ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

Material change inspection report

2 March 2026

Polwhele House School

Polwhele House

Truro

Cornwall

TR4 9AE

Inspection outcome

The school has submitted a material change request to increase the maximum number of pupils from 161 to 205.

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school Standards if the material change is implemented. It is recommended that the material change be approved.

Inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b), 11, 12, 14 and 16(a) and 16(b)

1. Leaders implement secure safeguarding arrangements which take careful account of the context of the school and the needs of the pupils. Staff work diligently to create a culture where pupils' needs have a high priority. The safeguarding policy reflects current statutory guidance. Leaders have also adapted their policies in the light of forthcoming changes to guidance, such as restrictions on the use of mobile phones.
2. Directors monitor the school's safeguarding procedures with care through a scrutiny of the policy, regular meetings with the safeguarding team and appropriate checks of safeguarding records and the single central record of appointments (SCR).
3. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are appropriately trained for their roles. There is a designated safeguarding lead (DSL), supported by three deputies. They meet regularly to review any concerns and any actions taken to address these.
4. Leaders have developed effective links with local safeguarding partners. Any concerns are referred promptly and the school follows any guidance provided. Safeguarding records are detailed and support the effective monitoring of concerns.
5. Staff undergo regular safeguarding training, which reflects any changes to statutory guidance. This training includes the prevention of extremism and an awareness of child-on-child abuse. Staff new to the school receive thorough induction training. As a result, staff know how to respond to any safeguarding concerns and understand the importance of reporting any low-level behaviours that may give rise to concern.
6. Pupils have a range of ways to request help. They can readily identify trusted adults. Staff know pupils well and pupils are provided with suitable contact details so that they can request help outside of school hours should they need to do so.
7. Through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, which includes relationships and sex education (RSE), pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders have introduced an effective internet filtering and monitoring system that sends alerts to senior staff, who respond promptly to any issues.
8. Leaders have recently reviewed the health and safety procedures. A detailed policy outlines clear responsibilities and effective processes to promote the safety of pupils, staff and visitors. These include regular checks of the school site. School vehicles are well maintained and drivers receive the required training. Hazardous substances are securely stored. There are suitable checks on electrical equipment. Where issues are identified, leaders take prompt action in response. The directors provide effective and well-informed oversight of health and safety arrangements.

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9. Leaders implement suitable procedures to mitigate the risk from fire. Evacuation routes are clearly marked and pupils and staff take part in regular fire drills. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked and tested. The actions identified in a recent external fire risk assessment have all been promptly addressed.
10. There are well-planned arrangements to supervise the pupils both on site and during trips and outings. Staff are suitably deployed around the site during breaktimes and at the start and end of the school day. Careful thought is given to the supervision requirements when planning school trips and takes into account the nature of the activities involved. Playground rotas are planned so that older and younger age pupils are suitably separated. The current staffing levels are sufficient to ensure effective supervision should the proposed material change be implemented.
11. Leaders implement effective processes to identify and manage potential risks. Suitable risk assessments are in place for the school site and for trips and outings. These are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Staff are trained in the school's processes as part of their induction. Particular attention is paid to areas of higher risk, such as the science labs, and the equestrian activities. Leaders also implement risk reduction plans to support vulnerable pupils.
12. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

ISSR paragraphs 18, 19, 20 and 21

13. The school carries out all required safer recruitment checks on the suitability of adults to work with children before they begin working at the school. The checks are recorded on a suitable SCR.
14. Leaders have a secure understanding of the safer recruitment guidance. Staff with specific responsibilities for implementing the recruitment policies are trained for their role. These checks are regularly monitored by the directors.
15. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

ISSR paragraphs 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29

16. The premises and accommodation provide suitable facilities for the proposed increase in numbers. Areas within the existing buildings have been repurposed. A refurbishment programme is complete, which has created additional teaching areas.
17. Adequate toilet and washing facilities are provided for pupils. Additional changing areas have been created as part of the refurbishment project and pupils have access to private shower facilities as required. There is an appropriate medical room when required which provides suitable privacy.
18. Effective health and safety procedures mean that the premises and accommodation are well maintained and any maintenance issues are addressed promptly. Access to the site and buildings is appropriately controlled and monitored. Secure processes are in place to manage hazardous materials.
19. Leaders ensure that acoustics and lighting throughout the school are suitable and maintained appropriately.
20. Leaders undertake regular checks relating to the quality and temperature of water. Drinking water outlets are clearly labelled.

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21. Pupils are provided with suitable recreational and play areas inside and outdoors, which are appropriately demarcated between different age groups of pupils.

22. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

23. A suitable safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

24. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

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

25. Leaders demonstrate secure knowledge and skills and discharge their responsibilities competently, so that the relevant Standards are met. They promote a positive and nurturing environment that supports pupils' wellbeing effectively. Pupils readily approach staff for support and guidance.

26. With the support of the directors, leaders have prepared effectively for this proposed material change. Leaders have implemented plans to refurbish and extend existing classroom facilities and provided additional changing and toilet facilities. Suitable safeguarding and supervision arrangements to support the proposed increase in pupil numbers are in place. Recent staff appointments have been made to cater for the desired increase in pupil numbers.

27. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

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School details

School	Polwhele House School
Department for Education number	908/6076
Address	Polwhele House School Polwhele House Truro Cornwall TR4 9AE
Phone number	01872 273011
Email address	office@polwhelehouse.co.uk
Website	www.polwhelehouse.co.uk
Proprietor	Polwhele House Ltd.
Chair	Mr Robert Tasker
Headteacher	Mr Mark Clutsom
Age range	2 to 16
Number of pupils	105
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 January 2025

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Information about the school

28. Polwhele House School is an independent co-educational day school located in Truro, Cornwall and governed by a board of directors. The current proprietor took ownership of the school in June 2025 and the current headteacher took up his position in September 2025. The school has catered for pupils aged 14 to 16 years since September 2025.
29. The school comprises an early years setting, a junior school for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and a senior school for pupils in Years 7 to 10.
30. The early years comprises one Nursery class and one Reception class.
31. The school has identified 41 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
32. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.
33. The school states that its aims are to create a friendly, stimulating, caring environment where every child feels valued. It seeks to develop community aspirations, determination, industry and perseverance, enabling every child to reach their full academic potential. The school endeavours to respect the needs of the individual and prepare children for the next stage of their education and life, building a partnership of trust, understanding and mutual support with parents.

Purpose of the material change inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection following an application made by the school to the Department for Education to make a material change to the school's provision. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about whether the school is likely to meet the Independent School Standards if the material change is implemented.

Inspection details

Inspection date	2 March 2026

34. Two reporting inspectors visited the school for one day.

35. 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 both the site to determine if the school's premises and accommodation could accommodate an increase in pupil capacity from 161 to 205
- discussions with the chair of the proprietary body
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils.

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- 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.
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