

School inspection report

10 to 12 October 2023

The Pivot Academy LS East

The Pivot Academy LS East
Unit 3 Killingbeck Drive
York Road
Leeds
LS14 6UF

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as ‘the Standards’.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor, directors and leaders possess the skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities effectively and demonstrate a clear understanding of how to promote pupils' wellbeing. This ensures the practical fulfilment of the school's commitment to the belief that 'all children deserve better'. All of the pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and most have experienced previous disruption to their education. The directors, together with the headteacher, have created a culture within the school community of both rigour and compassion. As a result, pupils thrive educationally and emotionally, making assured progress in relation to their individual starting points at the school.
2. Leaders have developed an effective, relevant curriculum, centred around reading, PSHE, zones of regulation, extended writing, and what pupils must know and not forget. This approach is underpinned by the provision of an individual learning programme for each pupil, using accurate assessments of their specific needs. Teachers and support staff know pupils well, and implement these programmes effectively, enabling pupils to catch up with their learning. Pupils continue their education with much improved confidence and success, achieving well in GCSEs and other accredited coursework.
3. Leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' access to and use of information and communication technology (ICT); provision currently limits opportunities for pupils to extend their learning. Pupils in the upper school do not develop their musical abilities to the full as music is not offered as an option for these pupils.
4. The directors, leaders and staff work relentlessly in the interests of pupils' wellbeing. Pupils admitted to the school typically have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and the manner in which they are helped to deal with and overcome these issues represents a significant strength of the school. The school provides a calm and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe to learn and to make mistakes, knowing that leaders and staff are there to assist and encourage them. Pupils feel reassured that there is always an opportunity to make a fresh start and move on positively. They successfully learn how to self-regulate their behaviour and emotions, to believe in and care for themselves and make good progress.
5. Pupils gain an understanding of healthy lifestyles and access physical education including through recreational activities which boost their confidence and fitness. Consequently, pupils' physical and mental health are supported well.
6. The directors, leaders and staff effectively ensure that pupils' social and economic education is matched appropriately to their aspirations and the opportunities available to them when they leave school. Pupils receive impartial and independent advice and guidance from the school's own careers support team, supplemented by an independent advisory service. In 2023, all leavers gained placements at colleges or apprenticeships.
7. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme includes preparation for living in a multi-cultural society and reinforcement of the importance of respect for others' individual or cultural differences. Pupils engage positively in these areas of learning. Pupils value the importance

placed on their needs and futures. They are keen to contribute to society and respond readily and supportively to community projects.

8. Directors have a clear understanding of the processes that keep pupils safe. They regularly review safeguarding arrangements with the designated safeguarding lead and complete an annual review of the implementation of the safeguarding policy. They give consideration to any lessons learned through their evaluations. Directors together with leaders, maintain appropriate links with other agencies. Leaders and staff are vigilant to any safeguarding concerns. They consider carefully the contextual safeguarding risks of the school and to any pupils. Staff are well trained. They understand and follow the school's appropriate safeguarding procedures.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

- Leaders and managers should ensure that pupils can extend their achievement in information, communication and technology.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that pupils in the upper school have the opportunity to increase achievement music.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Directors, who oversee the running of the school, have appropriate expertise, and are diligent in keeping up to date with statutory requirements and guidance. They apply this expertise skilfully, continuously monitoring the implementation of policies and actively checking on health and safety and safeguarding arrangements. Their extensive specialist knowledge of SEND has resulted in the formation of an alternative provision in which pupils' educational needs are met successfully.
10. Directors provide suitable challenge when it is required and set strategic direction of the school. Action is taken in response to matters arising from leaders' self-evaluation, including with regard to the implementation of the accessibility plan. Pupils feel valued as a result of their placement in a high-quality setting. Directors and leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing. The school successfully lives up to its motto that 'all children deserve better'.
11. Leaders manage the whole school team of teachers, support staff and specialists effectively to ensure the implementation of policies and procedures. As a result, pupils and their families receive a comprehensive, well-led wrap-around service that responds effectively to their needs.
12. Parents have access to clearly written information including about education, health and care (EHC) plans for their children. This means that parents are well informed about how best to work with the school on their child's behalf.
13. Pupils' day-to-day issues are dealt with positively in close liaison with their parents. Parents know they can raise a complaint if concerned about any matter, because the school makes it clear in its complaints policy that they are encouraged to do so. In practice, the productive home-school relationship fostered by leaders means that any parental concerns are resolved quickly.
14. Leaders maintain consistent oversight of risk, especially with regard to pupils' vulnerabilities and specific circumstances, ensuring that identified risks are mitigated effectively. Staff are well acquainted with the risk management procedures for everyday situations, specific one-off events and potential risks for individual pupils, implementing them consistently. Therefore, pupils are able to proceed with their learning activities and enjoy extending their experiences safely and confidently.
15. Leaders encourage staff to share any concerns or successes regarding individual pupils at beginning and end of day meetings. This enables the swift identification of any necessary support or adaptations and allows staff at all levels of the organisation to be directly involved in the distributed leadership that is a hallmark of the school's effective practice. Staff are highly responsive to pupils' emerging needs.
16. Teachers and support staff display effective leadership in their classroom management, presenting a confident, facilitative, respectful approach to their work with pupils. In turn, pupils learn to take leadership of their own learning, modelling themselves on the adults around them, taking pride in completing tasks and achieving the results they aim for.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The school is highly selective regarding the suitability of pupils for whom it can provide education, training and recreation. As a result, pupils who are admitted are able to benefit from the school's provision.
18. Almost all pupils on roll have had previous periods of disrupted education. Staff are adept at quickly identifying pupils' priority needs and addressing them effectively so that each pupil can settle into the school knowing they are valued and will be helped appropriately. A particularly effective feature of this help is the five 'Golden Threads' which run through all aspects of school: reading, PSHE, zones of regulation, extended writing, and what they must know and not forget.
19. On entry, pupils typically have low levels of attainment. Leaders provide a relevant, effective curriculum which assists pupils to catch up with their learning in core subjects, PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE), with appropriate emphasis on functional life and social skills. The curriculum is not broad, as a result of its intended focus on enabling pupils to make up for lost time in schooling. However, the required curriculum areas are covered, and the curriculum actively promotes fundamental British values. Pupils find this curriculum reassuringly manageable while enabling them to make good progress.
20. Pupils make good progress so that they secure places at mainstream or specialist schools, further education colleges, or apprenticeship schemes. In 2023, all leavers achieved suitable placements, having achieved required GCSE results and/or other accredited qualifications.
21. Leaders and staff provide recreational experiences that are well matched to pupils' needs, such as multi-sports, trampolining and climbing, all of which extend pupils' leisure horizons, confidence and self-esteem.
22. The teaching of music and opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning in ICT is currently limited, particularly for older pupils. Music is not taught as a subject in the upper school, thus reducing opportunities for older pupils to develop their abilities. Older pupils are keen to develop their musical skills further within the upper school curriculum, particularly when linked to digital skills development.
23. Teaching is highly effective because teachers and support staff are well trained in specialist approaches, know each pupil well and develop positive and good-humoured rapport with them. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in this supportive and cheerful learning environment.
24. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are effective. Assessments inform planning for next steps and any additional support that pupils need. Staff plan learning well and are alert to opportunities to build on spontaneous opportunities when pupils display a readiness to explore a learning point in more depth or to extend their thinking.
25. Staff continually check pupils' understanding, encourage them to do their best, provide helpful feedback and skilfully select stimulating resources. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and confidence

to engaging and searching questions. They are ready to take risks in their learning and are not afraid to make mistakes. They are motivated to learn, and to work well with one another and individually.

26. Although pupils face challenges in regulating their own behaviour at times, staff are quick to support them in applying techniques to deal with any issues, usually with success. Consequently, behaviour in class is typically positive and pupils do not deliberately disturb others' learning.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

27. The directors, leaders and staff understand that meeting the physical, emotional and mental health need of pupils is fundamentally important to enable pupils' academic progress and achievement. Therefore staff focus on meeting these needs as a priority.
28. Leaders have implemented a curriculum which includes the teaching of strategies for personal self-regulation, social skills, self-care and overall wellbeing. Pupils apply the techniques they learn with positive results, and as a result are better able to maintain calm and improve their access to learning in the subjects they are taught.
29. A highly skilled specialist team supports pupils' mental health and suitable referrals to other relevant agencies are carried out when required. Because these provisions are so readily available to pupils, on a daily basis, and because staff know pupils well, pupils receive the necessary support and guidance they need quickly, and consistently over time.
30. Staff undertake regular reviews of the emotional wellbeing of pupils with EHC plans in liaison with the local authority. They identify next steps in providing support. An equally thorough approach is taken with other pupils. All staff are trained to support pupils' emotional development, including through daily contact with parents. Each pupil has a bespoke support plan which is effectively implemented. This practice successfully fosters pupils' emotional wellbeing.
31. Pupils benefit from the school's calm and nurturing environment with defined spaces for peaceful reflection and downtime. Leaders provide a low stimulation environment to prevent pupils experiencing sensory overload. This is greatly appreciated by pupils, who also value support with coping strategies for loud noises such as fire alarms. Leaders' close attention to health and safety and fire safety arrangements results in pupils feeling secure and confident in the school environment.
32. Pupils are well supervised at all times, within the school and during off-site activities. Pupils feel safe and appreciate the well cared for premises. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that any bullying would be reported straight away and dealt with by staff quickly and effectively. Behaviour is typically positive.
33. Pupils' physical health is promoted through a consistent focus on healthy eating, personal hygiene, individually tailored programmes of physical education and extra-curricular activities. Pupils acquire an understanding of aspects such as healthy lifestyles, on-line safety, safe relationships, and the risks associated with substance abuse.
34. First aid and medical provision are well managed and contribute to pupils' sense of security and assuredness that their wellbeing is of prime importance to leaders and staff.
35. Admission arrangements take pupils' additional needs fully into account. Leaders and staff make every effort to ensure pupils are present as much as possible, diligently following up any absences.

36. Leaders and staff consistently emphasise values within the PSHE curriculum and other subject areas. Pupils respond well and develop high levels of mutual respect and spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils are accepting of others. They appreciate the importance of respect, understanding of right and wrong and an openness to possibilities in life.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

37. Leaders are ambitious on behalf of pupils. Pupils who typically start at the school with low self-esteem, nervous of repeated failure, and limited awareness of life's possibilities, successfully learn that they have the right to and the ability to gain access to further education, training and employment. This is a consequence of leaders' deep commitment to helping pupils in this regard and the relevant provision it has put in place.
38. Accredited functional life and social skills courses enable pupils to develop the competencies and confidence they will need in the future. Leaders give appropriate emphasis to training through work experience and other vocational opportunities, including in association with local further education colleges. As a result, pupils become increasingly aspirational, expand their knowledge of potential future opportunities post-school, and prepare well for taking them up
39. The school's careers guidance team is supplemented by a commissioned independent careers service. This combined specialist provision enables pupils to build up a picture of different further education, training and employment options from an early point in their time at school. They successfully learn about the social and economic implications of their choice of a preferred pathway. Pupils gain broader perspectives including by attending careers and apprenticeship fairs.
40. As the time for transfer to post-16 placements approaches, leaders ensure pupils receive increased personalised support in order to gain the best chance of success on leaving school. Staff continue to provide informal support during the following months, and sometimes years after pupils have left the school. Transition procedures linked to EHC plans are managed well and enable pupils to experience a strong sense of personal, responsible involvement in the process.
41. Pupils gain knowledge about the wider context of British society, participating in celebrations, cultural and charitable events as well as school trips and enrichment opportunities. These introduce them to the diverse nature of cultural and faith communities. Their exposure to a broader world has increased their appreciation of wider tolerance issues, for example when learning about life in other countries around the world.
42. Pupils' understanding of the law, democracy and British institutions is successfully fostered within the PSHE curriculum and also through specific activities. These include discussions, including with the safer schools officer, about racism, hate crimes and unacceptable or illegal activities. Such discussions positively impact on the attitudes of some pupils, correcting their sometimes-pre-conceived misperceptions and elements of prejudicial views, and strengthening their understanding of right and wrong.
43. Pupils display a strong commitment to their school community, treating the premises with respect, and contributing to the life of the school, such as when taking supervised responsibility for the mini-bus maintenance programme. They also make a contribution to the wider community in activities such as litter picking in a local park.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant Standards are met

Safeguarding

44. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective and pay suitable regard to the particular vulnerabilities of the pupils, all of whom have SEND and SEMH. Leaders promote a culture of awareness of the increased risks of safeguarding issues arising from the pupils' learning and behavioural characteristics. Leaders ensure high levels of vigilance and an openness to the possibility of concerns from staff, pupils and parents. Leaders provide appropriate training for staff including for those with safeguarding lead responsibilities. The school's safeguarding policy is suitably tailored to the specific needs of the pupils and characteristics of the school.
45. Staff are knowledgeable in child protection procedures, including those for online safety and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. They understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern and are alert to the need to monitor pupils' attendance. Staff are aware of the importance of maintaining professional boundaries with pupils and understand the whistleblowing procedure.
46. Leaders work effectively with external agencies when concerns arise. Any referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police, are made in a timely manner.
47. Safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff and directors and an accurate record of checks is kept.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Pivot Academy LS East
Department for Education number	383/6006
Address	Pivot Academy LS East Unit 3 Killingbeck Drive York Road Leeds West Yorkshire LS14 6UF
Website	pivot-group.uk/the-pivot-academies/the-pivot-academies-leeds
Proprietor	The Pivot Academy Ltd
Chair of directors	Mr Michael Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Cheryl Lotherington
Age range	7 to 16
Number of pupils	64
Date of previous inspection	12 August 2020

Information about the school

48. The Pivot Academy LS East is an independent, co-educational day special school situated in Leeds, West Yorkshire. Some pupils have been permanently excluded or at risk of exclusion from other schools. Many pupils who join the school have previously had poor attendance and have experienced significant disruption to their education. The local authority commissions all pupils' placements at the school. The chief executive officer of Pivot Educational Consultancy Limited is also the chair of directors who, together with the directors of the company, oversees the management of the school.
49. The school comprises a lower school for pupils in key stage two and an upper school for pupils in key stages three and four, in two closely situated buildings. Within the two departments, pupils are grouped according to their individual needs and learning characteristics rather than by their age alone.
50. The school has identified all pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, including autistic spectrum condition, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, social, emotional and mental health challenges and/or adverse childhood experiences. Forty-two pupils in the school have an EHC plan. Those without an EHC plan are mostly dual registered, being admitted to the school through places secured through the Area Inclusion Partnership or by direct referrals from schools.
51. English is an additional language for one pupil.
52. The school states that it aims to offer all children equal opportunities and choices for life because 'all children deserve better'. It seeks to provide a curriculum that supports pupils to become resilient adults, based on the 'Golden Threads' of reading, personal, social and health education, zones of regulation, extended writing and what they must know and not forget.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 10 to 12 October 2023

53. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

54. Inspection activities undertaken included:

- discussions with the chief executive officer and directors of Pivot Education Ltd.
- discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of staff and pupils
- observations of lessons, extra-curricular activities, breaks and recreational times
- observations of briefing and debriefing meetings led by the headteacher and senior leaders, attended by all staff
- scrutiny of policies and other documentation
- a health and safety tour of the school.

55. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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