for each pupil to set appropriate progress indicators and to help inform the qualifications that best match pupils' ambitions and abilities.
- There is a focus throughout the intended curriculum on furthering pupils' skills and knowledge to develop independence in readiness for adulthood.

Paragraphs 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g) to 2(2)(i)

- The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum follows a scheme of work that aims to build pupils' knowledge and skills on their prior learning.

- The proposed school has an audit tool in place to measure the effectiveness of its careers guidance against the Gatsby Benchmarks. It intends to ensure that pupils receive impartial advice through the local authority's careers advice and guidance services.

Paragraph 2(A)(1) to 2(A)(2)

- The proposed school has an appropriate policy for relationships and sex education. It has ensured that the curriculum matches the national guidance in terms of its content. The policy and schemes of work are available on request.

Paragraphs 3 and 4

- The proposed school has clear systems in place to check on pupils' achievements and progress in learning. The proposed school has set out the milestones that it would like pupils to reach by the end of each topic. It is intended that teachers will use assessments to adjust the curriculum expectations according to what pupils can achieve.
- The teaching resources in classrooms and in shared areas are new and are of good quality. More resources have been ordered so that they will be ready for use if the school opens.
- The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The proposed school's PSHE curriculum includes strands of life skills, careers and equalities. It includes activities to develop pupils' awareness of different cultures and beliefs. There is a heavy emphasis in the curriculum to develop pupils' moral understanding and social skills.
- The proposed school's behaviour policy aims to support pupils to improve their own behaviour. The proposed school intends to place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of what behaviours are socially acceptable when they first start at the school.
- The proposed school has appropriate plans in place to promote British values and pupils' understanding of equality. The PSHE curriculum includes a wealth of opportunities to look at what constitutes a healthy relationship. The curriculum aims to enable pupils to develop respect for others' beliefs and opinions and to value diversity.
- The curriculum for religious education (RE) aims to build pupils' awareness of a range of different faiths and religions as they move through the curriculum from year to year.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 10

- The proprietor has an appropriate safeguarding policy in place, which gives consideration to current statutory guidance. It contains clear guidance for staff about the procedures that they must follow if they have safeguarding concerns about a pupil. There is a suitably qualified designated safeguarding lead, who ensures that there are comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding training and updates for all staff when necessary.
- There are appropriate policies in place for behaviour and for anti-bullying. These include strategies to calm pupils when they are becoming dysregulated and to prevent bullying. There is clear guidance for staff on how to handle any incidents of misbehaviour should the need arise.

Paragraphs 11 to 16(b)

- The proposed school's health and safety policy is comprehensive and links to a range of other relevant policies and procedures. The proposed school has a risk assessment policy in place which explains how to mitigate risks to pupils and staff. The proprietor has ensured that there are also a number of relevant risk assessments in place for the school.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is a relevant fire risk assessment in place for the premises. There are regular maintenance checks for fire equipment, fire assembly points and the emergency lighting system.
- The proposed school has a clear policy for the administration of first aid. It is intended that each member of staff will be trained in first aid on induction. The proposed school has an appropriate admissions policy in place.
- The proprietor has ensured that there are admission and attendance registers in place that will comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18 (3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(6)

- The proprietor has a single central record (SCR) of the suitability of staff checks in place. This is held electronically but can be printed in legible format. All new staff are checked before they are employed to work with pupils. These checks are comprehensive and well documented.
- The SCR includes checks on the health and fitness of staff and their suitability to work with children. It includes all relevant checks for the proprietor, such as the check on whether individuals are suitable to manage a school.

Paragraphs 19(2) to 19(3)

- The proprietor does not intend to use any supply staff to cover any staff absence. The proposed school will employ additional staff to ensure that there is always someone to cover for any unexpected absences.

- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- The premises are in an excellent state of repair, having been recently refurbished. The proposed school is a single-story building which was previously a maintained primary school and, as a result, has a number of classrooms. The spaces include a library and a sensory room as well as a number of small areas for small group intervention work. There is a playground and extensive field to the rear of the property.
- Separate toilet facilities are provided for boys and girls. These are cubicles that can be locked from the inside. There are separate facilities for staff, for disabled pupils and for visitors.
- The dedicated medical room includes a shower facility that can be used for older pupils following physical education. This room also contains washing facilities and is close to a toilet.

Paragraphs 25 to 29(1)(b)

- There are rigorous checks in place for the maintenance of the premises and for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff. The classrooms and corridors are clean and tidy. Regular checks by reputable firms show that the electric and gas supplies are in good working order.
- Classrooms are spacious and the furniture and learning resources are all new and of a high quality.
- In each room there is suitable lighting and there are exterior lights fitted to the main entrances and exits.
- The emergency lighting and fire exit signs are maintained to a high standard. Fire fighting equipment has been checked and will be checked annually. Emergency doors open in the direction of escape. The emergency exits are indicated by correct signage and are illuminated with emergency lighting.
- Drinking water is clearly labelled. The hot water outlets in the proposed school have thermostatic mixing valves fitted to ensure that the water temperature does not pose a scalding risk. There are also appropriate checks in place for the management of legionella.
- There is ample outdoor space available for pupils' physical education and for their use during breaktimes, including a large field to the rear of the premises.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(3)(g)

- The proposed school does not have a website. The information required by the standards, including the school's schemes of work and safeguarding policy, are

available in printed format or they can be emailed to parents and carers and other agencies on request.

- There is a system in place to account for any income and expenditure for each pupil that is funded by a local authority as part of an education, health and care (EHC) plan. This model is used successfully in the proprietor's other schools. The proposed school is well placed to be able to provide comprehensive information on pupils' progress and development to the responsible local authority.
- The proposed school's contact information includes the school's address, telephone number and information about the proprietor's registered office. It also contains a statement about the proposed school's aims. The proposed school aims to publish a school's website if it opens that will include this information. At present, this information is available on request.
- The proposed school's policies clearly show how the provision at the school will be adapted for pupils, all of whom will likely have an EHC plan.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- The proposed school's complaints policy meets the requirements of the standards. It provides clear timescales for each stage of the process. The policy allows for any concerns to be addressed informally. Where necessary, it also allows for a panel hearing if complaints cannot be resolved.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor has put in place comprehensive arrangements for quality assuring the work of the school, including how the school will consistently meet the standards. The measures in place are robust and are used to inform the proprietor on a regular basis. The proprietor demonstrates the knowledge and skills to be able to hold the school to account for maintaining the quality of provision over time.
- The proposed school has designed a programme of activities for pupils' well-being that has been linked to PSHE topics. As a result, the proprietor has ensured that there is a strong focus on pupils' personal development and welfare.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proposed school has an equalities policy in place. This details how it will ensure that it promotes diversity.

- There is also an appropriate accessibility plan in place that sets out the measures in place to ensure pupils access the curriculum.
- The proprietor has ensured that the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are likely to be 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.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	151794
DfE registration number	359/6010
Inspection number	10402489

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Polaris Children's Services Limited
Chair	Joanne August
Headteacher	Not yet appointed
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000 to £75,000
Telephone number	07881 245 013
Website	None
Email address	catherine.beard@polariscommunity.co.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	5 to 18	5 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	42	42

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	42
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	42
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	42
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	42

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	10
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located at Downall Green Road, Wigan WN4 0LZ.
- The proposed school intends to cater for up to 42 pupils between the ages of five and 18 years. All pupils are likely to have an EHC plan.
- The proposed school intends to cater for pupils with SEMH needs and other SEND, including autism.
- The proposed school does not intend to use any alternative provision.
- The proposed school is in the process of appointing a headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine if the school is likely to meet the independent school standards prior to opening as a registered school.
- This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector met with the leader for quality assurance to scrutinise the record of checks that the school undertakes on the suitability of staff and to check on the arrangements to ensure the safety of the site, including the measures taken to meet fire safety. They also made a tour of the premises.
- The inspector met with the quality assurance leader to scrutinise documents and polices and to discuss the provision in place for pupils' education, should the school be approved for registration. The inspector also looked at the plans for the education of pupils at the school and the arrangements to assess pupils' progress.
- The inspector met with a representative of the proprietor body, who is also the chair of governors, to ensure that the proprietor has the skills and knowledge to discharge their duties and to ensure that there are robust arrangements in place to ensure that the standards are met consistently.
- The inspector also scrutinised a broad range of policies, risk assessments and documentation, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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