Horizons Independent School

Address: 60 Mendip Road, Birkenhead, Cheshire, CH42 8NU

Unique reference number (URN): 151346

Progress Monitoring Inspection: 23 September 2026

During the standard inspection on 3 March 2026, the school did not meet all the independent school standards and associated requirements. We carried out this progress monitoring inspection to see if the school met all standards.

Read the inspectors' findings for the independent school standards below

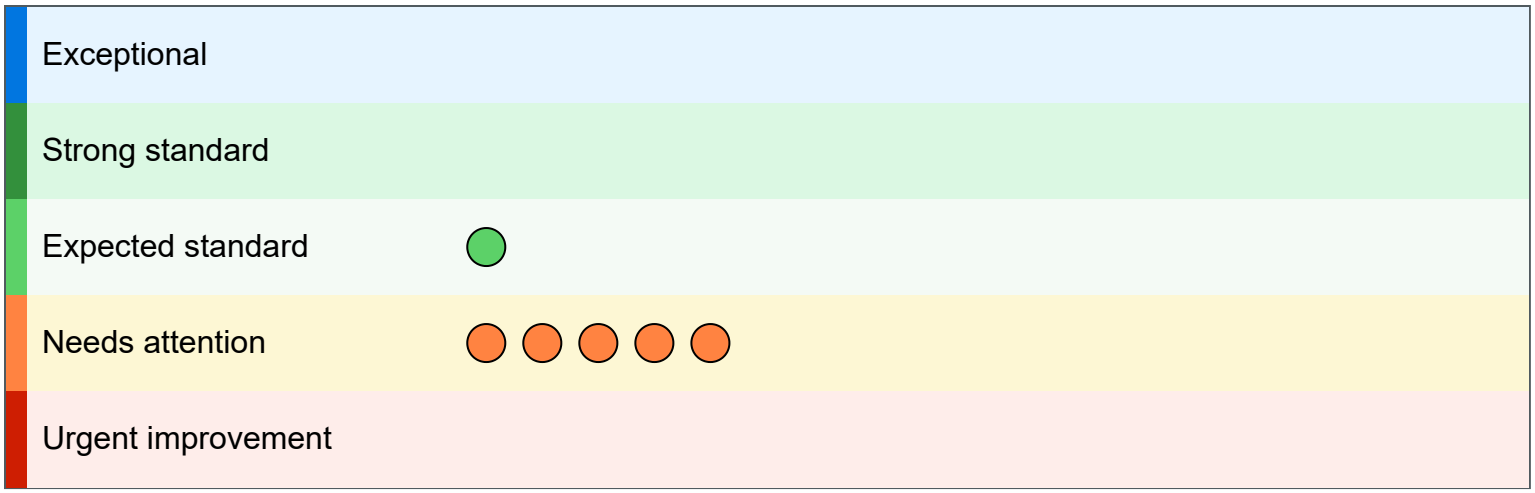
Inspectors only considered the areas marked as updated.

Inspectors focused on the following independent school standards and other requirements during this progress monitoring inspection:

- Part 1. Quality of education provided
- Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors
- Part 6. Provision of information
- Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

This progress monitoring inspection did not look at these evaluation areas:

- Achievement
- Attendance and behaviour
- Curriculum and teaching
- Inclusion
- Leadership and governance
- Personal development and wellbeing



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.
- Insufficient evidence: Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard

Pupils who attend Horizons have significant and multiple barriers to learning that have previously prevented them from engaging fully with education. Most pupils experience success at Horizons because staff take the time and care to identify and understand their individual needs well. This includes pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as any other factors which have made their educational journey more challenging.

Staff use what they know about pupils to design approaches and strategies that help pupils to build trust in adults, regulate their emotions and, over time, improve their attitudes to learning. Staff give pupils individually planned opportunities to experience success. This helps to build pupils' self-esteem and builds their interest in learning. Staff work well with a wide range of external agencies and experts to craft a suitable offer for each pupil. Leaders

regularly check that the offer for each pupil helps them to make progress from their starting points.

Leaders provide a wealth of training for staff that increases their understanding of the most suitable approaches to help each pupil. This helps staff to share leaders' determination to reintegrate pupils back into full-time education. Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

At the time of the inspection, most pupils do not follow an academic pathway. This is because leaders have rightly prioritised pupils' reintegration with education and their personal development. Pupils' achievement in the short time that the school has been open has been centred on the progress they have made from their starting points in terms of their behaviour, attitudes and attendance. All of the elements that leaders have chosen to focus on are setting pupils up well for their next steps in learning. However, pupils' academic achievement is limited due to the short time that the school has been open.

All pupils who attend the school are disadvantaged. Some pupils face significant and ongoing challenges that make it hard for them to engage in learning. Leaders identify pupils' starting points in terms of reading, writing and mathematics. They help pupils to reduce the gaps in their knowledge, although this is at the early stages of development.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Pupils join the school with typically low attendance at their previous settings. Leaders work closely with pupils and families to provide the support that they need to improve their attendance over time. Over time, most pupils break the habit of non-attendance and get into better routines, with regular attendance at school. All pupils who attend the school are disadvantaged. Leaders know pupils' individual, unique circumstances very well. They use this information to provide bespoke support that helps pupils to improve. Despite this, some of the analysis that leaders complete about pupils' attendance over time is at the very early stages. At this point in time, it is difficult to see the impact of this work in pinpointing small steps for improvement.

Although the school has only recently opened, the biggest impact on most pupils has been on their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Previously, these aspects would have been pupils' barriers to learning. Leaders support pupils to build trusting relationships with staff and each other. This helps pupils to resolve conflict. Staff engage pupils in interesting activities which build their confidence and help them to feel part of the school community. Pupils do not worry about bullying because they know that the school is a place where everyone can be themselves and be accepted.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Leaders have ambitious plans for pupils to learn a broad range of subjects, once their emotional needs are fully met and understood. Currently, pupils do not receive this offer. Leaders know that the curriculum will have to change as the school develops, as the curriculum for pupils up to this point has been focused on pupils' emotional regulation, improving behaviour and attitudes and building relationships. These aspects have been essential skills for pupils to build before they can move to learning an academic curriculum.

Staff have recently started to assess gaps in pupils' knowledge. They are starting to use this information to plan learning opportunities that challenge pupils academically, although this work is at the early stages. One of the most successful aspects of pupils' development, in the short time that the school has been open, has been the impact on their communication skills. Pupils receive bespoke support that helps to give them a voice, as well as an outlet for their emotions. This helps pupils to share their interests, take part in learning and provide meaningful feedback to leaders about what it is like to attend the school. For some pupils, this is the first time that they have felt their voice is heard and important.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

The proprietor and headteacher know the school well. Leaders recognise that there are aspects of the school that need more time to reach their high ambitions for pupils' education. The proprietor holds leaders to account for the offer that pupils receive and challenges leaders to make sure that pupils can succeed in this school where typically they have not before. Leaders and the proprietor set out actions for improving the school that are well thought out. The proprietor makes sure that the necessary resources are available for leaders and checks the impact of the decisions that leaders make on pupils' education. However, the proprietor has not made sure that all of the independent school standards have been met.

Leaders take bold decisions to prioritise certain aspects of the provision at this early stage of the school's development. For example, the focus up to this point has been on establishing pupils into school routines and supporting them to be emotionally ready to learn. This has been done in a way that sets pupils up well for their further learning and development.

Leaders set out a programme of training for staff that is carefully considered. Staff are skilled at recognising pupils' needs and planning an offer for them that supports self-regulation and builds trusting relationships. Leaders commission experts to support this aspect of teachers' development. Staff feel well supported in their roles and value the time that leaders take to make their voices heard.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention

Pupils' personal development is important to leaders, but some parts of the programme are at the early stages of implementation. Pupils' knowledge about the world around them is not secure. Leaders recognise that most pupils who attend the school have multiple and complex barriers to their wellbeing. Pupils typically join the school finding it hard to

recognise and manage their emotions. The first phase of each pupil's journey at the school is to help them to be emotionally ready to learn.

As most pupils join the school with significant gaps in their knowledge of the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum, leaders prioritise the parts of this curriculum that will have the most impact on pupils' safety. For example, some pupils have missed important parts of the relationships and sex education curriculum. Leaders commission external experts to give pupils the vital knowledge that they need. In turn, this helps pupils to recognise unhealthy relationships and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils develop an awareness of support avenues and build faith in adults to act where something concerns them.

Leaders have recently used the expertise of a specialist careers adviser to support pupils to develop aspirations for when they leave the school. This includes pupils building their understanding of a realistic pathway, including knowing what qualifications they will need. Over time, this helps pupils to think realistically about their future where previously this had not been possible.

Pupils benefit from well-considered pastoral support. Staff use the productive relationships they have with pupils to build independence, resilience and trust. This helps pupils to share when something worries them or to ask for help or advice.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Standard inspection 3 March 2026

For many pupils who attend this school, this is their first successful experience of education. However, most pupils do not learn an academic curriculum. Pupils typically join the school after periods out of education or with a turbulent previous engagement with providers. This school helps pupils to reintegrate into education because it values pupils as individuals. Staff know pupils' needs well. They use this to plan an offer for each pupil that captures their interest and helps them to develop essential aspects of their personal development. The school has only been open for a short time. In this time, leaders have established strong relationships with pupils on roll and have started to develop routines that will set pupils up well for their next stage of learning, employment or training.

Over time, pupils begin to enjoy attending the school. They do not worry about bullying. Pupils start to improve their attendance as they build trust in staff to listen to them and support them. That said, leaders' actions to improve attendance are at the early stages. Staff have recently started to use the information they have about pupils to reduce the barriers to learning that pupils join the school with.

Leaders plan a range of opportunities for each pupil that go beyond what they would normally experience. These well-planned experiences support pupils' character development and open their eyes to learning in a way that has often not been possible before. However, some parts of the personal development offer are underdeveloped. That said, trusting relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to regulate their emotions

and to feel safe and secure. Over time, pupils learn to share any worries they have with staff as they know they are there to help them.

Next steps Updated

- The school must meet all the ISS as set out in this report card.

About this inspection Updated

The inspector carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The purpose of this inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards (the ISS) it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspection was conducted without notice.

The inspector spoke with the proprietor, the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of staff and pupils.

The inspector also considered the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record of pre-employment checks and whether the school's safeguarding policy is available to parents and carers. These requirements of the ISS are met.

The previous standard inspection took place from 3 to 5 March 2026 at which the school was judged to not comply with the ISS.

This was the first progress monitoring inspection.

Following the previous inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) required the school to prepare a statutory action plan. Ofsted's evaluation of the action plan was completed on 3 August 2026. This action plan was accepted by the DfE on 1 September 2026.

The proprietor is Horizons Independent Schools Limited. The chair of the proprietor body is Roger Boulton.

The fees currently charged are £45,000 to £60,000.

The school's email address is roger@horizonseducation.org.

The inspector confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, autism and associated needs.

The school is registered to admit up to 35 pupils.

The school uses 2 unregistered alternative provisions for pupils.

Headteacher: Corynne Peace

Independent school standards

During the standard inspection on 3 March 2026, the school did not meet all the independent school standards and associated requirements.

We carried out a progress monitoring inspection on 23 September 2026. We only consider the independent school standards and associated requirements when we do this, and do not consider any other part of this school's provision.

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection.

What inspectors found at the progress monitoring inspection

Updated

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out progress monitoring inspections of independent schools, we report on the school’s compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards (the ISS) first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the ISS consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

At the school’s last standard inspection in March 2026, inspectors found that the proprietor had not ensured that all of the ISS in part 1 were securely met. For example, the curriculum in place did not ensure that pupils experienced the full range of education that they should. This included personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Staff were not provided with clear guidance around the most important knowledge that should be taught in subjects across the curriculum. This limited the opportunities for pupils to fulfil their potential. Actions to ensure that pupils received appropriate careers advice were at an early stage.

Following the last standard inspection, the proprietor submitted an action plan to the Department for Education (DfE) which was approved. The proprietor has ensured that some

actions in the plan have been carried out and implemented within the specified time periods. Where these have taken place, they have had a positive impact for pupils, particularly regarding the breadth of education that pupils receive, PSHE and careers education. Notably, the proprietor has ensured that leaders actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. As a result, standard 34(1)(c) is now met.

The proprietor and leaders have taken deliberate actions and worked at pace to ensure that some of the previously unmet standards linked to the quality of education are now securely met. That said, there remain a small number of steps within the action plan that have not been completed within the specified time periods. Consequently, standards 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b) continue to be unmet.

The proprietor has not ensured that all of the standards for part 8 are met.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

At the time of the last standard inspection, inspectors found that the curriculum for pupils had been focused on pupils' emotional regulation, improving behaviour and attitudes and building relationships. Leaders had ambitious plans for pupils to learn a broad range of academic subjects. However, these were at an early stage of development. Inspectors also found that aspects of personal, social, health and economic education were underdeveloped. Additionally, whilst some pupils had access to elements of careers advice, this was not as thorough and coordinated as it should have been.

Curriculum, Teaching

At the previous inspection, the proprietor had not ensured that pupils experienced the breadth of curriculum as set out in the independent school standards (the ISS). This included opportunities for pupils to experience personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, which reflected the school's aim and ethos. Furthermore, the school's written policy on the curriculum was not supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work. These limitations meant that the proprietor had not ensured that all pupils had the opportunity to learn and make progress across the curriculum. Since then, the proprietor and leaders at the school have commenced work on the development of the curriculum, including ensuring that there is a full range of academic subjects available to pupils through different pathways.

Leaders have made particularly positive progress in setting out what key knowledge and skills pupils should learn and when in English and mathematics. This provides staff with a clear understanding of what to focus upon when designing learning activities. It also provides pupils with an appropriately sequenced journey of learning. Leaders have also put in place a PSHE curriculum that covers the required content across the different aspects of learning. This includes fundamental British values, pupils' knowledge of the world around them, including different faiths and cultures, and how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders have ensured that pupils who need additional bespoke input linked to the PSHE content receive it in a timely fashion. However, in subjects other than English, mathematics and PSHE, the level of content detail within the curriculum plans is variable and at differing stages of development. This means that some staff are not certain which key knowledge they should prioritise in lessons. In turn, this limits the opportunities that pupils have to learn important knowledge in some subjects.

At the previous inspection, the proprietor had not ensured that pupils had access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that helped them to fulfil their potential. Since then, leaders have developed and delivered a coordinated approach to careers advice. Pupils receive informative lessons, they engage with a range of potential employers and further education providers, as well as having the opportunity to take part in work experience. This is complimented further through meetings with independent career advisers.

The proprietor has not ensured that all of the previously unmet ISS in part 1 are met.

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1. Quality of education provided **Updated** Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Part 1, paragraph 2(1)

The standard in this paragraph is met if–

(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and

Part 1, paragraph 2(2)

For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–

(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and

The following requirements of the standards are now met:

Part 1, paragraph 2(2)

For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–

(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;

(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–

(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and

(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–

(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;

(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

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2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils Standards met

All standards have been met.

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3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils **Updated** Standards met

All standards have been met.

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4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors **Updated** Standards met

All standards have been met.

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5. Premises of and accommodation at schools Standards met

All standards have been met.

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6. Provision of information **Updated** Standards met

All standards have been met.

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7. Manner in which complaints are handled Standards met

All standards have been met.

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8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools **Updated** Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Part 8, paragraph 34(1)

The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–

(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

The following requirements of the standards are now met:

Part 8, paragraph 34(1)

The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–

(c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Lead inspector:
David Robinson, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

This data is from 23 September 2026

Total pupils

31

School capacity

35

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

31

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

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