

# Inspection of Expanse Learning Wigan School

Tyrer Avenue, Worsley Mesnes, Wigan, Greater Manchester WN3 5XF

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Inspection dates: 10 to 12 June 2025

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## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy and feel safe at school. The sensitive and responsive staff have an exceptional understanding of how to meet pupils' needs. This ensures that the environment is one of comfort and calmness.

Pupils behave well. Staff encourage them to take greater ownership of the management of their own feelings. The excellent relationships that pupils have with staff, and with one another, help the school to set high expectations for all pupils' learning. Pupils achieve relevant qualifications to pave the way to meaningful destinations once they leave the school at the end of Year 11.

Pupils enjoy a broad range of experiences to enrich the curriculum. The additional activities on offer include popular lunchtime clubs like handball, karaoke and arts and crafts. Pupils also have a wealth of opportunities to extend their interests and experiences through well-thought-out trips and visitors to school. For example, they learn about equality and disabilities by taking part in wheelchair basketball with a local rugby league club. Pupils also benefit greatly from the responsibilities that they are given, such as being school councillors or antibullying ambassadors. Pupils embrace these responsibilities and take pride in their contribution to the life of the school.

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

The school takes time and care to identify pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and to fully understand pupils' individual personalities and interests. Staff ensure that any barriers to learning are addressed well to enable pupils to access the curriculum.

There is an effective programme in place for pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. Staff select age-appropriate books for pupils that are matched to pupils' knowledge and interests. Staff provide effective support to ensure that pupils gain the phonics knowledge that they need. Over time, pupils become confident, fluent readers.

The school is continually improving its educational offer. It delivers a broad, rich curriculum that enables pupils to study relevant qualifications to match their aptitudes and their ambitions. For example, pupils can study from entry-level qualifications up to GCSE level. The school has extended its offer to include vocational qualifications, such as in construction.

In most subjects, the curriculum sets out precisely what the school wants pupils to learn. Teachers present new information clearly and in the agreed sequence, so that pupils build their learning well. Teachers check on pupils' understanding of what has been taught before moving on to new content. Where subjects have been well thought out in terms of the curriculum content, pupils demonstrate a strong grasp of their prior learning. However, in a small number of subjects, the design of the

curriculum is not as clear about what the school wants pupils to learn. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well in these subjects as they do in others.

The school's careers provision has been well thought out in terms of ensuring that pupils have a wide understanding of their post-16 options. Pupils have access to independent advice and a range of opportunities to visit local colleges and sixth-form providers. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' independence and ensures that they are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Attendance is a high priority for the school. Many pupils join the school having missed a significant amount of their education. The school uses its analysis of the reasons for absence to inform successful strategies that enable pupils to re-engage with their learning. There are demonstrable improvements to pupils' attendance in a short space of time.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They are attentive and focused on the task at hand. Pupils are faultlessly polite and respectful towards adults and each other. Staff encourage these positive behaviours with a high degree of consistency. Pupils are supportive of one another's efforts.

The school has placed pupils' personal development at the heart of everything that it does. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of what it means to be different and how all people should be treated equally. The promotion of pupils' understanding of different faiths is extremely strong. Pupils are increasingly supported to manage their own mental health by being encouraged to express their feelings. Pupils know what makes a healthy relationship. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain and for their next steps in learning.

The proprietor and the governing body work well together to constantly question and seek to improve provision for pupils. This is illustrated by the school's commitment to staff development. Many staff have had significant opportunities to develop their skills. They then apply their greater expertise in school. Staff value the sense of being part of a team at the school. They appreciate the purposeful well-being days introduced by the proprietor.

The proprietor demonstrates a keen understanding of its role and has stringent measures in place to ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development than in other subjects. This means that pupils' achievement in these subjects is not as strong as it could otherwise be. The school should ensure that it defines clearly the essential learning that it wants pupils to know and remember in all subjects.

## **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145289
<b>DfE registration number</b>	359/6003
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10375140
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	73
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Expanse Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Tony Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ed Hanley
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£26,250
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 877 715
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.expanselarning.co.uk">www.expanselarning.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:hello@expanselarning.co.uk">hello@expanselarning.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	1 to 3 March 2022

## Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection took place in March 2022. Since then, the school has undergone two material change inspections in September 2023 and October 2024, to increase the number of pupils that the school can admit. The school is registered to admit up to 90 pupils.
- All pupils who attend the school are pupils with SEND. All have an education health and care plan. Most pupils at the school have autism. Some pupils have additional learning difficulties.
- The school currently makes use of three unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school is located at Tyrer Avenue, Worsley Mesnes, Wigan WN3 5XF.

## 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early communication, history and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum documentation, looked at a sample of pupils' work and visited lessons in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors conducted a tour of the building, reviewed policies and spoke with leaders to assess compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors gathered parents' and carers' views by reviewing responses, including free-text responses, submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also spoke to parents during the school day.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, looked at records for behaviour and bullying and spoke with leaders and staff.
- Inspectors discussed the provision in place for pupils' personal development.

## **Inspection team**

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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