

Inspection of Pivot Academy

Rawfolds Way, Cleckheaton BD19 5LJ

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend Pivot Academy have often found it difficult to cope in their previous schools. Several pupils come here having not attended school for a significant length of time. When pupils join the school, they are assigned a key worker to look after their needs. Pupils feel they can talk to staff if there is anything worrying them. Most pupils feel safe in school. A few pupils feel less safe when other pupils misbehave.

Pupils' social and emotional needs are well met by staff. Leaders work with several outside agencies to provide additional support for pupils. The school's safer schools police officer attends the school regularly to do preventative work with some pupils. Pupils receive effective careers information, advice and guidance. This helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Pupils' behaviour is not good. The school's own records show that there have been several behaviour incidents over time, including assaults on staff and pupils. When pupils join the school the number of times that they are suspended from school declines over time. However, the number of suspensions remains high.

Pupils understand the different types of bullying. They are confident that staff will deal with any bullying incidents quickly when they happen.

The school's curriculum is not as ambitious as it should be, including in the sixth form. Leaders have not ensured that the school's reading programme is implemented consistently and effectively by staff across all three sites.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils join the school at various times of the year. Many pupils arrive with significant gaps in learning. Leaders are not clear about the knowledge that pupils must know in detail. In addition, in some subjects, knowledge about how the subject works is not well covered. For example, in history the focus is mainly on facts. There is less focus on concepts such as how historians use evidence to make connections and claims. There are limited opportunities for pupils to revisit what they have been taught. Pupils do not have opportunities to write at length so they can build up their stamina and independence in writing across the curriculum.

Some pupils who join the school are unable to read fluently. Other pupils find reading comprehension challenging. Leaders have recently prioritised the teaching of reading. Staff have received training in the school's reading programme. However, the school's reading programme is not consistently implemented by staff. Some staff do not use this programme at all. Staff do not have a clear understanding of the specific reading barriers faced by individual pupils.

Staff receive lots of information about how to support pupils' additional needs. However, this information is not implemented consistently well across the curriculum to support pupils' academic progress.

Pupils have a range of vocational and academic qualifications to choose from in key stage 4. These qualifications are based on pupils' individual needs. However, the curriculum offer in the sixth form is limited. Leaders understand the need to develop a broader curriculum offer for students in the sixth form.

Leaders have established a comprehensive personal development programme in Years 7 to 11. This programme is responsive to pupils' needs. It is adapted when staff identify additional needs or risks that pupils may face. Pupils understand the meaning of consent and healthy relationships. Pupils receive effective and impartial careers information and guidance. The carers leader considers local labour market information when planning the school's careers programme. The sixth-form personal development curriculum is underdeveloped, however.

Most pupils' attendance improves, from extremely low starting points, when they join the school. Staff often use the school's minibus to collect pupils from home when they do not arrive at school. They also undertake welfare visits to check on vulnerable pupils if they are not in school. Students' attendance in the sixth form is low.

Staff are patient with pupils. They encourage pupils in a calm manner. Staff challenge pupils when their behaviour is poor. The school's rewards system is implemented well. Leaders have quickly established effective routines at the school's new site, Salus House. Despite this, pupils' behaviour is not good. There are too many behaviour incidents over time. An inspector observed some poor behaviour from some pupils during the inspection.

The proprietor's vision and values are known and shared by staff. The proprietor and leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils get a second chance to succeed. Most staff are proud to work at the school and feel that leaders consider their workload. However, a small number of staff do not feel well supported with their workload and in managing pupils' behaviour.

Most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View, have positive views about the school. One parent said, 'This school has changed my son's life for the better.' A few parents are unhappy with some aspects of the school, for instance communication between home and school and pupils' behaviour.

Leaders have ensured that there is an accessibility plan. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act, 2010. During the inspection, some administrative amendments were made to the school's admissions register to ensure full compliance with the requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders immediately resolved an issue with the hot water in one of the buildings during the inspection.

The proprietor has already implemented the material change requested of the Department for Education (DfE). Salus House, the school's additional site, opened in March 2022. Leaders admitted pupils in Years 7, 12 and 13 in September 2021. The staffing ratio is three pupils to one member of staff. An additional headteacher, based at Salus House, started in September 2021. The proprietor has plans to continue to increase staffing if the number of pupils on the school's roll increases further. A facilities manager has been appointed to ensure oversight of all three sites. The new site is well maintained. It is a pleasant environment for both staff and pupils. Leaders are clear that the sixth-form intake will be limited to 10 students, due to the amount of space available. Leaders have adjusted the building where sixth-form students are based. For instance, there are separate toilets for key stage 4 and 5 pupils.

The proprietor ensures that the necessary health and safety checks are completed on all three sites. Appropriate health and safety checks were completed on the school's new site before it opened to pupils and staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a designated safeguarding leader (DSL) on all three sites. Two additional DSLs oversee safeguarding across the whole school. This enables leaders to manage the considerable number of safeguarding cases.

Staff understand the additional vulnerabilities that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities may face. They also have a good understanding of the local safeguarding risks. Pupils are taught about these risks through the school's personal development curriculum. Leaders work with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the support that they need, when required.

Pupils understand how to stay safe online. The school has an internet filtering system to block inappropriate content. Pupils do not have individual computer access, therefore it is not possible to track pupils' individual activity. To mitigate this, pupils do not access the internet unless they are working one-to-one with a member of staff.

The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils' behaviour is not good. There are too many behaviour incidents. The number of pupils suspended from school remains high. Leaders must ensure that the number of behaviour incidents is significantly reduced, and pupils' behaviour improves over time.

- The school's reading programme is implemented inconsistently. This is limiting the progress of pupils in reading. Leaders must ensure that staff understand the specific barriers to pupils' developing skills in reading and understand how to remove these barriers. This will enable the weakest readers to get the support they need to read with fluency and automaticity. Leaders should also ensure that there are more opportunities for pupils to read across the curriculum.
- Leaders have not considered well enough the important knowledge that pupils must learn in each subject. Many pupils come to the school with significant gaps in learning. These gaps are not closing quickly enough because there are limited opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding and revisit what they have been taught. Leaders need to ensure that subject leaders design the curriculum so that it provides opportunities for pupils to revisit what they have been taught and deepen their knowledge and understanding in each subject.
- The sixth-form curriculum offer is not broad enough. There are limited qualifications for pupils to choose from. As a result, some students are not fully engaged, and they miss school regularly. Leaders should ensure that they implement their plans to broaden the curriculum offer in the sixth form. Leaders should also ensure that sixth-form students' attendance improves.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	144857
DfE registration number	382/6008
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10212957
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Number of part-time pupils	14
Proprietor	Michael Smith
Chair	Michael Smith
Headteacher	Sam Porter and Rob Arrowsmith
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,000 to £41,000
Telephone number	01484 766350
Website	www.pivot-group.uk
Email address	info@pivot-group.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–18 January 2018

Information about this school

- Pivot Academy is a secondary day school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion. Many pupils who join the school have previously had poor attendance and have experienced significant disruption to their education before coming to Pivot Academy.
- All pupil places are commissioned by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is based on three sites. The original site at Rawfolds Way, Cleckheaton is for pupils in key stage 4 and 5. There are two buildings on the school's second site, The Bungalow, St Thomas Garden, Huddersfield. There is provision at this site for pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school. These pupils attend the school for a short period of time. There is also provision on this site for key stage 4 pupils who are permanently on the school's roll. The third site at Salus House, Huddersfield, is recently opened and caters for key stage 3 and 4 pupils. The original site will close in December 2022. Leaders have already informed the DfE that they intend to open a new site to replace the existing site in September 2022. This site was not checked as part of the inspection as the building is not complete.
- The school has two headteachers and a lead teacher. They are responsible for each of the three sites.
- There is a special educational needs coordinator and a DSL based at each of the school's three sites.
- The chief executive officer of Pivot Educational Consultancy Limited is also the proprietor.
- The school uses one registered alternative education provider for some students in the sixth form.
- The school closes to pupils at 1.30pm on Fridays. Leaders intend to review this.
- The school has not included the name of the proprietor in the government's website, 'Get information about schools'.
- The school is registered for 50 pupils. There are currently 79 pupils on the school's roll. The proprietor has applied to the DfE for a material change to increase the number of pupils to a maximum of 137, to change the age range from 12 to 16, to 11 to 18, and to approve the use of the school's new site, Salus House.

Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken account of this in their evaluation.
- The school applied to the DfE, last year, to make a material change to its registration. The proprietor wishes to increase the maximum number of pupils that can be admitted to the school from 50 to 137 with the opening of the school's third site. The proprietor also requested that the age range is changed from 12 to 16, to 11 to 18. At the DfE's request, inspectors checked whether the school is likely to continue to meet the independent school standards if the DfE were to decide to approve this change.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, and personal, social, health and economic education. Here, inspectors talked to some pupils about their work, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to teachers and curriculum leaders. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans in these subjects and other subjects.
- An inspector toured all three of the school's sites to check compliance with the independent school premises standards. The inspector was accompanied by the school's facilities manager and the proprietor. An inspector visited one of the three off-site sports facilities that the school uses for physical education.
- An inspector heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils. Inspectors spoke to staff about the impact of the safeguarding training they receive. Inspectors looked at some of the school's behaviour and attendance logs. The school's single central record, which includes the recruitment checks made on staff, was reviewed.
- An inspector spoke with the safer school's police officer who attends the school on a weekly basis. The lead inspector held a telephone call with the local authority designated officer. The lead inspector also held a telephone call with a member of staff from Kirklees Council who is involved in organising the pre-apprenticeship programme at Kirklees College attended by some students in the sixth form.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that a serious incident that occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- Inspectors met with the headteachers, the proprietor, two of the school's DSLs, the director of special educational needs and the director of teaching and learning. Inspectors also met with other school staff and leaders.
- Inspectors considered the views of 35 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors also considered the responses from 11 parents or

carers to Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's pupil survey.

- Inspectors also considered a complaint about the school that was received during the inspection.

The school's proposed change to increase the age range and maximum number of pupils and addition of another site

The school has applied to the DfE to make a material change to its registration. At the DfE's request, inspectors checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school's provision is implemented. The school has already implemented the material change.**

Inspection team

Michele Costello, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tricia Stevens	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector

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