

EdStart Schools Bolton

67 Manchester Road, Bolton BL2 1ES

Inspection date 27 August 2025

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)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) to 2(2)(i)

- The proposed school has an appropriate curriculum policy with clearly defined aims for the curriculum. The policy outlines a sufficiently broad range of subjects for pupils to study in key stage 3 and key stage 4. The curriculum policy outlines how the curriculum will contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education and take into account the needs and previous experiences of pupils.
- The curriculum policy is supported by appropriate schemes of work for each subject. The proposed school has thought carefully about what pupils should learn and by when, and what prior knowledge they will need to be successful in new learning. The curriculum is carefully designed to meet the individual needs of pupils, all of whom will have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The proposed school has placed sufficient importance on the teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and mathematics. For example, the teaching of reading knowledge, including phonics when needed, is to be prioritised as part of the curriculum. Pupils will study a range of other subjects that will provide them with experiences in technological, human and social and aesthetic and creative education.
- Pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education will be taught through timetabled lessons and embedded throughout the curriculum. There is an appropriate scheme of work for PSHE education which sets out the important knowledge that pupils will acquire from key stage 3 to key stage 4. There is a suitable emphasis on health and well-being and relationships. The proposed school has already developed close links with the local community, such as local support services, to help deliver this curriculum. The curriculum encourages pupils' respect for other people, including those with the protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Paragraphs 2A(1) to 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2)

- The PSHE curriculum will provide pupils with appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE). The proposed school's policy complies with the relevant statutory

guidance. The proposed school has considered how it will consult with parents and carers about the policy.

Paragraph 3 to 3(j)

- The proprietor is committed to ensuring that teachers and other staff have the appropriate subject-specific knowledge, expertise and experience to teach the curriculum well. They have thought carefully about recruitment and have already appointed staff who have experience of working in special education. The proposed school, as part of the wider proprietor body, will have access to established professional development programmes. As a result, staff will receive appropriate advice and guidance to help them to deliver the curriculum effectively.
- Staff have the relevant subject expertise to teach the proposed curriculum. The training for staff will be focused on how to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Quality assurance processes are in place to check that pupils learn the intended curriculum.
- The proposed school intends to carry out assessments to establish pupils' starting points when pupils join the proposed school. The school will use these initial assessments to inform how pupils are grouped and taught. Teachers will check what pupils know and can remember regularly. This information will be used to inform future teaching.
- Classrooms and social spaces are well equipped and resourced. For example, spaces have been designated for a school library and for group work and mentoring to take place.
- There is an appropriate policy in place setting out the proposed school's expectations for pupils' behaviour. The policy is appropriate to the planned cohort of pupils and recognises the specific challenges that pupils may face with regard to their social, emotional and mental health needs. The policy outlines the proposed school's commitment to ensuring that all staff adopt a positive approach to improving pupils' behaviour.

Paragraph 4

- There is a suitable assessment policy in place that the proposed school has carefully thought about, including for the potential cohort of new pupils in key stage 3. This policy outlines how pupils' performance will be monitored and shared with parents. The intention is to report to parents every term and provide them with information about their child's progress, attainment, and attendance and behaviour.
- All of 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

Paragraph 5, 5(a) to 5(d)(iii)

- The proposed school will cater for pupils' SMSC development through the PSHE curriculum and the wider curriculum. Pupils will learn about fundamental British values, such as the rule of law, individual liberty and democracy. Pupils will also learn about other faiths and cultures and how to be respectful and tolerant of people who have different views and beliefs to their own. Enrichment activities will incorporate

frequent trips and visits as well as extra-curricular activities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

- The proposed school's policies include references to the protected characteristics as set out in legislation.
- Pupils will learn how to keep themselves safe and mentally well. For example, they will be taught about online safety, knife crime and consent. The school intends that this will help pupils to be reflective and to make safe and healthy choices in their future lives.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7 to 7(b)

- The proprietor has put in place the necessary arrangements to safeguard pupils and to promote their welfare at the proposed school. There is a suitable and up-to-date policy in place, which adheres to current statutory guidance.
- The chair of the proprietor body, headteacher and governors have completed safer recruitment training. A senior leader will be the designated safeguarding leader (DSL) in the proposed school. Staff who will deputise for the DSL are trained to the same level. There are designated staff who work in executive roles, across a number of schools in the proprietor body, with specific responsibility for safeguarding. They have a wealth of appropriate knowledge, expertise and experience in this area.
- All new staff will receive an appropriate induction into the school, including suitable safeguarding training. Staff will receive regular updates on local and national safeguarding issues, such as radicalisation and extremism.

Paragraphs 9 to 9(c), 10

- The proprietor has a comprehensive and suitable behaviour policy in place. There is also an appropriate anti-bullying policy. These policies pay particular regard to the needs of the pupils in the proposed school. The behaviour policy outlines how pupils are expected to behave and sets out examples of how pupils will be supported when addressing unacceptable behaviours. The policies outline the actions that the proposed school will take to address any incidents of unacceptable behaviour or bullying, including discriminatory language.
- The proposed school has established a system for staff to record and report any incidents of bullying and poor behaviour. The proprietor intends to have oversight of any incidents and regular analysis of this information will take place. This will inform the support provided to individual pupils to help them to regulate their own behaviour.

Paragraphs 11, 12

- The proprietor has a comprehensive and suitable health and safety policy. This complies with all relevant laws.
- Staff new to the school will complete health and safety training as part of the induction process. The proprietor has made suitable arrangements to ensure that the school's computer network has appropriate monitoring and filtering systems in place.

This provides reassurance that pupils will be safe when they use electronic devices in school.

- The proprietor has ensured that there are a range of measures in place to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in all three of the proposed school's sites. For example, there are fire extinguishers, which will be checked regularly. There is appropriate signage around each building that identifies ample emergency routes and exits and there are planned, regular fire drills. The recommended fire door survey has been undertaken for the new Manchester Road site. This confirms that all legal safety requirements are in place.

Paragraph 13

- The proprietor has written a first-aid policy and has made arrangements to ensure that all staff will be suitably qualified to administer first aid on all three sites. The school has ensured that there are fully stocked first-aid kits in all sites of the proposed school.

Paragraph 14

- The proposed number of staff is suitable to ensure that pupils will be appropriately supervised throughout the school day on all school sites. Pupils will always be supervised, including at breaktimes and when undertaking off-site visits, for example to local places of interest.

Paragraph 15

- The school has a suitable admissions policy. The proprietor has established systems to ensure that the school's admission and attendance registers will comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024.
- There is an appropriate system in place to register pupils' attendance each day. The proposed school will monitor any absences. It plans to take swift and appropriate action to follow up on any pupil absence, when required. Parents will receive information about their child's attendance in school reports.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable risk assessment policy in place. The risk assessments that have already been completed show how leaders plan to take appropriate actions to minimise risks to pupils. These include risk assessments for individual pupils, areas of the school building, travel between sites and for proposed trips and visits.
- 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)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 19(2)(ii), 19(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c), 21(6)

- The single central record is in place and meets the requirements for the information it must contain. Leaders understand that the required checks on the suitability of staff must be completed before staff take up their appointment. These include the enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks, identification checks, checks on

and management of a school.

- All of the required checks for the members of the proprietor body, headteacher, leaders and staff at the proposed school have been completed. There is a clear and detailed plan for the induction of new staff. This includes staff completing safeguarding and other appropriate training on appointment.
- Leaders are aware of the procedures that they should follow should they employ agency staff to ensure that these staff are suitable to work with pupils.
- 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)(c), 28(1) to 28(1)(c)

- An adequate number of toilet and washing facilities are provided. Toilet cubicles have full-height doors and can be locked from the inside to provide privacy. There is a supply of hot and cold running water. The hot water does not pose a scalding risk. There is a toilet on the ground floor for the use of disabled pupils.
- The proprietor has ensured that there are shower cubicles and changing facilities available for pupils to use on the school site where physical education activities will take place.
- The proprietor has made arrangements to ensure that pupils will have access to drinking water throughout the day.

Paragraphs 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 28(2) to 28(2)(b)

- On each of the three school sites, there is a designated room for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils. There is a sink in these rooms as well as a bed and first-aid cabinet. These rooms are located near to a toilet.

Paragraph 25

- The proposed school is housed across three premises. Two of the premises, Castle Hill and Horwich, are currently operating under EdStart Salford school, which is led and managed by the same proprietor and senior leaders. The new Manchester Road site is located in a two-storey building that has been refurbished to a high standard. The accommodation includes multiple teaching rooms, recreational and social spaces, a library, outdoor space, adequate toilet and washing facilities, a kitchen, a medical room, a reception area and offices. All three sites are sufficient to safely accommodate the proposed age range and number of pupils.

Paragraphs 26, 27 to 27(b), 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- Pupils will have ample access to safe outdoor spaces for recreation and for outdoor learning. Pupils will also have timetabled physical education (PE) lessons in accordance with the school's curriculum. In addition, pupils will access some sports and recreational facilities in the local area. The proposed school will have risk assessments in place to ensure the safety of pupils when travelling to and from site, and when using these facilities.

- Teaching spaces have suitable lighting and acoustics. Appropriate external lighting is

installed so that pupils, staff and visitors can enter or exit the buildings on all sites safely in the hours of darkness.

- 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)(c), 32(1)(f) to 32(1)(i), 32(2) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii) to 32(3)(g)

- At the time of the inspection, the proposed school did not have a dedicated area of the proprietor's website for the proposed school. However, leaders intend to make all parents aware of the proposed school's contact details and to give them access to its policies, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils. The proposed school intends to publish all the required information on its website in due course.
- The proposed school intends to provide termly and annual reports on pupils' progress, attainment, attendance and behaviour to parents.
- The proposed school intends to provide the necessary information to the responsible local authorities for those pupils with an EHC plan.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- The proprietor has a suitable complaints policy. The policy sets out all the necessary stages as well as timelines for the effective handling of complaints and the sharing of written records as required. The policy ensures that the procedure for making a complaint is transparent for the user.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor and senior leaders demonstrate an excellent understanding and knowledge of the standards. They already run similar schools successfully. The proprietor has thought carefully about the proposed plans to split the Salford group of schools and reallocate two Bolton sites to this new proposed Bolton school. There is a sound and appropriate rationale for this decision that is in the best interests of pupils.
- The proprietor has ensured that those with responsibility for leadership and management have a wealth of knowledge and expertise to carry out their roles effectively. Arrangements are in place to implement rigorous governance structures and processes, with a clear scheme of delegation. The proprietor intends to use this to ensure that leaders are well supported and appropriately held to account for their responsibilities.

- Leaders are highly committed to providing an exceptional quality of education for

pupils and they are likely to fulfil their responsibilities to promote the well-being of pupils.

- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable accessibility plan that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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 152052

DfE registration number 350/6023

Inspection number 10415730

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 special school School status Independent

day school Proprietor EdStart Schools Bolton Ltd Chair James Lowe

Headteacher James Bradley

Annual fees (day pupils) £16,800 to £65,000

Telephone number 0300 303 4414

Website www.edstartschools.com Email address

admin@edstartschools.com

Pupils

	School’s current position	School’s proposal Inspector’s	recommendatio n
Age range of pupils	Not applicable 11 to 16	Not applicable	Number of pupils on the
school roll	Not applicable 83	Not applicable	

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 83	



Number of part-time pupils Not applicable 0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan

Not applicable 40

Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan

Staff

School's current position School's proposal

Number of full-time
Not applicable 83

Not applicable 40

equivalent teaching staff 25 25

Number of part-time

teaching staff 0 0

Number of staff in the

welfare provision 0 0

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed independent special school is located in premises on three separate sites. These premises are at 67 Manchester Road, Bolton BL2 1ES, Castle Hill Young Peoples' Centre, Castleton Street, Tonge Moor, Bolton BL2 2JW and Horwich Young People's Centre, Fox Street, Horwich, Bolton BL6 5NZ.
- EdStart Schools Bolton will use the Horwich and Castle Hill premises that were previously registered at EdStart Salford (which is led and managed by the same proprietor and senior leaders) and the new site at Manchester Road, Bolton.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 83 mixed-gender pupils, aged between 11 and 16 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater for pupils who have SEND by providing them with a small, nurturing learning environment.
- The proposed school intends to cater for pupils with cognitive learning needs, speech, language and communication needs, autism, social, emotional and mental health needs, moderate learning difficulty and specific learning difficulty.
- The proprietor is EdStart Schools Ltd. This company is registered at Companies House. There are two directors. One of the directors is the chair of the proprietor body.

- The proprietor intends that there will be a governing body. The chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- The proprietor does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to determine if the school is likely to meet the standards if the DfE decides to approve the request to register this school.
- This is the proposed school's second pre-registration inspection. The first pre registration inspection took place on 20 February 2025.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders. She spoke with the chair of the proprietor body.
- The inspector made a tour of three sites that are intended to be used by the proposed school. This included checks to evaluate the suitability of the proposed premises against the relevant standards. The inspector also looked at a wide range of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour, health and safety and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Amanda Downing, lead inspector His Majesty's Inspector

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