

Willow House School

120 Stanley Road, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, Greater Manchester SK8 6RF

Inspection date

4 November 2025

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1) to 2(1)(b)(i)

- At the standard inspection in October 2024, the school's curriculum did not take into account the needs of its pupils in accordance with their education, health, and care (EHC) plans. Moreover, some pupils did not have opportunities to learn and make progress across the curriculum. The proprietor had not ensured that the curriculum took sufficient account of the social and emotional needs of pupils. This hindered the progress that these pupils made in the range of subjects that they studied.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in January 2025, it was found that leaders' plans to improve the curriculum were not sufficient to address these standards. This was because the targets set were vague and the timescales for actions were unrealistic. The actions did not address how staff would be supported to develop their curriculum thinking or adapt their resources to meet the varied needs of pupils.
- At the progress monitoring inspection in April 2025, the school had begun to improve the curriculum for pupils. Refined schemes of work and curriculum plans for some subjects showed consideration for the additional needs of pupils and the key knowledge that they should learn. Despite some improvements the plans, and schemes of work for aesthetic and creative education, were not sufficiently well developed. They did not take account of the needs of pupils as well as they should.
- When the school's subsequent action plan was evaluated in July 2025, it was found that the actions directly addressed the unmet standards and next steps from the previous standard inspection. Specifically, the proprietor had set out clear plans to provide training for staff about how to adapt their planning to consider the needs of the pupils. In addition, appropriate actions set out a commitment to design the curriculum for pupils' aesthetic and creative education and to monitor its impact on pupils' learning.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, the proprietor has ensured that a comprehensive written curriculum policy is now in place. This is supported by detailed plans and schemes of work that are implemented effectively across the school. This policy appropriately reflects the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with

EHC plans. The curriculum demonstrates careful consideration of how different groups of pupils will access learning and make progress and this includes for their aesthetic and creative education.

Paragraph 3 to 3(g)

- At the standard inspection in October 2024, the school's curriculum did not take into account the needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan. Moreover, some pupils did not have opportunities to learn and make progress across the curriculum. The proprietor had not ensured that the curriculum took sufficient account of the social and emotional needs of pupils. This hindered the progress that these pupils made in the range of subjects that they studied.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in January 2025, it was found that leaders' plans to improve the curriculum were not sufficient to address these standards. This was because the targets set were vague and the timescales for actions were unrealistic. The actions did not address how staff would be supported to develop their curriculum thinking or adapt their resources to meet the varied needs of pupils, including those with an EHC plan.
- At the progress monitoring inspection in April 2025, some improvements were noted. For example, the proprietor had designed subject-specific training for some subjects to support the design and delivery of the curriculum. However, for other subjects, this training and support for staff was at the early stages of development. This hindered how well the curriculum was delivered across the school. In addition, the proprietor had not ensured that staff had the knowledge and skills to check pupils' understanding consistently well.
- When the school's subsequent action plan was evaluated in July 2025, it was found that the proprietor had refined and sharpened its proposed actions. These actions targeted training for staff to address gaps in subject knowledge and professional development to ensure that staff delivered the curriculum well. Furthermore, the proprietor had set out its plans to devise and implement an assessment framework.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge. The proprietor has established an environment where teaching fosters pupils' self-motivation and encourages them to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort to their work. Pupils are developing their ability to think and learn independently, demonstrating genuine interest and engagement in their learning.
- Lessons are well planned, with teaching methods and activities that make effective use of class time. Classroom resources are utilised well to support learning. Teachers show a sound understanding of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment, which informs their lesson planning appropriately. Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of the curriculums that they teach. Pupils have a clear understanding of the curriculums that they study.
- The proprietor has put in place an effective framework for assessing pupils' work. Staff now use assessment information with greater precision to design activities that address the gaps that some pupils have in their learning.
- The previously unmet standards in this part are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health, and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), and 32(1)(c)

- At the time of the standard inspection in October 2024, these standards were met. At the request of the Department for Education (DfE), these standards were considered as part of this progress monitoring inspection.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable safeguarding policy in place and that this is published on the school's website. The policy has regard to the appropriate statutory guidance.
- There are secure procedures in place for staff to report any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare. The school communicates effectively with other agencies and professionals, such as the local authority, to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The school ensures that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. This helps staff to recognise when pupils may be at risk of harm.
- All new staff receive an appropriate induction programme, safeguarding training and regular updates on areas, such as radicalisation and extremism and online safety.
- The standards in these parts continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(b)

- At the school's standard inspection in October 2024, the standards in this part were unmet. The proprietor had not ensured that the standards were consistently and securely met. This is because staff were not equipped suitably to design and deliver the curriculum effectively. Additionally, they were not supported to manage behaviour effectively.
- The action plan that the school submitted to the DfE in November 2024 was evaluated by Ofsted in January 2025 as being unacceptable.
- At the previous monitoring inspection in April 2025, some standards linked to the quality of education and leadership and management remained unmet. However, the previously unmet standards linked to behaviour were found to be met.
- The proprietor submitted an action plan to the DfE in June 2025. This was evaluated by Ofsted in July 2025 as being acceptable.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, the proprietor and the school have an accurate view of the school's performance. They have worked together to address the standards that were not met at the time of the previous standard inspection. In addition, the proprietor has worked swiftly to address the objectives that the school set out in its action plan.
- The proprietor has reviewed and refreshed its systems and procedures. It has established clear lines of accountability between itself and the school. As a result, the proprietor now has a stronger oversight of the extent to which the school consistently meets the standards.

- The proprietor has appointed an experienced executive headteacher, who took up post on 1 September 2025 following a handover period during the summer of 2025. Furthermore, the proprietor and the executive headteacher have strengthened the leadership and oversight at the school, which has provided increased capacity to secure the improvements that were needed.
- The school has established a high-quality programme of training for staff. This has helped to secure rapid improvements in the quality of education that was identified as next steps for the school at the previous standard inspection. For example, in the design and implementation of the aesthetic and creative curriculum across all year groups and the school's assessment strategies.
- The previously unmet standards in this part are now met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an appropriate accessibility plan in place. This fulfils the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets 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(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical, and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 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;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity, and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136230
DfE registration number	356/6035
Inspection number	10417869

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

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	5 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Halliwell Homes Ltd
Chair	Mathew Hargreaves
Headteacher	Emma Fletcher (executive headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£75,250
Telephone number	0161 4374296
Website	www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/willow-house-school
Email address	emma.fletcher@halliwellhomes.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	15 to 17 October 2024

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection took place from 15 to 17 October 2024.
- The school is located at 120 Stanley Road, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, Greater Manchester SK8 6RF.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Most pupils have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan.
- The school provides education for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including those placed in a residential setting. It is registered to take a

maximum of seven pupils aged between five and fourteen years. At the time of the inspection, there were six pupils on roll.

- The school is one of six schools operated by Halliwell Homes Limited.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- Following the school's last standard inspection, the DfE required the school to prepare a statutory action plan. Ofsted evaluated this plan on 14 January 2025. The proposed action plan was deemed unacceptable.
- At the school's first progress monitoring inspection in April 2025, some of the previously unmet standards remained unmet.
- Following the school's first progress monitoring inspection, the DfE required the school to prepare a statutory action plan. Ofsted evaluated this plan on 10 July 2025. The proposed action plan was deemed acceptable.
- This was the second progress monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in October 2024. It was conducted without notice.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body, executive headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- The inspector reviewed schemes of work and pupils' work. He also visited some lessons.
- The inspector spoke with a number of pupils about their learning.
- The inspector reviewed documents, including the safeguarding policy, curriculum documents and documents relating to leadership and management.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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