Esland Doncaster School

The Pavilion, Melton Park, High Melton, Doncaster DN5 7SZ

Unique reference number (URN): 152632

Pre-registration inspection report:	8 October 2026

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

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

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proprietor and senior leaders have the knowledge, skills and experience to establish and lead the proposed school effectively. The headteacher has substantial experience of special education across primary, secondary and further education. The deputy headteacher brings experience of teaching and leadership in mainstream and specialist settings. Leaders understand the independent school standards (ISS) and their responsibilities for ensuring that these are met consistently.

Leaders have a clear vision for the proposed school. They intend to combine an ambitious education with therapeutic support that helps pupils overcome barriers to learning. They have planned the curriculum and accommodation around the needs of pupils with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, communication difficulties and associated social, emotional and mental health needs.

Leaders have established links with local authorities, particularly Doncaster, to understand the demand for places. They intend to increase pupil numbers gradually. Leaders recognise the importance of considering how individual placements will affect the wider pupil group.

A governing body is in place. Planned oversight includes visits to the school, curriculum reviews and consideration of pupils' progress. Leaders intend to

monitor teaching and learning, using observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work to inform staff development. Leaders will have access to professional support and opportunities to work alongside colleagues in the proprietor's other schools.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the proposed school.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

The proprietor has established a broad curriculum that covers all the required areas of learning. Primary provision draws on the national curriculum and includes English, mathematics, science, humanities, computing, creative subjects and physical education. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and religious education contribute to pupils' wider development.

Curriculum policies are supported by detailed plans and schemes of work. These take account of the proposed age range and pupils' different abilities, aptitudes and needs. Leaders intend to use information from families and education, health and care (EHC) plans to adapt provision further when pupils join.

Three secondary pathways provide access to qualifications ranging from entry-level study to Functional Skills, BTEC and GCSE qualifications. Pupils' pathways will be reviewed as their knowledge and needs become clearer. Plans for post-16 provision extend these pathways through further vocational learning and preparation for adulthood.

Reading is a priority. Leaders have planned daily reading and suitable approaches for pupils who need additional help. These include a suitable systematic synthetic phonics programme for younger pupils and further age-appropriate resources for older pupils who may need additional support with reading. The appointed English lead will oversee this work and support the development of literacy and linguistics across subjects.

Relationships education is planned appropriately for pupils' ages and needs. A separate policy is in place. Leaders have prepared arrangements for consulting parents and carers and responding to requests for withdrawal from aspects of this education.

Careers education will begin in Year 7. Pupils will have access to impartial advice from an independent careers' adviser. Planned opportunities include visits to further education providers, encounters with employers and work experience from

Year 10. Enterprise, work skills and the school's self-authored programme will help pupils develop practical skills and make informed choices about their futures.

Teaching

Leaders have planned teaching around small groups and pupils' individual needs. An English lead and an assistant psychologist have been appointed. Further recruitment is planned to ensure that the school has the subject expertise and support required as pupil numbers increase.

The intended therapeutic approach will help staff understand pupils' needs and support their engagement in learning. Additional specialist advice and therapy will be available, including through The Esland Group's wider resources, according to individual need. Leaders intend to organise therapeutic support around core learning to preserve pupils' access to the academic curriculum.

A staff development programme is in place. Planned training includes subject knowledge, teaching approaches and support for pupils' communication and emotional needs. Leaders will review teaching and pupils' work to identify where further training is needed.

Assessment

Leaders have established an assessment policy and framework. Initial information will inform pupils' transition into school. During pupils' first weeks in school, staff will assess their knowledge, understanding and any gaps in learning.
Planned assessment includes English, mathematics and reading, alongside consideration of pupils' social and emotional development. Leaders have identified suitable screening tools to explore particular learning needs where necessary.

Teachers will use ongoing checks and termly reviews to plan pupils' next steps. Assessment information will also inform decisions about curriculum pathways and the support pupils require.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the proposed school.

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

The proprietor has planned pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum. PSHE is organised around relationships, health and well-being, and living in the wider world. The content is sequenced to take account of pupils' ages and needs.

The curriculum promotes fundamental British values. Through PSHE and citizenship, pupils will learn about democracy, the law, responsibility and respect for others. Planned discussions of local and national issues will help pupils relate this learning to their own lives. Religious education and cultural events will develop pupils' knowledge of different faiths, beliefs and traditions. Learning about equality and discrimination will help pupils understand the importance of treating others with respect.

Leaders intend to provide opportunities for pupils to express their views and contribute to the school community. These include a school council, a buddy system and other pupil responsibilities. Enrichment activities will reflect pupils' interests and needs, with opportunities for outdoor learning, sport and creative activities.

Staff induction and training will cover political impartiality. Leaders understand their responsibility to prevent the promotion of partisan political views and to ensure that pupils are presented with balanced views when discussing contentious or political issues.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the proposed school.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The proposed school has a safeguarding policy that has regard to statutory guidance. Leaders have undertaken relevant safeguarding, designated safeguarding lead and Prevent training. They understand the importance of identifying the risks that individual pupils may face.

Safeguarding will form part of the initial work with pupils and families. Leaders intend to use information gathered before admission to plan appropriate support and transition arrangements. A suitable online platform will support the recording of concerns and leaders' oversight of safeguarding information.

Leaders understand their duty to refer a person who may be unsuitable to work with children to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Behaviour and supervision of pupils

The proposed staffing model provides for small teaching groups and appropriate adult support. Leaders intend to match staffing to pupils' needs and increase admissions in line with the school's capacity to provide suitable supervision.

The behaviour policy prioritises positive relationships, prevention and de-escalation. Staff will be supported to understand pupils' individual needs and recognise when additional assistance is required. Leaders plan to use restorative work and involve parents in developing individual support plans.

The policy sets out expectations for behaviour and provides for rewards and sanctions. Arrangements are in place to record serious incidents and the sanctions used.

Anti-bullying

The proprietor has established an anti-bullying policy and suitable arrangements for preventing and responding to bullying. These reflect the proposed school's emphasis on positive relationships and respect for others. Planned learning through PSHE will support pupils to understand how their actions affect other people.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

Suitable health and safety and first-aid policies are in place. Staff have undertaken relevant training, including first aid at work. Appropriate medical accommodation is available to support the timely care of pupils who become unwell or are injured.

The proprietor has established suitable fire safety arrangements. A fire risk assessment has been completed. Arrangements are in place for the servicing and checking of fire safety equipment and emergency lighting. Evacuation plans and information about the location of fire equipment are available.

Admissions and attendance

Leaders understand their responsibility to maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with the requirements. Suitable arrangements are planned, with a commercial system being used for recording relevant information.

Risk assessment

A written risk assessment policy is in place. Detailed assessments cover the premises and planned activities, including science activities, the separate teaching cabin and risks from slips, trips and falls.

The proprietor has secured relevant checks relating to electrical safety, asbestos and legionella. Arrangements also cover the safe management of hazardous substances, such as those used in commercial cleaning. The secure site and planned staffing provide a suitable basis for managing risks associated with pupils' use of the premises.

Use of restrictive interventions

Suitable procedures provide for the prompt written recording of the use of force and incidents involving seclusion or restraint. Leaders have planned staff training in de-escalation and appropriate physical intervention. The intended approach gives priority to preventing incidents and helping pupils manage their emotions safely.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the proposed school.

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

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

The proprietor understands the checks required when appointing staff and those responsible for the management of the school. Recruitment arrangements cover identity, medical fitness, the right to work in the United Kingdom and relevant qualifications. They also provide for criminal record, barred list and prohibition checks, including additional checks where a person has lived overseas.

Those responsible for recruitment have undertaken safer recruitment training. Appropriate arrangements cover the suitability of members of the proprietor body and restrictions on participation in management.

No agency staff are currently employed. The proprietor understands the requirement to obtain written assurances and relevant information from an agency before a person starts work. Arrangements also provide for checking the person's identity on arrival.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

An electronic single central record is in place. It includes the staff appointed to date and governors, including the chair of the proprietor body. The record provides for the required checks and their completion dates to be recorded.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the proposed school.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

The proposed school has sufficient toilet and washing facilities for the intended number of pupils. These include separate provision for boys and girls and an accessible toilet. Suitable changing accommodation and two showers are available for older pupils taking part in physical education.

Water supplies and temperatures are appropriately controlled. Drinking water is accessible and provided separately from the toilet facilities.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

A suitable medical room is available for the examination, treatment and short-term care of pupils. Washing facilities and a nearby toilet are provided.

Three sensory rooms and other flexible spaces will support pupils' individual needs. The accommodation is suitable for the therapeutic support that leaders intend to provide.

Maintaining school premises to safeguard the health, safety and welfare needs of pupils

The premises have been refurbished and provide appropriate accommodation for the proposed school. Accommodation across two floors and a separate teaching cabin provides sufficient space for the proposed 50 pupils. The range of teaching spaces allows for small-group and individual work.

The buildings and grounds are secure and well maintained. Suitable dining and food technology facilities support the planned curriculum and daily routines.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

Lighting and acoustic conditions are appropriate for the intended use of the accommodation. External lighting supports safe access to and from the premises.

Outdoor space

The proposed school has suitable outdoor space for physical education and play. The rural setting includes access to a woodland area that leaders intend to use for learning and activities that support pupils' well-being.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the proposed school.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proprietor has suitable arrangements to provide parents and prospective parents with the required information. This includes school and proprietor contact details, information about governance and the school's aims. Policies explain the proposed curriculum, admissions and provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

Information is available about provision for pupils with education and health care plans and those who speak English as an additional language. Leaders understand their responsibility to provide information for annual reviews and to supply the required financial information to local authorities funding placements.

Arrangements provide for parents to receive annual written reports about pupils' progress and attainment. The proprietor understands the requirements to publish inspection reports and information about any relevant restrictions imposed by the DfE. Information about academic performance and formal complaints will be made available as required.

Procedures provide for parents to receive information about any use of force, seclusion or restraint as soon as practicable. These take account of circumstances in which sharing information with a parent would be likely to cause significant harm to the pupil. Where information cannot safely be shared with any parent, the relevant local authority will be informed.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the proposed school.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proprietor has established a written complaints procedure that is available to parents. It provides for concerns to be considered informally before progressing to a formal written complaint. The procedure sets out the stages and timescales for handling complaints.

Parents who remain dissatisfied may request a panel hearing. The panel will include at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters raised. At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. Parents may attend and be accompanied.

The procedure provides for the panel's findings and recommendations to be shared appropriately. Written records will include the outcome of complaints and any action taken, whether or not a complaint is upheld. Records will be kept confidential, with access provided to the relevant authorities when required.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the proposed school.

The school's accessibility plan

The proprietor has an appropriate equality policy and written accessibility plan. Arrangements are in place to fulfil the duties under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. These support access to the curriculum, premises and information for disabled pupils.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and representatives of the proprietor. They reviewed curriculum plans, policies and arrangements for pupils' welfare. Inspectors considered recruitment records and toured the premises, including the separate teaching cabin and outdoor areas.

The proposed school is an independent special school for up to 50 pupils aged 7 to 18. It will provide full-time education for boys and girls. Places will be commissioned by local authorities.

The school intends to cater for pupils with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, speech, language and communication needs, and associated social, emotional and mental health needs. Its planned provision combines academic learning with therapeutic support and preparation for adulthood.

Lead inspector

Marcus Newby	His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector

Mehnaz Kauser	Ofsted Inspector

About this proposed school

Proprietor body	Esland North Ltd
Chair of the proprietor body	Jill Palmer
Headteacher	Christine Sherman
Type of school	Other independent special school
Capacity	50
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	**Provider's proposal:** 50
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	**Provider's proposal:** 0
Number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support	**Provider's proposal:** 0
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan	**Provider's proposal:** 50
Age range of pupils	**Provider's proposal:** 7-18
Gender of pupils	**Provider's proposal:** Mixed
Total hours operating as a school per week	**Provider's proposal:** 40
Total hours of teaching provided per week	**Provider's proposal:** 25
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	**Provider's proposal:** 15
Number of part-time teaching staff	**Provider's proposal:** 0
Annual fees for day pupils	£75,044
Email address	doncasterschool@esland.co.uk
Telephone	01302 432622
Website	www.eslanddoncasterschool.co.uk

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