

Strawberry Lane

Wylam Street, Durham DH6 5BE

Inspection date

15 July 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), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g) to 2(2)(i)

- The proposed school has designed a well-ordered, broad and ambitious curriculum. It has identified the knowledge and skills that it wants pupils to know and remember. At key stages 3 and 4, it has planned for three curriculum pathways. These formal and semi-formal pathways will meet the potential range of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's post-16 curriculum will allow for appropriate progression for pupils from key stage 4. Post-16 students will be able to follow an academic or vocational and skills pathway.
- The school will assess pupils' reading and cognitive abilities on entry. It will adapt the curriculum further and design personalised curriculums for individual pupils. There is a central focus on literacy and numeracy in each curriculum pathway. Those pupils who are at an early stage of reading will learn to read using phonics. The school has a Department for Education (DfE) recognised phonics programme in place.
- The school's curriculum includes personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). The school has planned a PSHE curriculum informed by the work of a national organisation for PSHE education. The curriculum includes content on protected characteristics and fundamental British values. It is designed to prepare pupils for adulthood and for life in modern Britain. Pupils will also receive careers education. This will start in key stage 3. In key stage 4, pupils will undertake work experience. Pupils will also benefit from individual, independent careers guidance. PSHE and careers education will continue for students in the post-16 provision. Post-16 students will receive education and guidance that is appropriate to their needs.

Paragraphs 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2)

- The proposed content of the school's relationships and sex education programme meets statutory guidance. The school has appropriate plans in place to provide relationships and sex education for pupils of secondary age. The school plans to consult with parents about the content of its relationships and sex education programme. The school's relationships and sex education policy includes information about parents' right to withdraw secondary-age pupils from sex education.

Paragraphs 3 to 4

- The school has developed its own model for teaching, informed by educational research. The school will provide staff with training that aims to enable them to adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs. Teachers will also benefit from support from subject leaders who work across the proprietor's schools. The school has established a framework for assessment. Teachers will use this to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The school intends to give high priority to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It will give pupils opportunities to explore different cultures, faiths and beliefs. The school will make links with the local community, developing pupils as active citizens in that community. The school plans to have a school council. This will enable pupils to share their views about school life and play a part in the school's development.
- The school understands its responsibility to ensure that pupils are free from the promotion of partisan political views, either through the curriculum, extra-curricular activities or visitors to the school.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)

- The school has established the foundations of an open and honest safeguarding culture. The school's designated safeguarding leads are appropriately trained and possess a secure knowledge of contextualised safeguarding issues. They are aware of the additional vulnerability to risk of pupils with SEND.
- The school has planned a programme of safeguarding training for staff. This will begin before the proposed school opens. It will include training on reporting and recording concerns. The school has a safeguarding policy in place and will be supported by a safeguarding team that works across all the proprietor's schools. In addition, the school has established relationships with safeguarding personnel in those local authorities that are likely to commission pupil places at the school.
- The school will teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils will have daily PSHE lessons, enabling teachers to reinforce and embed essential safeguarding knowledge. The school also intends to work with parents and carers to raise their awareness of risks to pupils. It will also provide parents and carers with information about external agencies who can provide support.

Paragraphs 9 to 10

- The school has appropriate behaviour and anti-bullying policies in place. The

behaviour policy outlines the rewards and sanctions that the school intends to use. The policies consider pupils with SEND's needs and allow for reasonable adjustments to be made. The school intends to keep an electronic record of the rewards and sanctions that are given to pupils. These policies are intended to create a positive culture in which pupils are free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Paragraphs 11 to 14

- The school has appropriate policies in place to ensure and manage pupils' health and safety, including for administering first aid. The school also meets fire regulations. Fire equipment is installed and has been checked and passed for use. The school's policies and intended practices are comprehensive and set out a rigorous approach to the welfare and health and safety of pupils.
- The school intends to open with an initial cohort of 18 pupils. It has already recruited most of the staff required to meet the needs of this cohort. A recruitment process is underway to select and appoint the remaining staff by September 2025.
- The school intends to reach its proposed capacity of 60 pupils by the end of its second year of operation. At full capacity, the school will teach pupils in 10 teaching groups of no more than six pupils per group. Each teaching group will be staffed with a teacher and two teaching assistants. The school will benefit from additional staff in leadership, pastoral and clinical roles. It will also benefit from members of the proprietor's central staff team who will support different aspects of school provision, including SEND, safeguarding and curriculum and teaching.

Paragraphs 15 to 16(b)

- The school has in place an appropriate admissions register and electronic attendance register. It understands its responsibility to maintain these registers in accordance with statutory guidance.
- The school has formulated a risk assessment policy. It has also completed an extensive number of risk assessments. These measures are designed to mitigate risk and support pupils' health and welfare.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)

- The school has completed all relevant pre-employment checks on staff who have been appointed to work at the school. It takes a diligent approach to these checks. No member of staff will begin working at the school before all pre-employment checks have been made. The school does not propose to use supply staff. However, it knows what information it must secure from supply agencies should it determine a need to employ supply staff.

Paragraphs 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(6)

- All relevant pre-employment checks on members of the proprietor body have been made and recorded, along with the dates of the checks, on the school's single central record.

Paragraphs 21(1) to 21(3)(b)

- The school keeps an electronic single central record of all pre-employment checks on staff. The school has recorded all relevant pre-employment checks and the dates of those checks on staff who have been appointed to work at the proposed school.

Paragraphs 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c)

- The school does not propose to employ supply staff. However, the school knows its responsibilities with regard to recording information about checks on supply staff on the single central record.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25 to 28(2)(b)

- The school's premises and accommodation are intended to provide pupils with a high-quality environment in which their needs can be met. The school's accommodation includes enough classrooms to accommodate the number of pupils proposed by the school. It also includes an immersion room for pupils with sensory needs. Renovation work has been completed to a high standard. There is appropriate toilet, washing, shower, and medical care facilities. These facilities are sufficient for the number of pupils proposed by the school.

Paragraphs 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- The school's premises include appropriate outdoor space for physical education and play. Pupils will benefit from a range of fixed fitness trail and gym equipment. The school will also make use of a local leisure centre for physical education. The school's outdoor space is secure and not accessible to the public.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f) to 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii) to 32(4)(c)

- The school knows what information it must publish and provide for parents, the DfE and other organisations as required. The school has a website that is ready to be published should the DfE decide to register the school.
- The school proposes to attend pupils' annual review meetings. In these meetings, the school will provide relevant information about how well its provision, as stipulated in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, is supporting pupils' progress. It will also provide local authorities with the financial information required.
- The school has prepared a template for reporting to parents each term about their children's progress.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- The school has a written complaints policy that sets out the school's complaints procedure. The policy provides for both informal and formal means of resolving complaints. It also provides information about timescales, complainants' rights and the school's responsibilities for recording and communicating the outcomes of complaints.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor has ensured through rigorous recruitment and selection processes that it has appointed leaders with the requisite knowledge and skills to lead this special independent school. School leaders will be supported by an experienced executive headteacher. They will also benefit from the proprietor's well-established professional development offer.
- The school will deploy a series of quality assurance processes to ensure that it meets the standards. The school's self-evaluation will be checked further by the proprietor via a rigorous quality assurance system that includes the involvement of external partners. These well-considered arrangements are intended to ensure that leaders and staff fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively, including compliance with the standards
- In setting up this proposed school, the proprietor has worked closely with several local authorities. This has shaped the proprietor's plans for this school's provision to meet local needs through specialist education for pupils with autism. The proprietor has put pupils' welfare at the centre of the planning for this proposed school.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an accessibility plan. The plan outlines how the school will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum, information and the physical environment.

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	151727
DfE registration number	840/6027
Inspection number	10395313

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Proprietor	P Bloom Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Adam Price
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000 to £95,000
Telephone number	0191 3371465
Website	None
Email address	admin@strawberrylaneschool.co.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11 to 19	11 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

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	60
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60

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
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	29

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is in Bowburn, Durham. It proposes to operate from premises at Wylam Street, Bowburn, Durham, DH6 5BE.
- The school proposes to cater for pupils with autism. It will cater for pupils whose primary needs are autism but who also have other needs, including social, emotional and mental health needs, moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, specific learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils will have an EHC plan.

Information about this inspection

- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out this pre-registration inspection. The purpose of the inspection was to determine whether the proposed school was likely to meet the standards should the DfE decide to allow the school to open.
- This was the proposed school's first pre-registration inspection.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the regional director and a member of the school's governing body.
- Inspectors discussed the proposed school's curriculum with school leaders and looked at curriculum plans and schemes of work for all proposed subjects.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. They looked at safeguarding documentation and record-keeping, including the single central record.
- Inspectors toured the school's site and scrutinised a wide range of documentary evidence to check on the statutory requirements of the standards.

Inspection team

Ian Rawstorne, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Stephenson

His Majesty's Inspector

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