

Pathway Schools Limited

6 Harrow Road, Hereford HR4 0EH

Unique reference number (URN): 152610

Pre-registration inspection report:

27 May 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 (ISS) 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 ISS first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the ISS 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.

Leaders have considerable experience in opening and running independent schools and working with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They, along with the directors of the proprietor board, have a comprehensive understanding of the standards and have been rigorous in preparing the proposed school to meet them fully. The proprietor has made considerable investments in preparing the school building. They have created an inviting environment, which is finished to a high standard and provides a flexible space for learning, social interaction and recreation.

The proprietor has a compelling vision for providing for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs who have become disengaged with education and experience extreme anxiety. This is illustrated by the school phrase 'investing in pupils, believing in their futures'.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

The proprietor has developed a curriculum model that is already being implemented in another setting run by the proprietor. It is suitably ambitious and offers a breadth of curriculum that includes linguistic, mathematical, creative, scientific and technological elements. It makes use of a range of published curriculum units that have been chosen carefully to meet the needs of pupils and provide a coherent structure leading towards qualifications.

The approach is innovative in terms of how teachers will adapt, on an individual basis, the structure of the curriculum to best meet the engagement and confidence levels of pupils. These sensitive adaptations do not limit the breadth, depth or scope of the curriculum.

The emphasis on personal development is central to the curriculum and wider life of the proposed school. Pupils' SEMH needs inform the structure and delivery model of the curriculum on an individual basis.

Teaching

The proprietor is committed to ensuring staff are well qualified to deliver the curriculum. Specialist, qualified teachers will deliver the curriculum to ensure they have the expertise and subject knowledge to do so effectively.

The proposed school has invested in a training platform to provide staff with ongoing professional development.

The proprietor recognises the importance of challenge and scrutiny to improve and sustain the quality of teaching and provide teachers with effective support. An external school improvement adviser is in place to offer challenge and quality assurance and to add capacity to leaders, who will monitor provision regularly. Twice-daily briefings are planned to provide staff with an open forum to provide advice and feedback about what is working well or needs to improve.

Assessment

The proposed school has in place a detailed academic assessment system, which utilises a published assessment tool carefully adapted to match the specific curriculum pathways. As engagement in learning is so central at the proposed school, teachers will also assess the degree to which pupils engage in each session during the week. This is likely to provide them with valuable information about how effective the curriculum approach for each individual is.

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

Through the proposed school's personal, social and health education lessons and the enrichment curriculum, pupils will learn about fundamental British values and cultural diversity in modern Britain.

Planned enrichment activities aim to make learning meaningful and purposeful, as well as allowing pupils to experience and practise the social skills they will need throughout life.

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 safeguarding policy in place that meets all statutory requirements and addresses the additional vulnerabilities of pupils because of their SEND needs. An online system for reporting and recording concerns is in place. This system is linked to behaviour records as leaders recognise how linked a pupil's behaviour is with keeping them safe.

Planned staff induction processes include a range of safeguarding training to ensure that staff have a full understanding of safeguarding policies and processes before working with pupils. Safeguarding is also planned to be a focus of the proposed school's twice-daily briefings.

Behaviour and supervision of pupils

The proposed school has in place a behaviour policy, which is already used at the proprietor's other school. It sets out clear expectations of staff and pupils. It explains how staff will support pupils to improve their behaviour through conversation and the sensitive deescalation of situations that may cause them to become overly anxious. The expectations of pupils have been explicitly tailored to mirror those in wider society. This has been done to support pupils' preparation for adulthood and their understanding of social convention.

The proposed school has in place a behaviour recording system so that pupils' behaviours are logged and categorised. These records sit alongside safeguarding information and contribute to leaders gaining an accurate picture of pupils' needs and vulnerabilities.

Staffing numbers, along with the planned training during induction, are suitable for the proposed number of pupils to ensure that pupils can be supervised and supported effectively and safely throughout the day.

Anti-bullying

The proposed school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place. This, along with the curriculum and the behaviour policy, will provide an environment in which bullying will not be tolerated.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school complies with all necessary and relevant health and safety guidance. The site is secure, and the building has been refurbished to a high standard, creating a safe and calming environment for learning. The refurbishment has included installing a new fire safety system, which complies with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2025.

All existing staff hold certificates in first aid, and the proprietor intends for all new staff to be trained as a matter of course. The proposed school has first-aid supplies in place and readily accessible, along with a recording system that includes a process for notifying parents and carers.

Leaders fully understand their duty to record any use of physical intervention or restraint and to inform parents and carers on the rare occasion this might be needed as a last resort to keep a pupil safe.

Admissions and attendance

The proposed school has in place electronic admission and attendance registers which meet all statutory requirements.

Risk assessment

The proprietor manages risks appropriately through the implementation of a suitable risk assessment policy. They have assessed the risk on the proposed school site, along with risks associated with off-site visits and on-site activities.

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 and leaders have a full understanding of safer recruitment processes. They are knowledgeable and well trained in this regard. Systems to check the suitability of staff are appropriate and administered effectively. Leaders ensure that all required checks are made on a person's suitability before they can work at the proposed school.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

The proprietor maintains a secure single central record of recruitment checks, which includes all information within statutory guidance. The record is checked by leaders and an external consultant. The proprietor intends to have some staff working at the proposed school and the existing school, which the proprietor runs. This is reflected within the single central record.

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 handwashing facilities. These have been refurbished to a high standard. Drinking water is readily available throughout the day and a newly installed shower facility is available after physical education.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

The proposed school has a suitable 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 grounds are safe and support the welfare of pupils.

All spaces have been recently refurbished, and the building is an attractive, welcoming learning environment. The way in which it is organised allows for flexible and responsive use of space to adapt to pupils' needs. There are a range of large and small spaces for learning. There has been considerable thought behind how these spaces support pupils to regulate or feel secure when they are anxious or overwhelmed.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

Teaching spaces have windows and lighting that provide suitable levels of natural and artificial light. The acoustic condition of rooms is suitable to support learning and minimise difficulties for pupils with auditory sensory needs.

Outdoor space

The proposed school has an appropriate and safe external space that can be used for physical education, recreation and curriculum delivery. Additionally, adjacent to the site is a large public park, which the proposed school intends to use.

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 published all required information on its website. This provides prospective parents with detailed information about the proposed school's vision and ethos, as well as a range of key statutory documents and policies.

The proposed school has an annual report format, which is already being used at the proprietor's other setting. This report includes parents and carers with important information about a pupil's progress.

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 proprietor maintains a complaints policy that fully meets all required standards. It provides an opportunity for concerns to be addressed informally at the outset. The policy clearly sets out procedures and timelines for handling formal complaints, including written communication of outcomes to complainants. It also

incorporates the provision for a person who is independent from the leadership of the proposed school to sit on appeals panels.

The school's accessibility plan

There is 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 proposed 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 directors of the proprietor body, the headteacher, the executive headteacher and other leaders.

The inspector confirmed the following information about the proposed school:

The proposed school intends to admit a maximum of 25 pupils. All pupils will have an education, health and care plan. All pupil placements at the proposed school are likely to 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.

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

The proposed school is located on a single site at 6 Harrow Road, Hereford HR4 0EH on a small industrial estate.

The proprietor of the proposed school currently runs another school in Hereford.

Lead inspector

Gareth Morgan

His Majesty's Inspector

About this proposed school

Proprietor and Chair of the proprietor body	Pathway Schools Limited Ian Saunders
Headteacher	Rachel Ballance
Type of school	Other independent special school
Capacity	25
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's proposal: 25
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: 25
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: 25
Age range of pupils	Provider's proposal: 8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Provider's proposal: mixed
Total hours operating as a school per week	Provider's proposal: 28.75
Total hours of teaching provided per week	Provider's proposal: 28.75
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 19
Number of part-time teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 0
Annual fees for day pupils	£57,750 to £68,250
Email address	admin@pathwayschools.org.uk

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