

Edgewood Academy

Unit 6, Westmill Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3EL

Unique reference number (URN): 152649

Pre-registration inspection report:

28 July 2026

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered

The purpose of this inspection was to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the proposed school's likely compliance with the independent school standards and associated requirements that are required for registration as an independent school.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out pre-registration inspections of proposed independent schools, we report on the provider's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

The proprietor has set out a clear vision for the proposed school. Leaders are experienced in both state-funded and independent schools and have a thorough understanding of the standards. They have been diligent in preparing the proposed school and ensuring that all standards are likely to be met. This has included engaging external advisors to offer objective views and guidance.

The proprietor has been successful in engaging with local partners including local authorities and a range of schools and education networks. They have been active in providing guidance to other settings about using technology in education as well as forming supportive collaborations with other settings. This has included well-attended open days for professionals and for prospective pupils and their families.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the

standards in this part if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

The proprietor has developed a detailed and broad curriculum which is suitably ambitious. It includes linguistic, mathematical, creative, scientific and technological aspects as well as personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes. The curriculum, though using some adapted published units, is bespoke to this setting with the needs and experience of pupils firmly at the centre. It recognises that pupils attending the proposed school are likely to have experienced significant disruption to their education resulting in gaps in learning that will require prompt and targeted intervention.

The proprietor has considerable expertise in using technology to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Each pupil at the proposed school will have a device provided to them.

The proposed school has partnered with local settings that will provide pupils with physical education. These include a local sports centre and a local primary school. Both premises are within a short walking distance of the proposed school.

The curriculum extends beyond the academic. There is considerable emphasis on pupils' wellbeing and personal development threaded through it. In addition to this, the world of work and preparation for adulthood are key elements of the school's offer. This includes the planned provision of impartial careers advice.

Teaching

The proprietor is committed to ensuring staff are well qualified and experienced to deliver the curriculum. The proposed school plans for each class to be led by a qualified teacher supported by experienced learning mentors. As pupils who attend the proposed school are likely to have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, a service level agreement is in place with an external provider that will offer counselling support for pupils and guidance for staff.

As well as setting out a comprehensive programme of quality assurance to be carried out by school leaders, the proprietor has engaged the services of external partners who will support the assurance of the proposed school. This is intended to provide the proposed school with an objective assessment of its effectiveness and inform continual improvement.

The proposed school has invested considerably in a wide range of training programmes and resources for staff. These cover all aspects of provision from the teaching of phonics to in-depth training to fully understand pupils' individual needs.

Assessment

The proposed school has a detailed academic assessment system, which enables teachers to assess and track pupils' achievement across the curriculum. However, the assessment of pupils' progress goes way beyond their academic achievement, including granular information about their engagement, social and emotional development and detailed tracking against the targets within their education, health and care plans. The proposed school has designed an innovative system that enables staff and leaders to analyse this information closely as well as communicate it with pupils and their parents and/or carers.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

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

The proprietor has developed a carefully considered programme to support pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This includes an extensive PSHE curriculum. This has been put together with particular focus on pupils' individual needs. For instance, there is considerable emphasis on pupils' emotional wellbeing as they re-integrate into education following periods of disrupted education.

The proposed school has planned a comprehensive programme of enrichment activities that will contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. These activities serve a range of purposes, including fostering independence, enhancing pupils' understanding of the wider world, and broadening their cultural knowledge. They are planned to include visits to places of worship as well as to places of educational and cultural interest.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The proposed school has a suitable written safeguarding policy in place that meets all statutory requirements. Leaders are experienced designated safeguarding leads with experience of leading safeguarding in settings where pupils have additional vulnerabilities because of their additional needs.

The proprietor has put in place an online system for staff to report and record concerns about pupils and the actions taken to keep them safe. The school's PSHE and RSE programmes provide pupils with key learning about how to keep themselves safe, including online.

The proposed staff induction programme includes a range of safeguarding training designed to ensure that staff are fully familiar with safeguarding policies, procedures and expectations prior to commencing work with pupils.

Behaviour and supervision of pupils

The proposed school has a behaviour policy that outlines the expectations for both staff and pupils. It describes the approaches staff will use to promote positive behaviour including discussion with pupils and the careful de-escalation of situations that may lead to anxiety or distress.

Arrangements are also in place for recording and monitoring behaviour incidents. This information will be considered alongside safeguarding records, enabling leaders to develop a clear understanding of pupils' needs and any areas of vulnerability.

Planned staffing levels are suitable for the proposed number of pupils and will enable them to be supervised and supported safely throughout the school day. Induction and training arrangements will ensure that staff are appropriately prepared to meet pupils' needs.

Anti-bullying

The proposed school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy. Together with the behaviour policy and planned curriculum, it is intended to promote a culture of respect and inclusion in which bullying is not tolerated.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The proprietor has taken appropriate steps to ensure that the proposed school meets necessary health and safety requirements. The site is secure, and the proprietor has undertaken extensive refurbishment to provide a safe, welcoming learning environment. A new fire safety system has been installed in line with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The proposed school has a suitable first-aid policy. Staff either hold relevant first-aid qualifications or are scheduled to undertake training. Appropriate arrangements are in place for recording the administration of first aid.

Leaders are trained in the use of positive handling and physical intervention. They view physical intervention as a last resort and only to be used where necessary to maintain the safety of pupils. They anticipate the use of physical intervention will be extremely rare at the proposed school. Suitable systems are in place to ensure that any incidents of physical intervention or seclusion are recorded, monitored and reported to parents and carers as required.

Admissions and attendance

The proposed school has electronic admissions and attendance registers which meet all statutory requirements.

Risk assessment

The proprietor has suitable arrangements in place to identify, assess and manage risk. Risk assessments have been completed for the school premises, educational visits and activities undertaken on site. These arrangements demonstrate an appropriate approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

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

The recruitment checks made on staff, supply staff and the proprietor

The proprietor has a secure understanding of safer recruitment processes. They carry these out diligently and keep appropriate records. No person will work at the proposed school until all necessary checks have been made.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

The proprietor maintains a secure single central record that contains all required recruitment and vetting information in line with statutory requirements. The chosen system flags any missing records which enables leaders to check that all required information is complete and recorded correctly. In addition to this safeguard, the proposed school uses an external safeguarding consultant to provide another layer of assurance that the record is accurate and complete.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities, water supply, changing accommodation and showers

The proprietor has ensured that pupils will have access to suitable toilets and warm-water handwashing facilities. The water does not pose a risk of scalding as the temperature is carefully controlled. Drinking water is readily available throughout the day. The venue at which physical education will be taught has changing and showering facilities. These facilities have been carefully risk assessed by the proprietor to ensure pupils' safety and privacy.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

The proposed school has a dedicated medical room for the short-term care of pupils who are unwell or require first aid. The medical room has handwashing facilities and is located near to pupil toilets.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school's building and outdoor space provide a safe and suitable environment.

The building has recently undergone extensive refurbishment and offers an inviting setting for learning. The accommodation has been carefully designed to allow spaces to be used flexibly, enabling staff to respond effectively to pupils' individual needs. A range of larger and smaller learning areas is available, providing opportunities for different methods of teaching and support. Careful consideration has been given to the layout and use of these spaces to help pupils feel secure and to provide appropriate areas where they can regulate their emotions if they feel anxious or overwhelmed. The proprietor has given thoughtful consideration to the layout, decoration and furnishing of the premises to help create an environment that is supportive of pupils with sensory needs.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

All teaching spaces have appropriate natural and/or artificial light. All rooms have newly installed lowered ceilings which have created suitable acoustic conditions for teaching - particularly for pupils with auditory sensory needs.

Outdoor space

The proprietor has landscaped the outdoor area to provide a welcoming, safe space for break times and some curriculum activities including growing vegetables. The area is reasonably small but has been designed to make maximum use of the space. Suitable ground coverings have been installed to ensure the area is usable all year round.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proprietor has made available on the school's website the information required by the independent school standards. This gives prospective parents and carers access to information about the school's aims, values and ethos, alongside a range of key policies and statutory documentation.

Arrangements are in place for reporting pupils' progress to parents and carers. The format of this is highly detailed and linked closely to the proposed school's assessment processes. The report provides parents and carers with clear information about their child's achievements both in terms of their academic and personal development.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school has an appropriate written complaints policy in place. The policy provides opportunities for concerns to be addressed at an informal stage before progressing to the formal complaints procedure. Clear arrangements are set out for the consideration of complaints, including timescales for each stage and the written notification of outcomes.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent special school.

The school's accessibility plan

The proposed school has a written accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. It sets out appropriate actions the proposed school will take to meet the different needs of its pupils, staff and visitors.

About this inspection

The inspector carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools.

The inspector checked the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspector spoke with the headteacher and the head of operations. Both are directors and members of the proprietary board. The head of operations is the chair of the board.

The inspector confirmed the following information about the proposed school:

The proposed school intends to admit a maximum of 30 pupils. All pupils will have an education, health and care plan. Places at the school will be commissioned by local authorities. Pupils at the proposed school will likely have a primary SEND need of SEMH. Many will have other identified needs, including autism and moderate learning difficulties.

The proposed school does not intend to make use of alternative provision.

The proposed school is located on a small industrial estate. It occupies a single site at unit 6 Westmill Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3EL.

Lead inspector

Gareth Morgan

His Majesty's Inspector

About this proposed school

Proprietor and Chair of the proprietor body	Edgewood Pathways Ltd Thomas Bourne
Headteacher	Kate Manning
Type of school	Other independent special school
Capacity	30
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's proposal: 30
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's proposal: 0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll	Provider's proposal: 30
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	Provider's proposal: 30
Age range of pupils	Provider's proposal: 7 to 14
Gender of pupils	Provider's proposal: mixed
Total hours operating as a school per week	Provider's proposal: 32.5
Total hours of teaching provided per week	Provider's proposal: 32.5
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 17
Number of part-time teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 0
Annual fees for day pupils	£65,000
Email address	Kate.Manning@Edgewood-academy.com

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