

# Silver Birch

Concord Youth Centre, Claremont Road, Birmingham, B11 1LF

**Inspection dates** 6–8 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

## Summary of key findings

### This school is adequate because

- Students have made adequate progress but this is not more rapid because teaching is not sufficiently well matched to their individual needs.
- While the planning of teaching and learning is detailed, it does not take enough account of what individual students know and can do.
- Although staff provide students with positive feedback about their work during lessons, they do not annotate students' work with suggestions as to how it can be improved.
- In the short time since the school was opened, the proprietor has ensured that students are making adequate academic progress. He has also begun the process of self-evaluation and improvement planning but these are at an early stage of development.
- The proprietor has ensured that the new staff team works well together but professional development does not yet include sufficient opportunities for sharing and observing good practice in other schools.

### The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor is committed to ensuring that students succeed and are prepared for the future. The school is developing clear, secure plans for improvement.
- Students make good progress in improving their behaviour and raising their self-esteem.
- The mutual trust and respect between students and staff is promoting students' improved attendance and participation in learning.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Five lessons were observed, taught by a teacher and a learning mentor. School policies were read, together with information about students' progress and behaviour. Samples of students' work were also examined.
- Discussions were held with the proprietor and staff. The inspector held a telephone discussion with the Chair of the Governors. Informal conversations took place with students.
- Three responses to the staff inspection questionnaire were considered. Informal conversations took place with students. There were too few responses to Ofsted's on-line Parent View survey to take the survey into account.

## Inspection team

Michael Best, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school was registered with the Department for Education in November 2012 and admitted its first students in April 2013. This is the school's first inspection since its registration.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for up to 12 boys and girls aged 14 to 16 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Nearly all students have experienced significant difficulties in accessing mainstream education; many have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or are at risk of exclusion. Nearly all students have a history of poor attendance and significant gaps in their education. The main referring local authority is Birmingham, together with local academies.
- The school is located in youth club premises owned and managed by Birmingham local authority. The accommodation is shared with another school, R.Y.A.N Academy, although there are currently no students at that school being taught on the premises.
- There are six boys on roll, none of whom are dual-registered with their own schools. Two students have statements of special educational needs and one is looked after by the local authority.
- The school aims to 'help students become more confident and independent and be ready for college, an apprenticeship or the world of work'.
- The school does not make use of any additional provision.
- There have been recent changes in the leadership of the school. The sole proprietor is now also the Principal designate following the departure of the school's first Principal. The three members of staff all joined the school at the start of this term. Although there is a named Chair of Governors, there is no governing body at this time.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise students' achievement by:
  - ensuring that information about what students know and can do is used to plan and provide lessons that accurately address their learning needs
  - increasing the pace of lessons and the rate of students' progress by ensuring that the work set for individuals is closely matched to their previous learning and abilities
  - making effective use of questioning to focus students' attention and challenge them to think more systematically and deeply about what they are learning
  - building students' resilience to work more independently and sustain their concentration for longer periods
  - ensuring that students' written work is annotated to provide them with a written record of where they have succeeded, what they need to do to improve and an indication of their next steps in learning.
- Develop the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning by embedding systems for regularly and rigorously monitoring teaching and learning, students' achievements and the implementation of policies and procedures.
- Ensure that the professional development of staff, informed by systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, provides regular training that includes opportunities for sharing and observing good practice in other schools.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

### Adequate

Students' achievement is adequate. Achievement is not better than this because teaching and the curriculum are not closely enough matched to students' needs to accelerate their academic progress.

Students enter school with disrupted previous educational experiences, lack of motivation and, for many, little desire to conform to adult expectations. On entry to the school, students are assessed in English and mathematics and this provides an indication of their starting levels. Most start from levels below age-related expectations and all have much lost ground to make up.

Students' communication skills are developing as they increasingly participate in discussions and sharing ideas. While they make adequate progress with reading and writing, this is not better because teaching is not sufficiently aligned with students' needs to enable them to make more rapid gains. Students concentrate for increasingly longer periods of time. This, for example, helps them to develop their knowledge and understanding in mathematics and science. However, once again, the level of challenge in lessons is not always targeted sufficiently to match their individual learning requirements.

Students' learning habits and capacity to complete their work demonstrate improvement as they adjust to the expectations of the school. The school's focus on building students' positive attitudes to learning and helping them to control their behaviour and emotions is yielding success. Regular attendance and improved behaviour are contributing to bringing students' achievement more in line with the national averages in English, mathematics and science. Students' progress in other subjects, such as physical education and music, is at least adequate.

Students in Year 11 are studying for external examinations at the end of this school year. Only Year 10 students attended the school during its first term of operation and therefore, there are no external examination results to report from last year.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

### Good

Students are making good progress in improving their attitudes and behaviour. As a result, the number of incidents of misbehaviour have reduced quickly over time. Staff have high expectations of students' cooperation and compliance with the school's required standards of behaviour. These are consistently made clear and constantly reinforced through patient dialogue and effective role models. Staff work hard to address students' negativity through providing positive feedback and avoiding confrontation. Students increasingly take responsibility for improving their attitudes and behaviour, with the result that disruption to lessons is rare.

The presence of adults in lessons and around the school with a focus on behaviour and relationships makes a strong contribution to the development of students' positive responses. This high level of continuous staff supervision successfully promotes students' safety and wellbeing. Staff consistently promote students' understanding of the skills and qualities they require to succeed in education and in employment. Relationships between students and staff are good, demonstrating a mutual trust and respect. As a result, potential issues are quickly and effectively diffused at an early stage.

Overall, attendance is in line with the national average, representing significant improvement for nearly all students. The vast majority attend regularly. The breakfast club at the start of the school day is well supported and has helped to improve students' punctuality. The school's good relationships with students' families are establishing common expectations of good behaviour

between home and school.

The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Timetabled lessons in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) are supported by the continuous reinforcement of the school's expectations in lessons and during social time. Students' self-confidence and self-esteem increase as they experience success and recognise that their views and contributions are valued. The short breaks between lessons are effective in encouraging students to socialise with each other and adults, collaborate in activities and build their resilience in handling everyday situations. Involvement in the local community is promoted through links with local businesses and good use is made educational visits, including visits to local museums and places of interest. Students are provided with suitable opportunities to understand diversity in society and the importance of their own place within this. The school helps students to understand the importance of the democratic process and the role of public institutions and services in society. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure that balanced views are expressed in any study of sensitive political or religious issues.

### Quality of teaching

### Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate and enables students to make adequate progress over time. In lessons, staff promote students' understanding of the school's expectations of behaviour and use praise effectively to encourage students to cooperate in learning. Relationships between staff and students are good and successfully combat students' reluctance to settle down to work at the start of lessons. Staff mostly succeed in ensuring that students engage in learning and make adequate progress. The school's organisation of learning breaks morning and afternoon sessions down into short periods of teaching interspersed with a brief break. This helps to motivate students and sustain their concentration but provides limited opportunity for students to build resilience in completing longer pieces of work or learning more independently of adults.

While the content and activities in lessons are drawn from the school's subject plans and are mostly relevant to students, there is not always a close enough match of teaching to students' specific needs for progress to be better than adequate. Students have gaps in their previous learning that are barriers to their progress and the achievement of higher standards and these are not always recognised enough by staff. Staff make use of assessment information to adapt students' learning to address these shortcomings but they do not always do this enough. Consequently, the pace of lessons slows when additional explanations or smaller steps in learning are necessary to move learning forward.

Staff reinforce students' basic learning skills regularly and there is an appropriate emphasis on improving students' communication, literacy and numeracy skills. There are suitable opportunities for students to use information and communication technology (ICT) to extend their learning. Staff encourage students to take turns to speak and listen respectfully to the contributions of others. However, as the school day goes on some students find it increasingly difficult to focus on the immediate task in hand and staff do not always employ a sufficiently wide range of strategies to turn this around quickly. Questioning is used to monitor students' understanding and this has some success but opportunities are sometimes lost to encourage them to develop their thinking to deeper levels. Staff discuss students' progress with them as they complete their tasks and this is done well but there is rarely any annotation on students' written work to record this and highlight the next steps in learning. Feedback is encouraging but does not include sufficiently detailed written comments as to how students can improve their work in order to help them make faster progress.

**Quality of curriculum****Adequate**

The quality of the curriculum is adequate. All the required areas of learning are covered and there is an appropriate emphasis on core experiences in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). The provision made for students takes account of their statements of special educational needs, where appropriate. Teaching is informed by schemes of work leading to Entry Level courses in English and mathematics and National Curriculum courses in other subjects. However, students' low prior attainment and the gaps in their development of skills, knowledge and understanding, mean that there is scope for an even greater degree of curriculum planning for individual students than is currently the case. While students make adequate progress over time, they are not all able to make faster progress because the level of challenge of the work provided is not well enough matched to their specific needs. For example, while there are regular opportunities for students to develop and apply their communication, literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, students who have yet to develop fluency and deeper understanding when reading do not have a sufficiently well-structured curriculum to accelerate their progress even more in these specific areas. However, the school's programme for PSHCE does provide effectively for students' preparation for the next stage of their education, adulthood and the world of work.

The provision for students is enriched through music and physical education using the on-site specialist facilities which include a recording studio, fitness training room and sports hall.

Visits to local places of interest and wider afield, together with planned visits from the emergency services, effectively support the taught curriculum. Visits to local sporting and leisure facilities further support students' learning experiences, providing both motivation and enjoyment. Careers education is successfully provided by a local specialist organisation.

**Pupils' welfare, health and safety****Adequate**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is adequate. Following the appointment and induction of a new staff team, the proprietor has reviewed and strengthened recruitment procedures, arranged training and more systematically monitored records. These and other improvements are recent and this is why this area of the school's work is judged adequate rather than good. The proprietor's actions have ensured that the school meets the independent school regulations for this standard.

The proprietor is the designated person for child protection and has completed the required higher-level training. He has ensured that all staff are familiar with the school's safeguarding policy and have been briefed about the procedures to be followed as part of their induction. All the required checks are made on staff and volunteers, and these are recorded in a single central register. The school has taken suitable steps to check that other adults using the building during school hours have been suitably checked for their suitability to work with young people.

The proprietor has ensured that there are suitable policies for behaviour management, the prevention of bullying and first aid and that these are effectively implemented. The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is appropriately implemented. Effective provision is made for students who are vulnerable or at risk through good relationships with parents and carers. The school works with its commissioning bodies to ensure that all available services are engaged to the benefit of students.

Themes in the PSHCE curriculum, together with physical education lessons and healthy snacks, encourage students to develop healthy lifestyles. High levels of supervision and good adult role models enhance the safe environment of the school. Suitable arrangements are in place for the assessment of risk both on and off the premises, and health and safety procedures, including arrangements for fire safety, are appropriately implemented in conjunction with the other users of the building. The school makes appropriate arrangements for recording serious incidents of

misbehaviour and the registers for admissions and attendance fulfil requirements.

## Leadership and management

## Adequate

The quality of leadership and management is adequate. The school demonstrates the capacity to make a positive impact on the lives of challenging young people. In a short period of time, the proprietor has established an environment which promotes students' regular attendance and good gains in their behaviour and attitudes to learning. In his development statement, the proprietor demonstrates a realistic vision for what can be achieved and articulates a passionate determination for improving the lives of the young people attending the school.

The monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum are at an early stage of development. Similarly, systems for evaluating the school's work and planning for improvement are in their infancy. Opportunities to support the professional development of staff and increase their expertise in teaching and supporting challenging students, through the observation and sharing of best practice and the use of training activities, are limited. The Chair of Governors is supportive of the school and provides guidance for the proprietor in providing contacts with the local authority and voluntary organisations.

All the required information for parents, carers and others is made available either electronically or in various paper-based documents. This includes a copy of the current child protection policy and the procedures for managing any complaints. Complaints procedures meet requirements. The quality of the premises and accommodation also meets requirements.

The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school regulations are met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138971
<b>Inspection number</b>	422842
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/6013
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
<b>School status</b>	Independent School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	6
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Noel Thomas
<b>Chair</b>	Angela Solomon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Noel Thomas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£7,500–£9,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 246 0250
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