

Hammer Lane Academy

Hammer Lane, Sharlston, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 1DH

Inspection date

14 January 2026

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)(d)(ii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(h) to 2(2)(i)

- The proposed school has established a broad and well-considered curriculum, spanning the early years to the end of key stage 1. Its 3 curriculum pathways are carefully designed to meet the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Each pathway offers access to a wide range of subjects, with content and approaches adapted to reflect pupils' individual profiles and education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes.
- The curriculum places an emphasis on early reading, phonics and the development of mathematical understanding. Leaders have clearly identified the essential knowledge and skills that pupils are expected to learn, including the progressive development of both written and spoken communication.
- The curriculum includes a well-planned programme for personal, social, health and economic education. The proprietor has given careful thought to how this provision supports pupils' future learning and development. It is appropriate to pupils' age and stage and enables them to learn about fundamental British values, different faiths and the protected characteristics. The curriculum aligns closely with the school's aims and ethos and is intended to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

Paragraphs 2A(1) to 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(1)(g)

- The proposed school's approach to teaching relationships education is appropriate for the pupils it intends to serve. The planned curriculum content meets statutory requirements, and the school intends to consult with parents and carers on its delivery and scope.

Paragraphs 3 to 4

- The proposed assessment arrangements are aligned with the school's curriculum and pupils' individual SEND profiles. Leaders plan to carry out a range of initial checks on what pupils know and can do when they join the school. This information, alongside pupils' EHC plan outcomes, will be used to inform teaching and appropriate adaptations to provision.

- The proposed school plans to use occupational therapy alongside speech and language therapy to support pupils' needs. The proprietor has also established links with other settings to ensure that appropriate specialist expertise is available.
- The school has appointed staff with the knowledge and expertise required to deliver the intended curriculum effectively. Leaders have also considered how high-quality teaching and learning will be promoted and secured. An appropriate programme of professional development has been planned, including a focus on meeting the communication needs of the pupils who will attend the school.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The proposed school has given careful consideration to how it will promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Its SMSC programme is intended to foster respect for others and an appreciation of difference, while promoting positive relationships and empathy. The school has also planned to provide enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom and within the local community.
- The proprietor intends to promote positive behaviour and relationships among pupils in a way that reflects the school's values and ethos. Pupils will be encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities within the school, in the local community and across the proprietor's trust. The planned opportunities for pupils to develop respect for, and appreciation of, others are thoughtful and well aligned to these aims.
- The proposed school plans to train staff to ensure that they understand how to avoid the promotion of partisan political views. This training will provide guidance on how this will be upheld through both the taught curriculum and any extra-curricular activities that pupils access.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)

- The proposed school has established secure foundations for a robust culture of safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead has completed appropriate training, and a comprehensive safeguarding training programme is in place, informed by relevant statutory guidance. The school has identified suitable systems for recording and responding to safeguarding concerns, which are clearly set out within its safeguarding policy.
- The proprietor demonstrates a clear understanding of contextual safeguarding risks and of what is required to maintain an effective safeguarding culture. The school recognises its duty of care to pupils and understands when and how to seek support from external agencies.

- The curriculum is also designed to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, both in person and online, in ways that are appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Paragraphs 9 to 10

- The proposed school has suitable policies in place to promote positive attitudes among pupils and to discourage bullying and unkind behaviour. These policies support a culture of collaboration and mutual respect. Leaders also intend to adapt them, where necessary, to reflect the specific SEND of individual pupils.

Paragraph 11

- The school has an appropriate health and safety policy that complies with relevant legislation and reflects the ages and needs of the pupils who will attend. The proprietor also intends to carry out regular checks of the premises to ensure these requirements are met.

Paragraph 12

- At the school's first pre-registration inspection in August 2025, this standard was judged as not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor has taken effective steps to address this. Fire safety equipment has been fitted and is appropriately reviewed by external fire safety professionals. The school has an appropriate fire safety policy in place, with clearly marked fire exits and emergency lighting installed.

Paragraph 13

- At the previous pre-registration inspection, this standard was judged as not likely to be met. An appropriate space is now suitably equipped for the short-term care of pupils who are unwell or injured. The proposed school has ensured that a sufficient number of staff hold up-to-date first-aid training.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

- The proprietor has carefully considered the staffing levels needed to supervise pupils throughout the school day. Arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils are appropriately supervised at all times, and staff have been recruited with the relevant expertise to meet pupils' anticipated SEND effectively.
- The school has suitable procedures in place to maintain admissions and attendance registers in line with statutory requirements. Leaders understand their legal responsibilities in this area and intend to promote the importance of regular attendance while monitoring any absence closely.

Paragraphs 16 to 16(b)

- At the school's first pre-registration inspection, these standards were judged as not likely to be met. Effective action has been taken by the proprietor since then to address weaknesses in this area. The school has a suitable and well-considered risk assessment policy in place. Risk assessments are designed to provide clear and practical guidance for staff and take account of the needs of the pupils who will attend, as well as the layout of the building. Arrangements are in place to ensure that risks are identified, reviewed and mitigated effectively, including in relation to the premises and any ongoing works, so that a safe environment is maintained for pupils and staff.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

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

- The proposed school has completed all appropriate pre-employment checks on staff who have already been employed. Staff do not start employment at the school until the relevant checks have been completed and the evidence has been recorded electronically. The school understands its responsibility for making checks on staff who might work at the school from a supply agency.

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

- All relevant pre-employment checks have been conducted on the proprietor body. These are recorded on the school's single central record.

Paragraphs 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c)

- The proprietor maintains an electronic single central record of all pre-employment checks conducted for staff. The school has recorded the dates on which all relevant checks were carried out.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(a), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- The proposed school is located on the site of a former nursery and has now been fully refurbished to a high standard. The completed work provides a safe, secure and appropriate environment that supports pupils' health, safety and welfare.
- The school offers suitable toilet and washing facilities that are well matched to the number and needs of pupils who attend. Medical facilities for the short-term care of pupils who are unwell or injured are appropriate and aim to meet pupils' needs effectively.

Paragraph 25

- At the time of the previous pre-registration inspection, inspectors judged that this standard was not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor has ensured that the renovation work to the building and grounds has been completed to a high standard. These improvements provide a safe, well-maintained environment that supports pupils' health, safety and welfare across the school site.

Paragraph 26

- Both the teaching spaces and the wider school building have been designed to reflect the activities that will take place and are appropriately soundproofed.

Paragraphs 27 to 27(b)

- Inspectors at the school's first pre-registration inspection judged these standards as not likely to be met. Since then, external lighting has been appropriately installed to ensure that pupils, staff and visitors can enter and leave the premises safely.

Internally, the school is bright and well lit through a combination of natural and artificial lighting.

Paragraphs 28 to 28(2)(b)

- At the time of the first pre-registration inspection, these standards were not all likely to be met. The proprietor has rectified this. Drinking water is now readily accessible and appropriately located away from toilet areas, with clear arrangements in place to ensure that pupils and staff can identify suitable drinking water points. Adequate supplies of hot and cold water are provided in all toilets and washing facilities, with hot water maintained at a safe temperature.

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

- The school's premises include suitable outdoor spaces for pupils to play and take part in physical education. A range of play equipment and reading materials are available, and the outdoor areas are secure from public access.
- The school also provides internal spaces to support pupils' emotional regulation and wellbeing, including well-equipped sensory rooms and 'break-out' areas. These spaces enable staff to offer additional, personalised support in line with pupils' individual needs.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

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

- The proposed school understands its duty to publish appropriate policies and information for parents, the Department for Education and other bodies. The school has constructed a website for the provision of this information and intends to ensure that it is readily available to parents and other organisations upon request.
- The school recognises its responsibility to contribute towards the annual review of pupils' EHC plans and to provide the local authority with relevant financial records pertaining to these pupils.
- The school has developed an appropriate template for the reporting of pupils' progress and personal development to parents.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- The school has an appropriate written complaints policy in place. This provides relevant information about the school's complaints process and procedures. It gives clear guidance on how to raise informal and formal complaints. Additionally, it contains information on timescales, complainants' rights and how records of complaints will be kept.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- At the school's first pre-registration inspection in August 2025, the standards in this part were judged as not likely to be met in full. Since then, the proprietor has taken effective action to ensure that all standards in Parts 3 and 5 are likely to be met.
- The proprietor has a clear and ambitious vision for delivering high-quality provision for pupils with SEND. A comprehensive programme of professional development is in place for all staff, ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills needed to support pupils with communication and interaction needs, as well as other barriers to learning.
- The proprietor has ensured that the required standards are met, including through the completion of renovation work and the implementation of robust, pupil-focused risk assessments that promote pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The proprietor also demonstrates a strong understanding of what is needed to promote pupils' wellbeing. Policies and procedures reflect the school's statutory safeguarding responsibilities, including those under the 'Prevent' duty, and the proprietor is well placed to support and challenge school leaders in meeting pupils' needs effectively.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has a suitable accessibility plan in place that is well matched to the needs of the pupils it intends to serve. The plan clearly sets out how all pupils will be supported to access both the curriculum and the physical environment.
- The school is likely to meet schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- The proposed school's curriculum and policies provide assurance that the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) will be met when the school opens. The curriculum builds securely on the early years statutory framework and sets out a clear sequence of learning across all 7 areas of early learning.
- The school has taken careful account of the needs of the youngest children in the EYFS when developing its safeguarding policies and procedures. These reflect children's health and welfare needs, appropriate staffing ratios, SEND and the suitability of the physical environment.
- The statutory requirements of the EYFS are likely to be met.

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	152331
DfE registration number	384/6017
Inspection number	10431263

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 school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Waterton Academy Trust
Chair	Stephen Johnson
Headteacher	Laura Thresh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000
Telephone number	01924 967619
Website	www.hammerlaneacademy.org
Email address	hammerlaneoffice@watertonacademytrust.org
Date of previous inspection	20 August 2025

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	4 to 7	4 to 7
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	30	30

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	30

Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	30
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	30
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	30

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	15
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located at Hammer Lane, Sharlston, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 1DH.
- The proposed school will be an independent special school for pupils with a range of needs, including those with communication and interaction needs. All pupils will have an EHC plan. Places will be commissioned by the local authority in which each pupil lives.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 30 pupils aged between 4 and 7 years.
- At the time of the inspection, all staff had been appointed, including a head of school.
- Leaders at the proposed school do not currently plan to use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education commissioned the inspection to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the standards if it is given permission to open.
- This was the proposed school's second pre-registration inspection. A previous pre-registration inspection took place on 20 August 2025.
- The inspectors met with members of the proprietor body and the proposed school's interim executive board, the executive headteacher, the head of school and the deputy head of school/special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with the chief executive officer of the Waterton Academy Trust.
- Inspectors toured the school site, including to check the suitability of the premises.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including schemes of work and policies and procedures related to safeguarding, health and safety, risk assessment, administration of first aid and fire safety.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for staff recruitment, scrutinised various risk assessments, viewed the single central record and discussed the school's proposed arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Marcus Newby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Penny

Ofsted Inspector

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