Simpatico
Town Planning

‘Alness Lodge’, 50, Alness Road, Manchester, M16 8HW



Proposed change of use from care home (Use Class C2) to independent school for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (Use Class F1a).

Planning Statement

Statement prepared on 30th June 2025 by Richard Jewkes BSc DipTP MA,

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Introduction

This Planning Statement accompanies an application which seeks the grant, by Manchester City Council (hereafter 'the LPA') of full planning permission for a proposed change of use of an existing residential care home and its associated facilities to create a new, independent school for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities ('SEND'). The application site, which is located at 50 Alness Road, Manchester, M16 8HW, comprises a two-storey building known as 'Alness Lodge', with a private amenity area to the rear and a generous paved driveway/parking area to the front.

Simpatico Town Planning are acting under instruction from Wellbrook Education (hereafter 'the Applicant'), who plan to convert the property for use as a new, independent Class F1(a) educational institution. Specifically, it is proposed to use the site to provide a small, specialised school for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Applicant is an existing educational foundation which is already active in Manchester, having an existing SEND school at Wythenshawe. The foundation proposes to repurpose the site as a school, also providing associated parking and operational facilities. This application therefore seeks the necessary planning permission for the proposed change of use.

Having considered the relevant planning policy at national, local and neighbourhood level, and also the specifics of the case in terms of the site and its surroundings, it is considered that the site is appropriate, in planning terms, for the proposed use. Accordingly, therefore, this application seeks the grant of full planning consent from the LPA for a change of use to Class F1(a), in order that the project may proceed to the next stage.

In pursuit of this objective, this Statement will primarily focus upon the planning policy arguments in favour of the proposed change of use of the site. Reference will also be made within this Statement to the other material considerations surrounding the proposal. The application is accompanied by 'existing' plans and elevations, and also a 'proposed' floor plan. The Statement will also present a proposed indicative layout and will explain how the facilities are to be organised and laid out under the proposal.

About the Applicant – Wellbrook Education

1. This application comes forward from an existing, established independent education provider, Wellbrook Education, and forms part of their project to open a new independent school, in addition to their existing school in Manchester, which is located in Wythenshawe and known as Oakbrook School, and their other school, based in Derby, which is known as Wellbrook School.

2. The Applicants' existing schools cater to pupils aged 7 to 16 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and who have a primary diagnosis of autism or social and mental health needs. The Oakbrook School, Wythenshawe, was recently inspected by Ofsted, whose report on the institution (copy attached at Appendix 1) drew the following conclusions:

> *'The proprietor understands the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards). She has experience of operating a similar special school. The proprietor intends to develop robust quality assurance processes to ensure compliance with the standards. There are clear plans in place to ensure that the school works closely with the local authorities who would commission placements. The proprietor has recruited senior leaders who have experience in working in a specialist school and are qualified teachers. These leaders demonstrate the knowledge that is needed to run this independent school successfully. They are committed to ensuring that pupils receive an effective quality of education.*
>
> *The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the provider as an independent school.*
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> *Leaders have set high expectations of how lessons should be structured. Leaders have invested heavily in appropriate resources to ensure that teachers have the tools required to teach subject content effectively. The proprietor intends to train new staff to adapt learning activities so that pupils can access the curriculum well. They intend to review barriers to learning such as reading and then put support in place to address gaps. They have plans to integrate library lessons as well as phonics into the school timetable. They*

have given appropriate thought to how the curriculum will be designed to help develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.'

3. The Wellbrook School in Derby is well established, having recently been inspected by Ofsted in February 2026. The Ofsted report, a copy of which is submitted alongside this Statement at Appendix 2, confirms that the school is meeting standards across the board, in Safeguarding, Achievement, Attendance and Behaviour, Curriculum and Teaching, Inclusion, Leadership and Governance, and Personal Development and Wellbeing.

4. The Report is highly complimentary regarding the school's ethos and its execution, describing pupil's overall experience as follows:

This recently opened school is doing its pupils proud. Leaders have created a school in which pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully understood and provided for. The school skilfully evaluates each pupil's SEND and puts in place the support that they need to thrive. As a result, from their relative starting points, pupils achieve well. They are happy and feel safe.

Behaviour is typically positive. The recently introduced 'Five Rs' help pupils to understand what is expected of them. Pupils do their utmost to be in the right place at the right time, show resilience, respect others and property and use the 'right speech'. Pupils openly reflect on how well they have modelled each of these at the end of each lesson. They are eager to get holes in their 'punch cards' that recognise and reward their successes. Staff know what motivates pupils. Pupils feel valued.

Pupils enjoy learning. They engage positively with their teachers. They increasingly remember what they have learned. Pupils are keen to share their thinking and talk about their learning. They respond well to praise and suggestions for improvement.

Pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school. A broad and varied enrichment programme allows them to try new activities, including archery, rifle shooting, climbing and visits to a range of places. Over time, pupils gain a strong understanding of fundamental British values and the differences in people that the law protects. They learn what discrimination is and why

it is unacceptable. Bullying is rare. Pupils are happy that it is dealt with robustly when it does occur.

Over time, pupils' attendance improves significantly. Many who have previously struggled to attend school now do so regularly.

5. In order to continue their work helping young people, Wellbrook have identified the application site as being appropriate to accommodate a new school – their third – which would be affiliated with the existing institutions. Having identified that the application site would be an appropriate site from an educational perspective, they are now in the process of securing the other regulatory consents associated with opening a new school at this location. It is to this end that this planning application comes forward.

Site and surroundings

6. Alness Lodge is a purpose-built, modern-style residential care facility constructed around the mid-to-late 20th century, being laid out internally for multi-occupancy healthcare or supported living. The building is a wide, two-storey, horizontal block constructed of modern red-orange facing brick under a large, single-pitched tiled roof. It features white uPVC bay windows with hanging red tile-hung panels between the ground and first floors. Figure 1, below, is a recent image of the property, taken from the street in Alness Road.

Figure 1 – The application property



7. The property sits broad on its plot. The front boundary is heavily defined by a decorative, white-painted patterned concrete breeze block wall sitting on top of a low stone base, alongside black iron gates which form 'in' and 'out' access and egress points. The external site configuration includes a paved driveway area to the front to accommodate necessary visitor and staff vehicle parking. To the rear, the property enjoys a private, secluded garden/amenity area, including a paved patio area.

8. Figure 2, overleaf, is an aerial image of the site (all aerial imagery taken from Google) which shows both the configuration of the site, and also its relationships with the surrounding properties, all of which are currently residential.

Figure 2 –The extent of the application site and relationship with nearby buildings



9. Externally, the existing car parking area provides approximately 7 single vehicle spaces, and there is scope either for tandem parking or for larger vehicles, such as minibuses, which under the proposal would be used to transport pupils to the site. The driveway also includes a crescent of soft landscaping which it is proposed to pave, in order to enhance the availability of parking and improve manoeuvrability.

10. Beyond the site's own boundaries, Alness Road itself is a quiet, tree-lined suburban street in the Whalley Range area of South Manchester. The overwhelming predominant character of Alness Road consists of substantial, highly decorative Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Consequently, the application property stands out as a modern, purpose-built addition to the street.

11. As seen above at Figure 1, the neighbouring buildings to either side of the site are tall, imposing three-story period properties. Many of these historical homes have, over the years, been converted into flats, apartments, or alternative care facilities.

12. In terms of sustainability, the site is highly accessible, being situated a short walk (roughly 10 minutes) from the Chorlton Metrolink stop. This provides direct, high-frequency tram connections into Manchester City Centre, Victoria and Piccadilly stations, and south towards Manchester Airport. Frequent bus services also

run along the nearby main arteries of Withington Road and Wilbraham Road. Major routes like the 85 provide direct transport to the city centre.

13. Considering private transport links, the site is positioned just west of the A5103 (Princess Road), which offers direct vehicle access straight into the heart of Manchester City Centre heading north. Princess Road also leads directly onto the start of the M56 motorway and the M60 orbital motorway network, allowing straightforward private transit across Greater Manchester, Cheshire, and the wider northwest.

14. **Planning history:** The LPA's records confirm that, since the site was originally developed, only one planning application has been submitted which proposed alterations to the building. The application, LPA reference 120316/FO/2018, proposed and received consent for the erection of a single storey extension to the building. However, the consent appears to have lapsed without ever having been implemented. The site has no other relevant planning history.

Proposal

15. This application seeks the grant of planning consent by the LPA for the proposed repurposing of the site to provide a new, small school for children with SEND and/or a diagnosis of autism or other social and mental health needs. As is the case with the Applicant's existing schools, the proposed new institution would be Council-funded, rather than collecting fees privately for each of its pupils.

16. **Number of pupils and staff:** The proposed facility would accommodate approximately 12 pupils with SEND, aged 7 to 16, across 3 classrooms, supplemented by a sensory room and a dedicated library area.

17. Given the nature of the school, and the pupils' needs, the level of staffing would need to be appropriate, and it is currently envisaged that approximately 6 members of staff would attend the site across a normal school day, however not all at the same time.

18. **Hours of operation/daily routine:** Pupils would attend the site as per conventional school hours, i.e. generally between 0900 and 1500. There would, as in any school, be a staff presence on site both before and after the children's school day, with staff being present between the times of 07.45 and 16.45, at times commensurate with their jobs/duties. Some staff would be present mornings only, some afternoons only, and some all day as required in the exigencies of their role.

19. **Access, parking and trips:** As noted above, the site has sufficient parking facilities to accommodate 7 vehicles. Again, given the nature of the school and the fact that some pupils will live together in specialist residential homes, it is anticipated that 50% (so approximately 6) of the pupils will travel to school together in shared transport (i.e. a mini bus), reducing the number of vehicles present at the site during pick up and drop off periods.

20. The school would continue to utilise the site's existing access, direct from Alness Road, which is considered to represent an amenable, safe arrangement with long-range, unfettered visibility splays on approach and departure. Figure 3, overleaf, is an aerial image which shows the site's existing in/out access arrangement, providing direct access on and off the carriageway, which it is proposed be retained in its current form.

Figure 3 – Existing access/egress arrangements



21. **Physical works/alterations:** As the submitted 'existing' floor plans confirm, the building is currently laid out for use as a residential care home, having been in such use for many years. The established use is spread across the property's two floors, with bedrooms and other facilities being provided at both levels. However, under the use which is proposed in this application, only the ground floor would be utilised going forward. The first floor would be closed off and would not be accessible to the children who would receive education at the site.

22. At ground floor level, it is proposed to reconfigure the existing floor space in order to implement a layout which is appropriate for a small, specialist educational facility. It is proposed that 3 classrooms be provided, together with a sensory room, dining room and also a library space in the existing rear conservatory. Some of the existing facilities, including the staff room, medical room, kitchen and toilets would be retained and upgraded. Figure 4, overleaf, reproduces the submitted plans which accompany the application, juxtaposing the 'existing' and 'proposed' ground floor internal layouts.

23. For the purposes of this application, however, no external alterations are currently proposed to any of the buildings on site. It is envisaged that that proposal could be successfully implemented without any building works or elevational changes being necessary. The use could be successfully implemented through 'light touch' internal modifications and reconfigurations only.

Figure 4 – Existing vs. Proposed internal layout



24. Externally within the site, it is proposed that the existing parking area and the grounds to the rear of the building be retained and maintained following development. The rear garden would not be used as a routine outdoor play area; any off-site outdoor activities would be planned and supervised as part of the school's wider educational programme. The existing rear garden would therefore be managed in a manner which protected surrounding residential amenity and avoided disturbance to neighbours.

25. The above proposal description is presented for the purposes of this application, in order to apprise the LPA of the details surrounding the repurposing of the site to create a new school. It is subject to change upon receiving the LPA's feedback and guidance, but is submitted in order to show as clearly as possible how the facility would operate. On this basis, the following section of this Statement will consider the site's status as affected by planning policy, and on that basis will put forward the case in favour of the principle of development.

Planning policy and the principle of development

26. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that in making any determination under the Planning Acts the determination should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless materials consideration indicate otherwise.

27. Manchester City Council is the determining Planning Authority, therefore the Development Plan for the area consists of the adopted ***Manchester Core Strategy 2012 to 2027****,* and the relevant local supplementary guidance.

28. The National Planning Policy Framework, the National Planning Policy Guidance and Supplementary Planning Guidance are also material considerations.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

29. All development proposals of this type must be considered in the context of the provisions within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). This document sets out the broad principles to be followed in relation to planning and development proposals across England. The provisions set out in **Section 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development),** of the Framework are of central importance when assessing development proposals such as that under consideration here.

30. Section 2 of the Framework defines the purpose of the planning system as being '*to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner*', and identifies three intertwined objectives which should be at the heart of both plan making and decision taking. These are defined as the 'economic', the 'social', and the 'environmental'. The Framework holds that, in the context of these interrelated objectives, there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

31. In practical terms, Paragraph 11 of the Framework explains how this presumption should be applied, in particular with regard to decision taking with regard to planning applications. Paragraphs 11(c) and (d) states that:

*For **decision-taking** this means:*

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

32. **Section 8 (Promoting healthy and safe communities)** of the Framework places an obligation on decision takers to support development proposal which will ensure the sustained supply of school places which meets the needs of communities. Paragraph 100 of the Framework articulates this obligation as follows:

*100. It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. **Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education.** They should:*

*a) give **great weight** to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*

b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

33. **Section 11 (Making effective use of land)** advises that *'planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes **and other uses**'*. The proposal would make effective use of an existing developed site and would deliver a publicly beneficial educational use. In this regard, Paragraph 128 of the Framework makes specific reference to the desirability of converting otherwise under-utilised buildings for use as, amongst other things, schools. It states:

*128. Local planning authorities should also take **a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose** in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to:*

a) use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in this Framework; and

*b) **make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools and hospitals**, provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space.*

There is also a clear strategic need for additional SEND and alternative provision locally. Manchester's 2025 SEND and Inclusion Plan records that the percentage of children and young people in Manchester schools with identified SEND is growing, with 15% of pupils at SEN Support level and 7.1% with an Education, Health and Care Plan in January 2025, above the national figures cited in that plan. The proposal would therefore contribute directly to widening educational choice and responding to an identified local need.

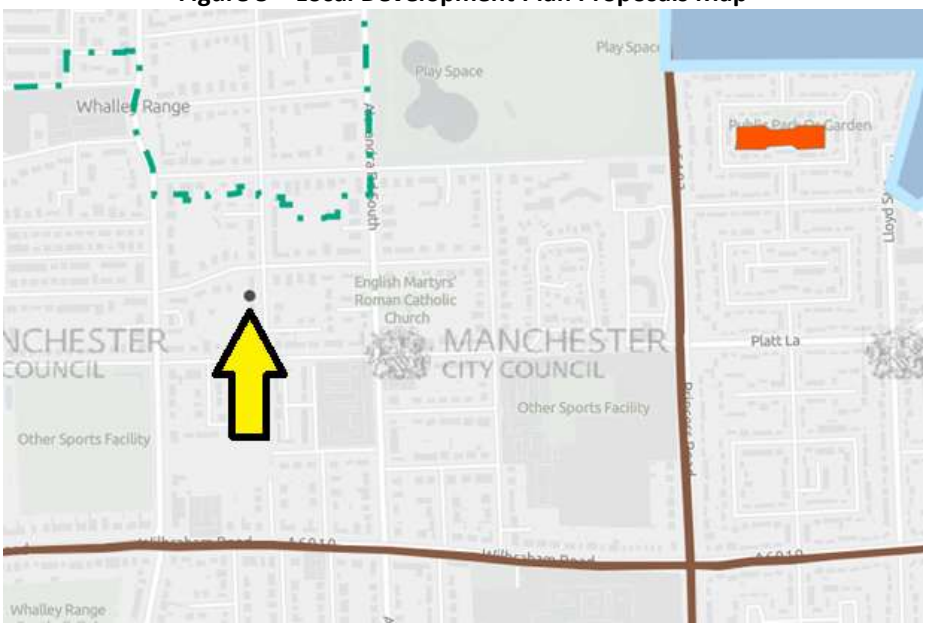
34. On this basis, the proposal is considered broadly to represent 'sustainable development' and to be consistent with the aims and aspirations of the NPPF. As such, should receive the support of the LPA, subject to local policy and to all other material planning considerations.

Local Planning Policy - Manchester Core Strategy 2012 to 2027

35. Turning to local policy, a check of the LPA's Interactive Planning Proposals Map has confirmed that the site is not set aside for any particular strategic purpose, and is not subject to any other form of special designation or protection. The relevant extract from the map is produced overleaf at Figure 5, and shows that, aside from the Whalley Range Conservation Area to the north, the locality is not affected by specific planning designations or protections.

36. As the Map indicates, the application site is not designated 'Employment Land'. It has no identified heritage nor environmental value. It is not the subject of Conservation Area status, nor any Article IV Direction which may restrict or preclude future uses.

Figure 5 – Local Development Plan Proposals Map



37. On this basis, it is understood that, subject to the proposal being considered appropriate in respect of all other material planning considerations and technical requirements, the principle of the proposed change of use would be consistent with both national and local planning policies and guidance.

38. Aside from the general principle of development, as assessed in pure policy terms, it is recognised that there are material considerations which will need to be considered, and any relevant local standards satisfied, in order for this planning application to receive the support of the LPA. Accordingly, therefore, the core material issues have been considered in preparation for submission of the application, and will be discussed in the following section of this Statement.

Other material considerations

39. **Noise/compatibility with adjacent uses:** It is recognised, in the context of local Core Strategy Policy DM1 (Development Management), that this application will need to demonstrate that the proposed incoming use would be compatible with the existing adjacent and surrounding uses.

40. As has been noted, the site is bound on three sides by existing residential properties. It is therefore vital that operations and the daily routine within the application site are managed in a way which protects the neighbours from undue disturbance or other detriment. It is also important to be mindful, however, of the level of activity which takes place at the site under the established use, and to assess the impact of the proposed new use in comparison with that existing situation.

41. In this regard, under the established use, residents of the care home are free to use the property's rear garden at their leisure and at any time of the day, 365 days a year. There is therefore the potential for noise disturbance to neighbours. Under the proposed new use, there will only be a presence at the site during the school's operating hours, meaning that the site would be unoccupied outside of those hours, including in the evening, at weekends, and outside of school term time. Also, it is not proposed that the school's pupils would use the rear garden as part of their school day routine – visits for this kind of outdoor activity would be pre-arranged at locations off site. The relative risk of noise disturbance to neighbours would therefore be greatly reduced under the proposed new use, in comparison with the existing established use.

42. Aside from noise management, given the nature of the proposal and the fact that no building works would be required, nor any external alterations made to the building, it is considered that there would be no other discernible impact upon residential amenity in the locality, for example in terms of overlooking, loss of light or privacy, or any other undue detriment to neighbours, in compliance with Policy DM1.

43. **Access and highways:** The application site is located in a highly sustainable location, lying within walking distance of bus, tram and rail infrastructure. It is not located within the City Centre boundary nor within a District Centre, and therefore for the purposes of local Core Strategy Policy T2 (Accessibility and Car Parking), should be considered to be located within an 'Outer Residential Area'. It is recognised, in the context of the policy, that some off street parking provision is desirable. As highlighted earlier in this Statement, the property's existing frontage can already accommodate 7 vehicles, and this could easily be increased by remodelling the existing landscaped area which lies between the access and egress gates.

44. Whilst the site does already provide a sufficient number of parking spaces to accommodate the proposed 6 staff members, it is considered, in any event, that the proposed use would be unlikely to lead to a notable increase in carborne journeys to and from the application site when compared to the existing, established care home use. Under the existing use, staff rotation can take place across the day and night, with vehicles coming and going regularly, 24/7. Under the application proposal, movements would be concentrated in the morning, when pupils and staff would be arriving at the site, and in the afternoon, when pupils and staff would depart. The use of shared transport, including minibuses, would further limit individual vehicle movements during drop-off and pick-up periods. Again, it is important to note that the school site would be entirely unoccupied during the evenings, at weekends, and outside of term time.

45. A managed arrival and departure procedure would be implemented by the operator, with staff supervising the frontage during peak periods to ensure that vehicles enter and leave the site safely, minibuses are marshalled appropriately, and any on-street waiting is avoided or minimised.

46. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of parking and highways, in accordance with Core Strategy Policies T2 and DM1, and in the context of Paragraph 116 of the NPPF, because any residual transport impacts would not be severe and the access arrangements can be safely managed.

47. **Flooding/drainage**: Enquiries have confirmed that the site lies within Flood Zone 1, which is land with a low risk of flooding. Further, under the proposal the existing foul and surface drainage systems would continue to be used. There would therefore be no impact on flood risk or drainage as a result of this proposal, in accordance with Core Strategy Policies EN14 (Flood Risk) and DM1, and with Section 14 of the NPPF.

Summary and conclusions

48. This application seeks to establish the support of the LPA for the repurposing of an existing building and its associated facilities to provide a small, specialised new SEND school. This Statement has sought to set out the case in favour of development, in the context of local and national planning policy, in order to demonstrate that the proposal would be broadly compliant with both. It has also discussed the other material considerations which will require assessment under this application.

49. The application site represents an under-utilised, brownfield site in a highly sustainable location, and this proposal represents an opportunity to broaden specialist educational provision within the City, bringing social, economic and environmental benefits to the local community. The proposal is therefore considered to represent 'sustainable development' and as such should receive support, subject to all other material considerations.

50. The local Development Plan does not assign any particular designation or protection to the application site. It is not protected as 'employment land', and is not the subject of any Article IV Direction which would preclude or even discourage the repurposing of the site to provide a small, specialist school. The principle of the proposed change of use would not therefore appear to be inconsistent with, nor contrary to, the LPA's local spatial aspirations for this site across the period of the adopted plan.

51. The various material considerations surrounding the case have been examined in this Statement, and it is submitted that the proposed development would be highly likely to bring about a net improvement to the level of residential amenity to be enjoyed by the site's neighbours. Under the proposal, the site would often be unoccupied, and therefore silent, which would reduce the potential for disturbance to neighbours. The site also already benefits from an appropriate amount of 'on plot' parking for a location of its kind, and it is considered that the proposed new use would not generate any severe, or even harmful, highways impacts in comparison with the established use.

52. On the basis of the above statement of case, therefore, the LPA is invited to lend its support to this application, in order that the Applicants may continue their mission of supporting pupils aged 9 to 16 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and who have a primary diagnosis of autism or social and mental health needs, in order that they may flourish and enjoy fulfilling lives out in the community.

Oakbrook School

Anglo House, Chapel Road, MANCHESTER M22 4JN

Unique reference number (URN): 152246

Pre-registration inspection report: 5 March 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 understands the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards). She has experience of operating a similar special school. The proprietor intends to develop robust quality assurance processes to ensure compliance with the standards. There are clear plans in place to ensure that the school works closely with the local authorities who would commission placements.

The proprietor has recruited senior leaders who have experience in working in a specialist school and are qualified teachers. These leaders demonstrate the knowledge that is needed to run this independent school successfully. They are committed to ensuring that pupils receive an effective quality of education.

The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

The proprietor plans to deliver a tailored curriculum to the meet the bespoke needs of pupils with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders have considered a broad range of subjects and qualifications that pupils would study from Years 3 to 11. This is compliant with the full suite of educational experiences outlined in the standards.

The proprietor has invested in commercial schemes of work for each subject, including personal, social and health and economic (PSHE) education, to ensure that essential learning is clearly mapped out. The leaders recognise that this curriculum will be refined once pupils start school and pupils' starting points are better understood. The curriculum policy gives sufficient thought to how the school intends to deliver the curriculum, including suitable timetable examples. This indicates that pupils would benefit from a core academic curriculum supplemented with a curriculum that develops pupils' life skills and readiness for life in modern Britain.

The proprietor has a clear PSHE and relationship and sex education policy. This policy is available on the school's newly launched website. The PSHE curriculum is appropriate for the school's intended pupils. It includes information on how pupils would be taught about keeping safe from risks online and offline. The school's programme to promote personal development and life skills includes careers guidance and preparation for adulthood.

The proprietor intends to use the careers charter to ensure that the curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to develop an appropriate understanding about different career routes. This includes access to an impartial careers adviser and opportunities to complete work experience. This information will help pupils to make informed choices about their futures.

Teaching

The proprietor intends that pupils will be taught by suitably experienced staff who have subject-specific knowledge. There is consideration of a comprehensive professional development programme to support staff who may need to teach outside of their specialist areas. Where required, the proprietor intends to commission specialist tutoring and specialist staff to ensure that pupils are supported well, particularly at key stage 4.

The proprietor intends to have class sizes of up to 6 pupils across 5 classrooms, with appropriate staff-to-pupil ratios. Leaders intend for pupils to be taught a curriculum that matches their starting points and stage of learning.

Leaders have set high expectations of how lessons should be structured. Leaders have invested heavily in appropriate resources to ensure that teachers have the tools required to teach subject content effectively. The proprietor intends to train new staff to adapt learning activities so that pupils can access the curriculum well. They intend to review barriers to learning such as reading and then put support in place to address gaps. They have plans to integrate library lessons as well as phonics into the school timetable. They have given appropriate thought to how the curriculum will be designed to help develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Assessment

The proprietor has established a sound assessment policy. If used effectively, it would mean that pupils' starting points and knowledge gaps would be identified on arrival. Leaders intend to use this information to then shape which learning pathways would be appropriate for each pupil.

The proprietor intends to gather detailed insights into pupils' ability and needs through collecting information from previous settings, education, health and care (EHC) plans and individual education plans. Leaders intend to work closely with specialists, therapists, the local authority and parent and carers to ensure that provision for pupils meets their needs.

The proprietor has appropriate processes in place to ensure pupils' progress through the curriculum and wider learning activities are recorded and reported. This includes sharing pupils' performance updates with parents and carers as well as the local authority.

The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

The proprietor proposes to offer an expansive programme to promote pupils' personal development. Teaching pupils to 'care for self, care for others and care for the environment' underpins this programme. For example, leaders intend to promote self-care and build pupils' resilience through outdoor pursuits such as bushcraft and climbing. They also plan to encourage pupils to care for the environment through eco projects such as recycling, gardening and composting.

The PSHE and religious education curriculum intends to cover fundamental British values, such as the rule of law. The proprietor intends to use guest speakers and

educational visits to further deepen pupils' understanding of citizenship and learn about different faiths and cultures.

The proprietor intends to help pupils to learn about decision-making and the importance of caring for others through a mentoring programme and community engagement projects.

The proprietor has plans to develop pupils' understanding of life beyond school through visits to places of worship, theatres and nursing homes. On arrival, the proprietor intends to ask pupils to share their interests to help shape wider enrichment opportunities.

The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

Safeguarding arrangements are clearly outlined in the school's policy. This aligns with national guidance and is published on the school's website.

The proprietor and senior leaders have the necessary training to ensure that they carry out their roles and responsibilities in line with the safeguarding procedures. They have clear plans to ensure that all incidents are logged and recorded. They intend to invest in a digital system to ensure that there is a sharp oversight of incidents.

The proprietor understands the potential additional risks for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps to shape risk assessments to ensure safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. For instance, leaders plan visits carefully and mitigate risks of pupils absconding.

The proprietor has appropriate plans to ensure that all new staff are suitably trained and understand how to apply the school's safeguarding policy.

Behaviour and supervision of pupils

The proprietor has ensured that a suitable written behaviour and exclusion policy is in place. This sets out key expectations that the leaders will have of pupils' behaviour and conduct. For instance, the proprietor intends to use a specific model to promote engagement, respect and resilience. This include promoting resilience for learning, respect for others and respect for property. There are clear steps for staff to follow if pupils do not meet these expectations.

Leaders intend for every member of staff to be trained to apply the behaviour policy well. This includes training staff on de-escalation techniques and use of restrictive physical intervention. The proprietor plans to focus on establishing positive relationships through a variety of specialist communication tools to ensure that strategies are adapted to meet pupils' needs.

Anti-bullying

The proprietor has ensured that there is an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place. This provides assurances that leaders intend to take bullying seriously and intend to handle incidents rigorously. The proprietor also intends to educate pupils on different types of bullying through the PSHE curriculum. Staff have clear steps to follow if incidents are identified.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The health and safety policies are comprehensive and suitable for this setting. The proprietor intends to have regular reviews and audits to ensure that all risks are assessed and mitigated. Risks assessments are thought out for both onsite and offsite activities.

Leaders have undertaken appropriate work to ensure that the building is complaint with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. There are suitable fire doors installed in the building and clear evaluation routes identified. The proprietor has ensured there will be trained fire marshals in school at all times. Further checks, such as on the fire detection alarm systems and emergency lighting, indicate that the proprietor has appropriate oversight of fire risks.

There is an appropriate first-aid policy in place. This includes names of staff trained in first aid and details of medication administration processes. The school has well-stocked first-aid equipment throughout the school.

Admissions and attendance

There is a system in place to record admissions and attendance electronically. The admission and attendance policy outline clear roles and responsibilities to ensure that these records are monitored and updated accurately. The arrangements indicated that the school is likely to comply with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The proprietor is committed to ensuring that all commissioned placements are carefully reviewed and that admissions are based on how well the school can meet pupils' needs. This is to ensure that leaders can reduce barriers to attendance and offer tailored support so that pupils can benefit fully from their learning

experiences. The school intends to admit up to 30 pupils and demonstrates the capacity to be able to meet this number.

Risk assessment

The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable risk assessment procedure put in place. There are various risk assessments available for the premises and pupil activities. These assessments set out the potential risks, the planned measures to reduce them and who will be responsible for keeping pupils safe.

The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

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

The recruitment process is thorough. All leaders have completed safer recruitment training and have a sound understanding of the important checks that need to be completed before staff join the school.

The proprietor intends to employ qualified teachers, with current recruitment processes ongoing to further expand staffing capacity. The proprietor has recruited leaders who have experience in working with pupils with SEND and leading schools across age ranges. As such, there are assurances that leaders know the actions to take to successfully operate an independent special school for pupils aged 7 to 16.

Leaders do not intend to use supply staff. However, they are aware of the checks that would be required if they did intend to use them.

The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

The proprietor has set up an electronic single central record which contains all the essential information in line with government guidance. Checks on the proprietor and senior leader are completed in line with statutory guidance. Leaders have organised employer folders to ensure that all records of online checks, medical fitness and qualifications are stored securely. The proprietor intends to work with the local authority to ensure that the single central record is audited regularly.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

The building sits over three floors. The school has an appropriate accessibility plan, which includes accessible toilets on the ground floor.

There are separate toilet facilities for pupils and staff. Cubicles are lockable from the inside and intended for single use.

There is ample access to drinking water on each floor. Where taps are suitable for drinking, this is marked clearly across the school. All taps have appropriate controls in place so that hot water does not present a scalding risk to pupils.

The building has a functioning shower on the ground floor. Leaders also intend to use local sporting facilities to ensure that pupils have access to wider curriculum opportunities if needed.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

The building has a purpose-built medical room on the ground which is accessible to all pupils. The room has a sink and is located near toilet and shower facilities. It is appropriately set up, contains a bed for pupils and is readily available for use when required.

The school also has a sensory room which is intended to be used to help pupils to regulate their behaviours or access therapy sessions.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

The school building is maintained to a high standard. It is clean, spacious and inviting for pupils. There are 5 classrooms, a dining area, an assembly hall, reading spaces, a kitchen, a meeting room and office spaces.

Each classroom is suitably furnished with, whiteboards, desks and chairs. Seating arrangements would ensure that at least 6 pupils could be taught in each of the 5 classrooms.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

Classrooms are newly refurbished and have appropriate lighting for the activities that will take place. The proprietor has ensured that external lighting is in place to allow for safe entry and exit from the building in the dark. Lighting and acoustics

are suitable for learning and also to meet the additional needs of pupils who may arrive with sensory needs.

Outdoor space

There is a secured outdoor play area at the back of the school which will be used for recreation. The proprietor intends to manage use of such facilities through staggered lunch and breaktimes for pupils. This is to help reduce sensory overload and support pupils with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.

The proprietor intends to add play resources and equipment once pupils' needs and interests are understood. The school also intends to ensure that these spaces are supervised by staff at all times. All spaces are also covered by CCTV to further enhance security.

The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proprietor has a well-considered written statement of its values, ethos and aims of the proposed school. This information is available on the school's website.

The school's website provides parents and carers with access to all necessary information. For example, the site includes information about the proprietor and contains policies such as for exclusion, behaviour and complaints.

Leaders understand the arrangements that will be required when working with different local authorities to review pupils' EHC plans.

The proprietor understands how to monitor accounts for pupils funded by the local authority and intends to maintain clear, accurate financial records for these placements.

The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Leaders have ensured that there is a clear complaints policy in place and this is available on the website. They have ensured that the policy clearly explains the procedures parents should follow should they wish to log a complaint against the school. This includes details of the timings for responses and details of the processes across each escalated stage of complaint.

The proprietor intends to keep a record of complaints, with clarification of the actions taken by the school or external individuals.

The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

The school's accessibility plan

There is a suitable accessibility plan in place. This indicates that leaders understand their duties and actions required to adhere to schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The plan considers how the site, curriculum and wider opportunities will be made accessible for pupils.

The proprietor has ensured that the regulation in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education Act 2002, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools.

Inspectors 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 renewed 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 chair of the proprietor body, the headteacher and the assistant headteacher during the inspection.

At the time of this inspection, the proposed school was not operating and had no pupils on roll.

This was the proposed school's first pre-registration inspection.

The proprietor has appointed a headteacher and assistant headteacher and intends to appoint further teaching and support staff.

The inspector made a tour of the site, both internally and externally, to check the suitability and safety of the premises.

The inspector viewed a wide range of documents provided by the proprietor, including safeguarding information, statutory policies and the proposed school's curriculum.

It is proposed that leaders will provide full-time education for up to 30 pupils, aged between 7 to 16 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and autism. It is expected that pupils will have an EHC plan.

The proprietor does not intend to make use of any alternative provision.

The proposed school intends to operate from the premises located at Anglo House, Chapel Road, Manchester, M22 4JN. The premises are spread across 3 floors and are comprised of 5 classrooms, a hall and a sensory room. In addition, the premises includes toilets, a kitchen area, medical room, showers and a staff room.

The proprietor is registered at Companies House. The chair of the proprietor body is Anita Sharma.

There is currently no governing body.

Lead inspector	
Amina Modan	His Majesty's Inspector

About this proposed school

Proprietor/Chair of the proprietor body	Anita Sharma
Headteacher	Dr Zakia Maqbool
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 16**
Gender of pupils	**Provider's proposal: Mixed**
Total hours operating as a school per week	**Provider's proposal: 40 hours**

Total hours of teaching provided per week	**Provider's proposal: 32.5 hours**
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	**Provider's current position: 2** **Provider's proposal: 12**
Number of part-time teaching staff	**Provider's proposal: 0**
Annual fees for day pupils	£65,000 to £90,000
Email address	headteacher@oakbrookschool.co.uk

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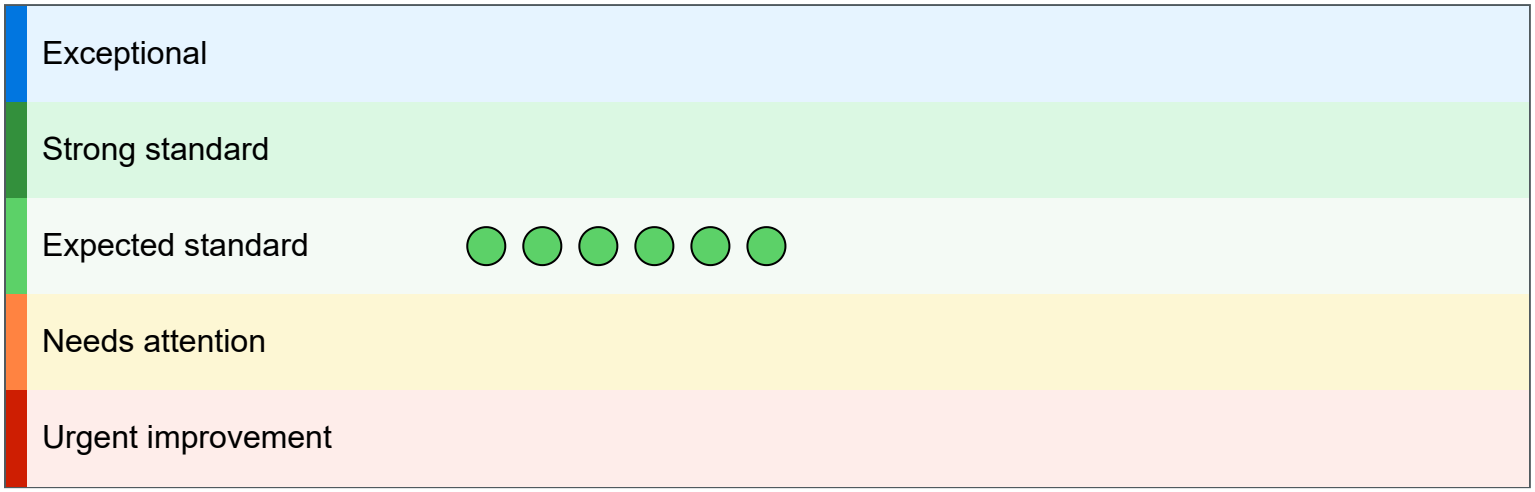
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Wellbrook School

Address: Station Road, Hatton, Derby, Derbyshire, DE65 5EH

Unique reference number (URN): 150920

Inspection report: 24 February 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.
- Insufficient evidence: Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Many pupils join the school following a disrupted period of education. They arrive working at levels below what is typically expected. However, from these starting points, they achieve well. The school helps them to catch up quickly. The school monitors pupils' progress through the curriculum closely.

Pupils' responses in lessons, their work in books and discussions with them, show that they typically remember what they have learned. For example, some pupils demonstrated an impressive recall of spelling rules they have learned. In a humanities lesson, pupils gave a detailed account of how the United Kingdom is governed.

Overall, any gaps in pupils' knowledge of English and mathematics are usually identified and addressed. However, some weaknesses in pupils' written work remain. Some pupils do not know how to form letters correctly and cannot write fluently.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Many pupils join the school with a history of poor attendance. Many have missed significant periods of their education. However, from these starting points, pupils' attendance improves both rapidly and dramatically. The school skilfully identifies barriers to positive attendance and puts the right actions in place to tackle these. It takes the views of pupils and parents fully into account when planning how to help. The processes for following up and challenging unexplained absences are robust. Leaders monitor and evaluate trends and patterns of attendance closely.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Typically, pupils live up to these. They follow the school's 'Five Rs' well. At the end of each lesson, they reflect on their performance against these. Daily, they consider what has gone well and what can be improved with their key workers. The school is typically calm, orderly and respectful.

Staff know pupils well. They understand what motivates them and what does not. They provide expert help when pupils become dysregulated. Any incidents of serious behaviour are dealt with sensitively and robustly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Overall, the school's curriculum is well organised. It makes clear what pupils will learn at each stage of their education. It builds cumulatively on what has gone before. It prepares pupils well for what they will learn next. However, in a small number of places, the curriculum does not make clear the precise content that pupils are expected to know and remember.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils study a wide range of texts, genres and authors. Those at the earliest stages of learning to read are well supported. The school's phonics programme is well organised and implemented well.

Teachers plan and deliver lessons that stimulate pupils' interests. Lessons are lively and engaging. They are closely aligned to the intent of the curriculum. Teachers check for gaps in pupils' understanding and ensure that these are addressed.

Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching. They know where teaching is working well and where improvements can be secured. They provide regular, well-targeted training that ensures that staff have the knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum. Leaders ensure that staff know how to adapt teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers typically do this well.

Inclusion

Expected standard

The school is inclusive. It ensures that pupils' needs are fully evaluated and understood. The curriculum and the provision put in place are well aligned to pupils' needs. As such, overtime, the barriers that pupils face are reduced successfully. The school pays close attention to the long-term targets set out in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. In daily key-worker discussions, pupils reflect on the progress that they are making. The school checks the steps that pupils make towards these. However, in a small number of cases, the school has not identified what pupils need to achieve in the short and medium term, to realise the longer-term goals that their EHC plans set out.

Staff training is regular. It results in teachers knowing how to adapt their teaching in light of pupils' needs. Training covers a broad range of topics related to pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school works in close partnership with parents and carers. Parents value the 'Wellbrook Weekly' that tells them how their child is getting on. The school works effectively with other agencies and professionals to provide the support that pupils need.

The school understands its responsibilities regarding pupils who are looked after. It carries out these duties diligently.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders have created a nurturing and caring school in which pupils are put first. They have an astute understanding of what is working well and what can improve further. They prioritise the right things. They regularly seek the views of pupils, parents and staff and act on what they find out. Leaders have a systematic approach to quality assuring the school's work. However, they do not always evaluate the impact that their work has on the full range of pupil groups as well as they could.

The proprietor has the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to carry out their role. They provide leaders with an effective balance of challenge and support. They ensure that they are challenged in order to secure the best possible provision.

Staff are unanimously proud to work at the school. They praise leaders' consideration of their workload and wellbeing. They feel valued and benefit from a robust training programme that is well matched to their roles.

Parents hold the school in high esteem. One parent summed up the views of many when they said, ‘Wellbrook is a brilliant setting for my child, who has improved so much. I cannot fault any aspect of the school. I receive so much support.’

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Pupils benefit from an ambitious personal development programme. Well-planned and sequenced programmes for personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education build pupils' knowledge cumulatively. Pupils revisit and deepen important learning over time. They learn how to stay safe in a range of contexts, including online, in the community and in relationships.

Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced across the curriculum and through the wider experiences on offer. Pupils learn about a wide range of faiths, cultures and traditions. They understand fundamental British values and the important laws that we have to protect us in our country.

The wider curriculum offer is rich, inclusive and engaging. Participation in activities such as mountain biking, visits to places of worship, fishing, air riflery, archery and climbing broadens pupils’ cultural capital. The school ensures that all pupils make good use of these. Pupils contribute positively to the local community, including through involvement with local events and working in partnership with care homes for old people. The school council plays an active role in shaping the school. Members are routinely consulted on changes to school polices. Their influence leads to tangible improvements, including to the way that breaktimes are organised, the management of mobile phones and expanding the range of resources available.

Careers education is well structured. It prepares pupils effectively for their next steps. Pupils receive impartial, independent guidance, meet a range of employers and providers and benefit from one-to-one advice.

Pastoral support is strong. Daily contact with key workers, alongside access to therapeutic services, ensures that pupils feel listened to and know who to turn to. Loki and Olwen, the school’s dogs, play an important role in the school's therapy offer.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This recently opened school is doing its pupils proud. Leaders have created a school in which pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully understood and provided for. The school skilfully evaluates each pupil’s SEND and puts in place the support that they need to thrive. As a result, from their relative starting points, pupils achieve well. They are happy and feel safe.

Behaviour is typically positive. The recently introduced ‘Five Rs’ help pupils to understand what is expected of them. Pupils do their utmost to be in the right place at the right time, show resilience, respect others and property and use the ‘right speech’. Pupils openly reflect on how well they have modelled each of these at the end of each lesson. They are eager to

get holes in their ‘punch cards’ that recognise and reward their successes. Staff know what motivates pupils. Pupils feel valued.

Pupils enjoy learning. They engage positively with their teachers. They increasingly remember what they have learned. Pupils are keen to share their thinking and talk about their learning. They respond well to praise and suggestions for improvement.

Pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school. A broad and varied enrichment programme allows them to try new activities, including archery, rifle shooting, climbing and visits to a range of places. Over time, pupils gain a strong understanding of fundamental British values and the differences in people that the law protects. They learn what discrimination is and why it is unacceptable. Bullying is rare. Pupils are happy that it is dealt with robustly when it does occur.

Over time, pupils’ attendance improves significantly. Many who have previously struggled to attend school now do so regularly.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the school consistently considers what pupils need to achieve in the short and medium term to meet the longer-term goals set out in education, health and care plans.
- The school should ensure that the curriculum, across all subjects, consistently sets out the precise content that pupils are expected to know and remember.
- Leaders should ensure that weaknesses in pupils’ written work are consistently addressed so that all pupils develop an accurate and fluent handwriting style.
- When carrying out quality assurance work, leaders should ensure that they more carefully consider the impact of the school’s work across the full range of pupil groups that make up the school.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and checked the school’s 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 renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, groups of staff and pupils and the chair of the proprietor body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and moderate learning difficulties and/or a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have education, health and care plans.

The school does not use any alternative providers.

This was the school's first standard inspection since opening in October 2024. The number on roll has risen from 6 pupil to 20 since the school opened.

The chair of the proprietor body is Anita Sharma.

The annual fees currently charged are from £65,00 to £112,000.

The school's email address is admin@wellbrookschool.co.uk

Headteacher: Claire Howells

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

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1. Quality of education provided — Standards met

All standards have been met.

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2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils — Standards met

All standards have been met.

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3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils — Standards met

All standards have been met.

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4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors — Standards met

All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools Standards met

All standards have been met.

6. Provision of information Standards met

All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handled Standards met

All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools Standards met

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:
Vic Wilkinson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
George Huthart, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

This data is from 24 February 2026

Total pupils

20

School capacity

25

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

20

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

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