

School Prospectus 2026 / 2027



Pontville
School

Education

Therapy

Futures



Details of the Proprietor:

Witherslack Group

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Lupton

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Details of the Head Teacher:

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Contact details during school holidays:

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Email: pontville@witherslackgroup.co.uk

Website: www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/pontville-school

School Ethos and Mission Statement

Pontville School is part of the Witherslack Group who have provided inspirational education and care to children and young people for many years.

Pontville School is an independent specialist school for pupils aged between 5 and 19 with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and social communication needs. We have two sites (Ormskirk and Skelmersdale) which are 9 miles apart. Both sites benefit from a comprehensive range of facilities and resources. Class sizes are deliberately small to ensure all pupils feel well-supported.

Pontville School is approved by the Department for Education (DfE) to cater for 155 pupils. Pupils attend Pontville School from various local authorities, including Lancashire, Sefton, Knowsley and Liverpool. The school is also able to offer 52 week residential provision working in partnership with a specialist children's home within the Witherslack Group.

Our school ethos is based on a belief that all of our pupils are capable and important and deserve the very best school experience possible.

Aims of school

The overarching aims of Pontville School are to:

- Develop a strong sense of community where everyone feels safe, cared for, involved and valued
- Provide a curriculum and facilities which promote the engagement and motivation of all pupils through innovation, creativity and fun
- Maximise academic progress and achievement for all pupils, as well as improved confidence, well-being and positive social communication skills
- Raise aspirations, develop independence and prepare pupils effectively for adulthood in a modern society
- Sustain positive partnerships with parents, carers and other stakeholders, in the best interests of pupils

Details regarding admission process

Our pupils have a various strengths and talents which we seek to identify and develop. Pupils also have a range of complex educational needs which impact on learning, the way in which they make sense of the world, how they process information and how they relate to others. We specialise in supporting pupils who have social communication needs, autism, ADHD and/or other co-occurring conditions including dyslexia, dyspraxia and FASD.

Initial enquiries and informal visits from parents/carers are always welcome and can be arranged by telephoning our school office and talking to our Family Liaison Officers. Formal referrals come to us directly from a pupil's local authority SEND team. Those referrals can be made throughout the academic year and we encourage families to work with their local authority SEND team from the outset.

Referrals are considered by the school's admissions panel and a non-prejudicial visit is arranged. Following this visit, a place may be offered to pupils whose needs and provision can be fully met by the school. Fees and NASS approved contracts are directly agreed by the school with placing local authorities and will vary dependent on an individual pupil's needs.

Once a placement is agreed, a collaborative decision is made between all parties about how a pupil will transition into the school. This may include a pre-admission visit to school and a home visit from one of our Family Liaison Officers. All important information is shared with the staff who will be working closely with the pupil and our approach takes account of the needs of the individual pupil. An assessment period follows, with a Post Admission review meeting taking place within approximately 12 weeks, with parents/carers and the placing local authority all invited.

If you wish to discuss making a formal referral, please contact Leonie Travers-O'Connor (Partnership Manager) on 015395 66755. The school's Admissions Policy is available on request.

[Details of our Clinical Services provision](#)

Essential to the Witherslack Group Therapeutic Model are our Clinical Services Team who work alongside the wider multidisciplinary team to provide an integrated provision of therapeutic intervention, care and education.

The school is supported by a designated and bespoke team of clinicians which includes: Therapists/Counsellors, Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Assistant Psychologists. Our pupils and the staff supporting them also have access to other specialist clinicians within the wider Witherslack Group.

All of our practising clinicians are registered practitioners with The Health and Care Professions Council or their appropriate designated regulatory bodies such as The British Association of Counselling Psychotherapists, British Association of Play Therapists, and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. All receive supervision from other senior clinicians within the Group or from externally commissioned specialists within their field.

Line management for the clinicians is provided by senior clinical colleagues and the Regional Director (Clinical), who in turn is line managed by the Group's Clinical Director. All clinicians are supported to maintain their registrations through Continuing Professional Development opportunities, many being supported by the Group to develop specialisms such as Sensory Integration Therapy and Trauma Informed Communication Approaches.

Clinical Governance is the responsibility of the Clinical Director who chairs the quarterly Witherslack Group Clinical Governance Board; attended by external advisors and internal Directors.

Details of approach to positive behaviour support, suspensions, rewards and sanctions

Pontville School delivers education and care in a caring, positive and largely predictable environment. However, some pupils may at times display behaviour which is challenging.

As highlighted in our Behaviour Policy, the school expects to achieve consistently high standards of behaviour across all ages and we aim to do this through a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach. The overall aim of a PBS approach is to improve the quality of a pupil's life and that of the people around them. PBS helps staff to develop positive relationships with pupils, as well as helping staff to understand the reasons for any behaviour which is challenging. This in turn ensures that effective support measures for individuals can be put in place as soon as possible, with improvements in behaviour being observed over time.

Our multi-professional staff teams meet regularly to discuss each pupil and the best ways we can support them. Regular internal team around the child (ITAC) meetings create a forum for this but our staff also have frequent informal discussions, which often include pupils. These processes lead to various interventions, strategies and support measures being agreed and implemented, as well as being outlined within an individual's support plan and/or Risk Assessment plan.

The school has a clear set of values (**Be Respectful, Be Responsible and Be Proud**) and classroom expectations, all of which have been informed by pupil views. Pupils are recognised and rewarded through use of a whole-school reward system. We regularly celebrate the successes of all pupils in a variety of ways, as we recognise that a focus on positive outcomes is essential for developing great behaviour, effort and achievement across the school.

At times, if pupils are placing themselves or others at risk of harm, staff may need to use physical intervention to keep them safe. This is used within strict guidelines, only as a last resort, and staff are trained in using the BILD accredited framework PRICE (Protecting Rights in a Caring Environment). Staff receive regular training in de-escalation strategies and PBS strategies. The school's leadership team monitors any use of physical intervention which helps to identify any patterns of behaviour and any additional intervention strategies to reduce its use.

Where behaviour falls below expectation, we ask pupils to reflect upon their actions and we attempt to identify the reason for the behaviour wherever possible. It may be appropriate to instigate a restorative approach and/or teach alternative behaviours and coping strategies, helping pupils to develop the skills they need to regulate their own emotions and behaviour

in a safe and acceptable way. Where necessary, we may decide to instigate a sanction. For example, a pupil may need to work away from their class for a period of time. We will always communicate with parents and carers when we take additional measures to support behaviour.

Suspensions and exclusions are rare. Suspension means that a pupil is not allowed to attend school and must remain at home during school hours, under the supervision of a parent or carer. Serious incidents will always be considered in context and suspension would only be considered by the Headteacher as a last resort in exceptional circumstances and in line with the school's Suspension Policy.

Provision for Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans

All pupils at Pontville School have an EHC Plan. This is a statutory document which outlines the outcomes a pupil is working towards and what is needed to achieve that. The school endeavours to make sure that the requirements of the EHC Plans are met in line with the DfE's SEND Code of Practice. Where a pupil is professionally assessed and specific additional support is identified as being required, every effort will be made to arrange this as soon as possible, where those resources are available to the school.

Examples include:

- Use of learning scaffolds, knowledge organisers, specialist seating, fidget tools or the school's technology
- Extra support from a teaching assistant or the pastoral team
- Individual interventions led by a HLTA eg. to develop literacy or numeracy skills
- Use of one of our sensory rooms or access to our outdoor facilities
- Targeted and individual assessment and support, delivered by our clinical team
- Adapted or more complex learning materials
- Extended project work and homework

All EHC Plans are reviewed at least annually within a formal meeting at school. The progress of each pupil is carefully monitored to promote great progress towards the identified outcomes on their EHC Plan. Parents/carers are integral to this process with their views and those of pupils, teachers and clinical staff obtained in advance of the review meeting. EHC Plan review meetings have a transition focus when a pupil is in Year 6, Year 9, Year 11 and Post 16 as next steps are considered by the local authority in more detail. All EHC Plan review meetings are informed by the statutory processes as well as any additional guidance from the placing local authority. Reports presented prior to review meetings are issued to all agencies involved, in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice.

For new pupils, a Post Admission review meeting will take place within the first 12 weeks after a pupil's admission. This meeting provides an opportunity to consider how a pupil has settled in and their early progress or barriers to learning. It also allows for our clinical services team

to share the findings of their multi-disciplinary team assessment and any intervention programmes to be agreed.

The school's SENCO Team can be contacted via the school office.

Details for consideration of pupils/parents whose first language is not English

On admission, a pupil's need for additional support is identified. Appropriate provision is then established prior to the pupil's start date. 1:1 support from a bi-lingual support assistant will be provided if this is an identified requirement. The school will use best efforts to ensure interpreters are made available to attend meetings, should this be required.

Details of complaints procedure

In accordance with the Children's Act 1989, all pupils at Pontville School have access to a Complaints Procedure. Informal complaints or concerns can often be addressed by contacting the school office in order to liaise with the class or form teacher. Formal complaints directly from the pupil or via a parent/carer or member of staff should be reported to the school office, for the attention of the Head Teacher. Complaints or concerns arising from other adults also follow set procedures.. A copy of the Complaints and Representations Policy can be found on the school website or requested via the school office.

Statement regarding accessing exam results

Pontville School has a positive track record of pupils achieving a variety of qualifications at Year 11 and Post 16. Such qualifications are reflective of each pupil's strengths and abilities and in the past have included GCSEs, BTEC, Functional Skills and Entry Level courses. The school determines which qualification pathway each pupil will pursue, taking account of the preferences and needs of pupils, as well as the views of their parents/carers.

The school is open on GCSE Results Day and senior staff are present to discuss and celebrate results, as well as providing advice and support. If results are preferred via email, this can be facilitated.

Our previous examination results can be accessed from the government website www.compare-schoolperformance.service.gov.uk or alternatively, a summary of results can be requested via the school office on 01695 578734.

Safeguarding Mission Statement

Pontville School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and young people. We believe in the importance of working with partner agencies to ensure that

pupils are kept safe, happy and healthy. All staff working at Pontville School are made aware of how to respond to any concerns.

We have a Child Protection Policy and all staff are trained and supported by our **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Mrs. Diane Seddon**, to ensure that the policy is fully and effectively implemented. The school also has four Deputy DSLs: **Mr. Steven Emmerson (Deputy Head Teacher), Mrs. Tabitha Walker-Simmonds (Deputy Head Teacher), Mrs. Loree Smith (Deputy Headteacher) and Mr. Peter Morrow (Pastoral Manager)**. The DSL and/or Deputy DSLs can be contacted via the school office on **01695 578734**.

Where we suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, we have a statutory duty to make a referral to relevant agencies. Where local procedures allow, we will inform the parent/carer[s] of the referral. The school will share any information relevant to the referral with those agencies and will contribute to any assessments being undertaken.

If you require further support on safeguarding matters you can contact:

Mary Aurens (Witherslack Group, Head of Safeguarding) or **Kerry Maynard** (Witherslack Group, Regional Director).

Alternatively, **Tim Booth**, (Local Authority Designated Officer – LADO - for Lancashire) can be contacted. All relevant contact details are available in our Child Protection Policy which can be found on the school website <https://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/our-locations/our-schools/pontville-school/parents-and-carers-area/> or can be requested from the school office.

Promoting General Welfare

Pontville School provides pupils with high quality support and nurture, helping them to fulfil their potential in education, whilst growing in independence and preparing for a positive future. We believe it is vital to establish stable and trusting relationships between pupils and staff, as well as working positively and in partnership with parents and carers.

The role of the school's Pastoral Team is to promote and support the general welfare and well-being of all pupils within the school. They are responsible for the administering of medication in school and they can also help to resolve any issues with school transport. Along with the Senior Leadership Team, the Pastoral Team link in regularly with other agencies such as CAMHS, social care or medical teams. In collaboration with our Family Liaison Officers, our clinical team and class staff, the Pastoral Team help to address any welfare needs and they have a pro-active role in delivering targeted support and advice to pupils in school, including work on anti-bullying and capturing pupil voice.

Risk Assessments

Our role is to support pupils to lead a positive life, helping them to understand daily risks that they face and to learn how to overcome them safely. Due to our pupil's needs, some of them exhibit 'risk taking' characteristics; we therefore have rigorous procedures to ensure everyone's safety. Individual risk assessments will be completed for all pupils during their 12-week assessment period and will form part of the post-admission assessment review.

Risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed that cover the environments, lessons, and general activities that take place within the school. Where off site activities are planned, the visit leader would complete a risk assessment and update our Evolve System which ensures all pre-visit checks have been completed and the visit is authorised by a senior member of staff. A fire risk assessment has been undertaken and this is kept updated following any changes to layout, heat-generating activities or fire hazards introduced. An annual review of fire safety is undertaken by a competent person.

Health and Safety

Pontville School has an ISO 45001 accredited safety and health management system that ensures risks have been identified and effective control measures are in place. Monitoring is undertaken by Hayley Dorian (Headteacher) and the Senior Leadership Team, assisted by the school's Health and Safety Representative, Tim Vickers (Maintenance Supervisor). The whole site has internal health and safety checks in place for the staff to complete, with an action plan put in place to rectify any faults.

The school have support from the Witherslack Group's Safety, Health, and Environment Team, who are competent health and safety professionals who provide advice, guidance and training to create safe and healthy environments for everyone. They undertake a health and safety audit of the school annually and complete additional visits when needed.

First Aid/Medical Care

Both of our school sites have medical rooms on the ground floor and we respond to any first aid incidents as quickly as possible, with parents/carers informed as appropriate. Most staff complete a standard First Aid course, with a number of additional key staff across both sites trained to a higher level. First Aid training for staff is followed up with refresher training as soon as practicable, after three years.

School staff are only allowed to administer prescribed medication with its original label. Paracetamol and Calpol can be administered if necessary with parents/carers consent. All medication is kept in a locked medical cupboard and its use is logged/recorded. Regular quality assurance processes are in place.

Anti-Bullying

We pride ourselves on our warm and caring atmosphere. All members of our community are entitled to safety and protection and therefore bullying will not be tolerated. We have clear guidelines and a whole-school Anti-Bullying Strategy which raises awareness of signs of bullying. We ask the whole school community to be alert to the acronym 'STOP' – **Several Times On Purpose** and **Start Telling Other People**. The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is available on the school's website.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education

Personal well-being and social development is promoted through a comprehensive Personal, Social, Health, Economic (PSHE) and Citizenship education programme. PSHE and Citizenship are important subjects at Pontville School as they provide pupils with the knowledge and skills to live safe, healthy and fulfilled lives.

From **September 2020**, the law relating to some aspects of PSHE changed, with new requirements for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. Relationships and Health Education are now compulsory for all pupils receiving primary and secondary education. It is also compulsory for schools to provide Sex Education to all pupils receiving secondary education. Parents/carers are not able to withdraw their child from any aspect of Relationships Education or Health Education. Parents/carers are able to withdraw their child from any or all aspects of Sex Education (other than those provided as part of the Science curriculum) up until three terms before the age of 16. The updated RSHE statutory guidance (from **September 2026**) also formalises expectations around parental engagement, requiring schools to meaningfully consult parents when reviewing RSHE policies and to share curriculum materials on request, including those from external providers.

All schools must have a policy for RSE and schools must consult with parents on this. The RSE Policy for Pontville School is available on our school website <https://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/our-locations/our-schools/pontville-school/parents-and-carers-area/> or alternatively, a printed copy can be requested from the school office.

Our RSE Policy includes a curriculum map for RSE so parents can see a summary of the content to be taught. We continue to be committed to working in partnership with parents and carers and as such, feedback on our RSE Policy is welcome. We understand that some parents and carers may have questions, queries or concerns about some aspects of RSE and all views will be listened to and carefully considered.

Details regarding staffing and recruitment

Pontville School follows a rigorous recruitment process in order that we recruit high quality staff and ensure that pupils are kept safe. Senior Leaders involved in the recruitment process undertake safer recruitment training and all staff employed within the school are subject to an enhanced DBS check.

Staff List

Head Teacher	1
Deputy Head Teacher	3
Assistant Headteacher	2
DSL	1
Pastoral Manager	1
Deputy Pastoral Manager	2
Pastoral Care Assistants	3
Family Liaison Officer	2
Administrative Staff	6
SENCO/Teachers	3
Teachers/Instructors	25
Teaching Assistants	40
HLTAs	4
Head Cook	1
Deputy Cook in Charge/Assistant Cook	3
Kitchen Assistant	1
Occupational Therapists	3
Psychologist	1
Assistant Psychologist/Therapies Assistant/Apprentice	3
Speech and Language Therapist	5
Therapist/Counsellor	3
Maintenance Staff	3

Frequently asked questions

What happens if my child is unwell or has an appointment?

If your child is unwell at home and won't be attending school, please let us know by telephoning the school office before 9.00am. You will also need to contact the taxi company if your child uses local authority transport. Good attendance is important to us, so we will ask you to explain why your child will not be at school. If your child becomes unwell at school, staff will take care of them and will let you know as soon as possible. If necessary, we may ask you to come and collect your child. If your child has an appointment which can't be arranged

outside of school hours, please let us know as soon as possible in advance of the appointment. We ask that you provide us with a copy of the appointment letter wherever possible.

What happens if my child doesn't want to wear school uniform?

As part of our community, all primary and secondary pupils are expected to wear school uniform. We provide all primary and secondary pupils with the school's polo shirts, sweatshirts and PE kits free of charge and parents/carers can purchase additional items if they wish via the school office. We ask for parents/carers to provide their child with dark grey/black school trousers or dark grey/black school skirts and black school shoes. Where this presents a difficulty, the Pastoral Team and/or Family Liaison Officers will work with you and your child to identify the problem and find a way to overcome it. This may include a reasonable adjustment.

Post 16 students can wear their own leisure clothes, ensuring that they are suitable for accessing education.

What happens if my child needs medication in school?

Please contact a member of the Pastoral Team through the school office. If you need to send medication in with a taxi, please telephone school first so that the Pastoral Team can make sure it is collected, logged and stored safely on arrival.

What happens if my child doesn't like school lunches?

We provide free meals for all pupils following national nutritional guidelines, although some pupils prefer to bring in a packed lunch and a healthy snack from home. Our menus are regularly reviewed to provide children with a well-balanced but enjoyable diet. The views of pupils are captured during this process. Each day begins with a breakfast snack option, followed by a selection of fruit and snacks at break. We offer a wide variety of freshly produced meals at lunchtime, and pupils eat with staff in one of our dining rooms where friendships and social skills are developed. Please inform class staff if your child has allergies or requires a special diet. This will be shared with our kitchen staff who will endeavour to accommodate any specific needs.

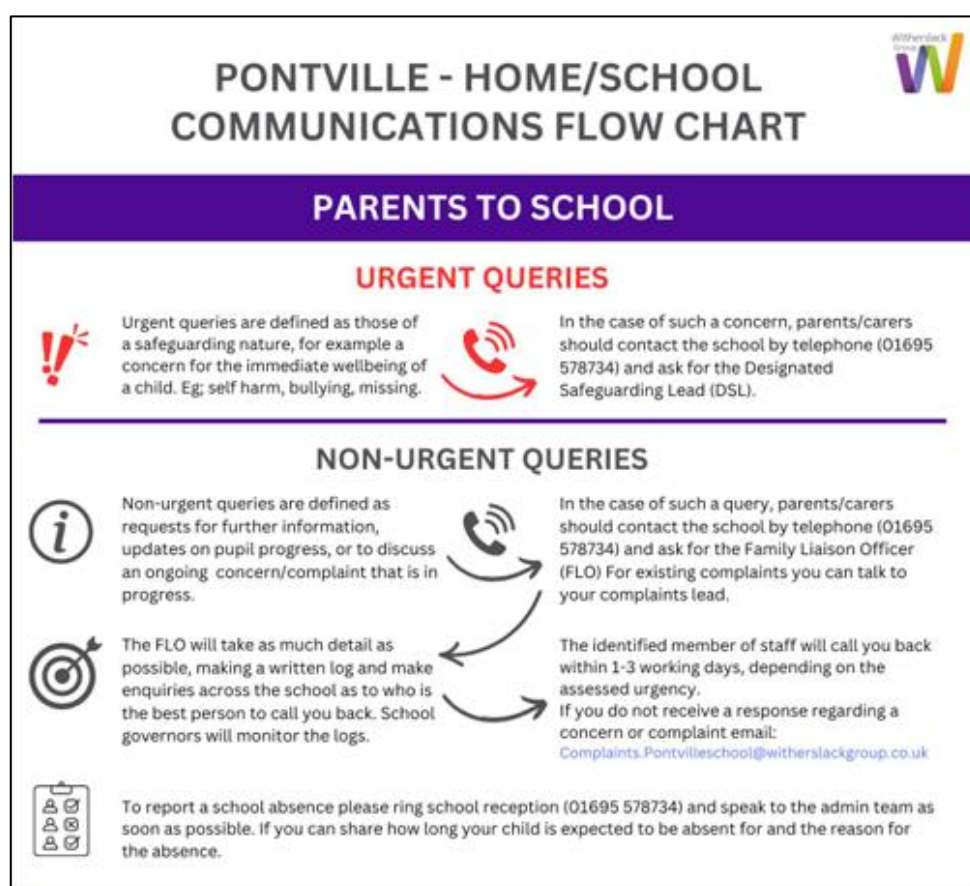
What can my child bring into school?

The school provides pupils with everything that they need so there is not usually a need to bring lots of items into school. Personal items, toys, games or money should not be brought into school, unless it is by special request or there is special permission to do so. It is at the responsibility and risk of parents/carers when sending pupils to school with any electronic devices, mobile phones and music equipment, including those used during the journey to/from school. All devices must be handed in to staff on arrival. They are then locked safely away until the end of the day and pupils are not allowed access to them until then. Mobile phone exemptions only apply to pupils who have a medical condition which warrants use in school (eg. for glucose monitoring) and a risk assessment will be put in place.

Fizzy drinks, energy drinks and those high in sugar are not permitted unless there is a medical exemption. Cigarettes, smoking and vaping equipment are not allowed, along with alcohol, illegal substances or anything that could be used as a weapon.

What are the arrangements for Home-School Communication?

We enjoy working in partnership with parents and carers and run a number of parent/carers events across each academic year. Prior to starting at Pontville School, our Family Liaison Officers are well-placed to answer most questions. Once your child starts at our school, your child's class staff will arrange to contact you at least weekly which can be useful for asking questions or discussing queries. Where you have concerns which can't be resolved by the class staff, please contact the school office and the Family Liaison Officers will aim to resolve this in the first instance. Alternatively, they will ensure you are directed to the most appropriate person to talk to within the time-scales outlined below:





witherslackgroup.co.uk



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