ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

Additional inspection report

30 September to 1 October 2026

Pownall Hall School

Carrwood Road

Wilmslow

SK9 5DW

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'.

Inspection outcome

The school meets all the relevant Standards that were considered during this inspection.

Inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b), 11, 13, 14, 16(a) and 16(b); EYFS 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.9 and 3.93

1. Leaders and staff work together effectively to promote a robust and vigilant safeguarding culture. The safeguarding policy provides detailed and clear guidance, outlines appropriate procedures and reflects current statutory guidance. Governors provide regular and thorough oversight of the school's safeguarding practices, including by meeting with leaders and staff, consulting with pupils, checking the single central record of appointments (SCR) that records the safeguarding checks on adults, and scrutinising safeguarding documentation.
2. Leaders provide staff with effective safeguarding training, including at their induction. For example, staff receive the latest updates to the 'Prevent' duty so that they are alert to the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation. Staff are also provided with prompt updates relating to statutory safeguarding procedures. They are trained to recognise different forms of abuse and early signs of neglect. Staff attend regular meetings with leaders, who share appropriate information about vulnerable pupils. As a result of such measures, staff demonstrate a secure and confident understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures and are well informed so that they support pupils' wellbeing with care and insight.
3. Leaders ensure that staff understand how to respond to, record and report any low-level or more serious concerns relating to adults who work at the school. Leaders maintain thorough records of any concerns, including the decisions they make and actions they take.
4. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are trained appropriately for their roles. They maintain constructive and appropriate links with a range of local safeguarding partners and external agencies, and refer concerns to them when required. Safeguarding leaders meet regularly to discuss vulnerable pupils and any emerging concerns so that the actions and decisions they take are well considered and implemented effectively. Leaders maintain clear and thorough safeguarding records in accordance with current statutory guidance.
5. The safeguarding policy sets out appropriate arrangements to safeguard children in the early years. Leaders and staff in the early years are alert to the specific safeguarding requirements associated with working with young children. The school's safeguarding team includes leaders with designated responsibilities for overseeing and implementing safeguarding procedures within that age range. Leaders in the early years write well-considered risk assessments that support the individual needs of vulnerable children effectively. Risk assessments include modifications, including adapting the classroom environment and providing specific resources to ensure that children continue to access the curriculum and wider school provision safely and successfully.
6. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils understand the importance of sharing any worries they may have. They provide pupils with a range of well-considered resources, including classroom worry boxes that are checked regularly by staff. Prominently displayed posters around the school remind pupils about the range of trusted adults who are available to them. Pupils know how to seek support.

7. Staff teach pupils how to use online platforms and resources responsibly and appropriately. For instance, pupils learn about maintaining secure passwords, the importance of not sharing confidential information and the dangers of suspicious phishing communications. Leaders implement robust internet filtering and monitoring procedures and regularly check their effectiveness. They respond in a timely and appropriate manner to any online alerts and maintain suitable records that help to identify any emerging patterns or trends.
8. Leaders complete the required pre-employment checks in advance of adults beginning work at the school. These checks are accurately recorded. Staff undertake appropriate and specific training so that the school's safer recruitment procedures are managed competently and effectively.
9. The school's approach to managing health and safety procedures is effective and managed well. Staff report any identified health and safety concerns to leaders, who take effective and prompt actions in response. Senior leaders and governors provide ongoing and thorough oversight of the school's health and safety measures. Leaders ensure that the school manages potential dangers and risks from fire appropriately. A suitable number of staff are trained as fire wardens. The school maintains a detailed fire risk assessment. Fire safety equipment is serviced in a timely manner. Pupils practise fire drills, follow clearly demarcated evacuation routes and know what to do in an emergency. The school's implementation of the health and safety policy means that the premises and accommodation remain suitable for pupils.
10. The school's first aid and medical provision is suitable. Well-qualified staff manage the administration of first aid and medication appropriately and maintain clear records. Leaders and staff understand, and effectively support, individual pupils' first aid and medical needs. Staff complete suitable first aid training, including paediatric first aid training for staff who work in the early years.
11. Leaders implement thorough supervision arrangements so that pupils are looked after with care and attention during the school day. Staff are visible, approachable and alert when pupils arrive at and depart from the school. During breaktimes, a suitable number of staff provide supportive and attentive supervision so that pupils play in a responsible manner and know how to quickly request support when necessary. The required staff-to-child ratio is maintained in the early years. Governors routinely attend the school to observe and check that the daily supervision procedures are suitable and implemented effectively.
12. Leaders and staff implement comprehensive procedures to identify, manage and mitigate any potential risks. Staff receive relevant training so that they know how to write well-considered risk assessments for their classrooms and teaching areas and for the broad range of educational visits and trips that they organise. Leaders identify vulnerable pupils and implement detailed risk assessments and welfare plans that support their individual needs and promote their wellbeing effectively. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are reviewed and evaluated systematically so that they continue to address potential risks appropriately.
13. The school meets the Standards.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

14. Leaders maintain and publish a suitably detailed safeguarding policy on the school's website.
15. The school meets the Standards.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraph 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

16. Governors provide ongoing, systematic and effective oversight of the school's policies and procedures. They assure themselves that leaders consistently demonstrate competent skills and thorough knowledge and understanding so that they discharge their responsibilities and roles effectively. Leaders, governors and staff participate in an ongoing and regular programme of external training that enhances and develops their knowledge and skills further. Consequently, the independent school Standards that were considered during this inspection are met consistently.
17. Leaders and staff actively, effectively and diligently promote pupils' wellbeing throughout the school. They create a nurturing, caring and inclusive school environment where pupils build and maintain respectful and supportive relationships with their teachers and with each other.
18. The school meets the Standards.

School details

School	Pownall Hall School
Department for Education number	895/6015
Registered early years number	EY2670353
Registered charity number	525929
Address	Pownall Hall School Carwood Road Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5DW
Phone number	01625 523141
Email address	genoffice@pownallhallschool.co.uk
Website	www.pownallhallschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Mr James Wareham
Chair	Mrs Eileen MacAuley
Headteacher	Mr David Goulbourn
Age range	Birth to 11
Number of pupils	243
Number of children in the early years registered setting	75
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2025

Information about the school

19. Pownall Hall School is an independent co-educational day school situated in Wilmslow, Cheshire. The school is a charitable trust whose governing body provide oversight of the school's operation.
20. There are 66 children in the early years, taught in two Reception classes and two Kindergarten classes. The separate early years setting, registered with Ofsted, provides for children aged 6 months to three years. This setting was not part of the inspection.
21. The school has identified 27 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
22. The school has identified 17 pupils for whom English is an additional language.
23. The school states that its aims are to provide a caring, safe and disciplined environment. Leaders encourage all pupils to fulfil their academic, sporting, musical and creative potential. The school seeks for pupils to learn and demonstrate traditional values including courtesy, mutual respect, tolerance and compassion. It strives to support pupils to develop good discipline and working habits for the future.

Purpose of the additional inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. This inspection was an unannounced additional monitoring inspection which was carried out at the request of the Department for Education.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	30 September and 1 October 2026

24. Two reporting inspectors visited the school for two days.

25. Inspection activities included:

- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school and information available on the school's website
- a health and safety tour of the school site
- discussions with the chair of governors and members of the governing body
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils.

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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