

Inspection of Poplar House School

24–26 St Annes Road East, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire FY8 1UR

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like their small, friendly school. Most have experienced many difficulties and disruption in their earlier education. Once here, pupils begin to put these experiences behind them. They trust staff to take good care of them. Pupils feel welcome, safe and happy in this school community where everyone is accepted.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They join the school with widely differing needs. Regardless of these needs, leaders have high expectations for the achievement of all pupils. From the start, pupils enjoy success, for example through the awards that they receive for the completion of units of work. This motivates pupils to try hard. They achieve well from their individual starting points.

Pupils know that staff expect them to behave well. There are clear rules and routines that pupils understand. Staff remind pupils of these rules should they forget to follow them. Leaders address any bullying behaviour swiftly and effectively.

There are many opportunities for pupils' wider development. For example, pupils learn to prepare and cook food. They learn to manage money, for example when buying ingredients from local shops. Pupils develop an interest in horticulture when they grow plants, including vegetables. They especially enjoy caring for their pet stick insect, Jeff. All of these experiences help to prepare pupils for the responsibilities of adult life.

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

Leaders have designed a broad, ambitious and interesting curriculum. This curriculum takes account of the range of needs of all pupils who attend the school.

Leaders have considered carefully what they most want pupils to know and to be able to do in readiness for future learning and employment and for life beyond school. In most subjects, leaders have broken down this important knowledge into smaller steps. Pupils learn these steps in a logical order so that they build up learning securely over time.

In a small number of subjects, some of the knowledge that is important for subsequent learning is less clearly defined. On occasion, this makes it more difficult for staff to ensure that pupils learn everything that they need to know in these subjects.

Staff check during lessons to make sure that pupils understand the learning provided. This helps to ensure that pupils' knowledge is secure before they move on to new learning. Leaders and staff gather a range of information from regular assessments to identify whether any pupils are at risk of falling behind. This enables them to provide support for pupils when necessary.

Staff typically design learning for pupils that is interesting and engaging. This usually helps pupils to learn well. Staff receive training to help them to deliver the curriculum effectively. However, the work of subject leaders to check the impact of this training is at a very early stage. This prevents some subject leaders from making sure that all staff deliver the curriculum consistently well.

Leaders have given reading a very high priority. Some pupils have missed out on important phonics learning in their earlier education. When pupils join the school, leaders ensure that they receive swift support to catch up on any missing phonic knowledge. This helps these pupils to read the key vocabulary that they encounter in a range of subjects.

Pupils' writing improves because their phonic knowledge helps them to spell more accurately. Leaders have provided pupils with an attractive and well-stocked library. Pupils enjoy visiting the library, where they can select books and read quietly. Over time, pupils develop a greater love of books and learn to read well.

Each pupil at the school has special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that pupils' EHC plans inform the decisions that staff make to help pupils to learn the curriculum. Leaders communicate effectively with a range of professionals, such as therapists and psychologists. This enables them to secure expert support for pupils should they require it.

The relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and positive. This supports pupils' behaviour in class and contributes to a purposeful working atmosphere in which pupils learn well.

Through the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), pupils learn how to make healthy lifestyle choices. For example, pupils learn about hygiene and nutrition. Pupils receive appropriate relationships and sex education that follows statutory guidance. Pupils learn about values such as democracy and individual liberty. They learn about diversity among people and about different faiths and cultures. These experiences prepare pupils sufficiently well for life in British society.

There is a clearly organised programme of careers education. Pupils visit colleges and work settings. Pupils learn how to apply for jobs and to prepare for interviews. Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to appropriate work experience. These opportunities help pupils to understand the range of choices available to them.

The proprietor body ensures that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently and securely. For example, the school premises are clean, tidy and well maintained. Pupils have an attractive outside area for play and for physical education. The school is well stocked with books and stationery to support pupils' learning. Leaders have put in place a suitable health and safety policy that they publish on the school's website. Leaders carry out a range of regular checks and risk assessments that meet health and safety requirements.

The proprietor body ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders, including the proprietor body, are considerate of any impact on staff's workload when they make decisions about the school. Staff appreciate leaders' concern for their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The proprietor body has ensured that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff know how to recognise when pupils might be at risk from harm. Leaders' records show that staff understand and follow the school's procedures for reporting any concerns about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders and staff take account of a range of information to develop a clear understanding of pupils' welfare needs. Leaders communicate effectively with professionals, such as local authority children's services, early help teams and mental health services. This enables leaders to secure additional support for pupils and their families if they need it.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when they are online. The proprietor has ensured that there are suitable filtering systems in place to help protect pupils from harmful content. Pupils know whom to speak to if they see something that does not look right.

Leaders have developed a suitable safeguarding policy, which they publish on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. This hinders staff in ensuring that pupils learn all that they need to know. Leaders should ensure that, in these subjects, they finalise the knowledge required for pupils' subsequent learning.
- Subject leaders have had limited opportunities to check the consistency with which staff implement the curriculum. This prevents them from providing guidance and support to any staff who may need it, for example in their choice of activities for pupils. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders are fully equipped to support staff to implement the curriculum consistently well.

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	148838
DfE registration number	888/6127
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10267707
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Proprietor	Your Chapter Ltd
Chair	Virginia Perkins
Headteacher	Kendra Morgan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,000
Telephone number	01253 372221
Website	www.educ8autism.co.uk/poplar-house-school
Email address	info@educ8.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school operates from a single site at 24–26 St Annes Road East, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire FY8 1UR.
- Since the school's pre-registration inspection in February 2022, a new headteacher and a new executive headteacher have been appointed.
- Although the school is registered for pupils aged 11 to 18, there are no students currently in the sixth form.
- Leaders make use of one unregistered alternative provider.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body and spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. They also spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with some pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with staff to discuss leaders' support for their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

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