

# Birchwood School

Birchwood Children's Services Limited, Ainscough Road, Birchwood,  
Warrington, Cheshire WA3 7PW

**Inspection date**

13 May 2021

**Overall outcome**

**The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(c), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)*

- The proprietor body has prepared an appropriate curriculum policy. This outlines a sufficiently broad range of subjects for pupils to study. The details emphasise the contribution that each subject will make to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education. This approach demonstrates leaders' intention to actively provide a flexible and personalised education for each pupil. The details also show that the active promotion of fundamental British values will lie at the core of the school's work. This includes values such as tolerance and respect, together with the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of being a British citizen.
- The curriculum policy is supported by schemes of work for each subject. The schemes of work and examples of the supporting long-term planning are thorough. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn during their time at the school. Planning considers the specific and individual needs of pupils, all of whom will be pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- There is suitable importance placed on reading, writing and mathematics in the curriculum. Additionally, there will be an emphasis on pupils studying subjects such as science, information and communication technology, history and geography. Subjects will also include design and technology, art, modern foreign languages and physical education (PE).
- Pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education will be taught through timetabled lessons. Aspects of PSHE will also be woven into the whole curriculum. The development of pupils' social, emotional and well-being skills are considered a central part of the curriculum by the school. The PSHE curriculum will also include the development of life skills, relationships, health and sex education. The topics to be covered are suitably wide ranging and include all those that pay particular regard to the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

- All secondary-age pupils will receive careers education. Leaders are using the Gatsby benchmarks as their framework to encourage pupils to reach their potential. Leaders intend to offer information, advice and guidance impartially. This will be tailored to the individual needs and interests of pupils.

*Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)*

- The proprietor body and leaders are in the process of recruiting the staff who will work at the school. Leaders have a clear idea of the calibre and expertise that they are looking for in their new teachers and other staff.
- Templates have been created for short-term teaching plans. Leaders will ask teachers to include the contents to be taught in these templates prior to the school opening. Teachers will be expected to match their subject teaching methods to the needs of the pupils. The school is well resourced, with a range of appropriate educational books and equipment that will be appealing to the age range of pupils that the school will serve.
- The proprietor body and leaders are committed to providing a good-quality education for pupils. Their knowledge, skills and experience will enable them to guide and support teachers, so they can provide a suitable quality of education when the school opens.

*Paragraph 4*

- Leaders have a suitable assessment policy in place.
- Leaders will assess pupils' attainment and personal needs when they start at the school. Their progress and attainment will be assessed regularly. Leaders understand the expected progression pupils will make across each curriculum subject. They are mindful of the likely wide range of pupils' abilities and needs. Pupils' progress will be shared regularly with parents and carers and those responsible for governance. Teachers will use these assessments to inform their teaching.
- Pupils will have access to a range of academic and vocational qualifications according to their ability and need. This will include key stage 4 national assessments if appropriate.
- All of the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

**Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

*Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)*

- Documentary evidence indicates that pupils' SMSC development is a thread that runs throughout the curriculum for the proposed provision. SMSC development is central to the school's aims, policies and plans for enrichment activities.
- SMSC aspects are threaded through schemes of work and show that pupils will learn about democracy and different faiths. Enrichment activities will be offered to all pupils to ensure that they experience a diverse range of social and cultural activities and traditions. For example, plans are in place to help pupils to be involved in charity work and local community events.
- Schemes of work will cover the development of pupils' skills and provide an

opportunity to discuss local and national events and offer experiences that will give them a balance of opposing views. Pupils will be encouraged to put into practice the values fundamental to living in Britain.

- The school's policies include positive reference to all the protected characteristics set out in legislation.
- The independent school standard in this part is likely to be met when the school opens.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- The proprietor body and leaders have paid careful attention to the most current statutory guidance for safeguarding pupils. A suitable and up-to-date policy is in place. Leaders have introduced all the necessary arrangements to keep pupils safe and to promote their welfare at the school.
- The headteacher will be the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). However, it is intended that any new senior staff that are appointed will also be trained to DSL level. All new staff will receive appropriate induction, safeguarding training and regular updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism, sexual exploitation, sexting, e-safety and the action taken to control the spread of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

#### *Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10*

- The proprietor body has detailed behaviour and exclusion policies in place. There is also an appropriate anti-bullying policy. Any incidents of poor behaviour will be recorded. Leaders intend to cross-reference these with other concerns so that they can gain a full picture of an individual pupil and respond quickly to any needs that arise. The policy includes appropriate and proportionate sanctions.

#### *Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- The proprietor body has a written health and safety policy which is appropriately tailored to the premises of the proposed school. It complies with all relevant laws. Regular fire safety checks of the premises are planned. The proprietor body will ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- The proprietor body has an appropriate first-aid policy in place. It is intended that staff will undergo first-aid training before the school opens.
- A written risk assessment policy is in place. Risk assessments already completed show that leaders plan to take appropriate actions to minimise risks to pupils. This includes risk assessments for individual pupils and also written guidance explaining how pupils and staff will be expected to behave and move around the school in line with COVID-19 guidance.
- Leaders have made appropriate arrangements to ensure that the school's computer network has appropriate monitoring and filtering in place to increase pupils' safety when they are working online.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- Pupils will always be supervised, including at breaktimes, arriving at school and on

leaving the school premises.

#### *Paragraph 15*

- Leaders have appropriate systems in place to register pupils' attendance and allow them to effectively monitor any pupils' absences. Leaders will report on attendance on a regular basis through the governance of the school.
- The proprietor body has published a suitable admissions policy for the school. Systems are in place to ensure that records of admission will adhere to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- All the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

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

*Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)*

- The single central register (SCR) is already in place and meets the requirements for the information it must contain. Leaders understand the need to complete all the required checks on the suitability of staff before they take up appointment.
- Records relating to the proprietor body and governance of the school are included on the school's SCR. All the suitability checks, including those relating to the leadership and management of a school, have also been carried out.
- The proprietor body has completed appropriate training to support it to appoint staff who are suitable to work in a school. Plans to recruit additional teachers and support staff are in place. Induction documentation for new staff makes it clear that they will undergo a full suite of safeguarding, and related, training upon appointment.
- Leaders are aware of the procedures that they should follow in the event of employing agency staff to ensure they are suitable to work with pupils.
- Leaders do not intend to engage volunteers. However, they are clear about their responsibility for checking the suitability of volunteers who might work with pupils if this does occur.
- All the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)*

- The proposed school is housed within a central section of a former care home. It is intended that the rest of the building will be a residential home for the pupils that will attend the school. The large, modern school building has been extensively refurbished

by the proprietor body to a high standard. The accommodation comprises five teaching rooms, small breakout rooms, a communal hall area, two kitchens, a medical room, reception area and office.

- There are appropriate toilet facilities. All toilets can be secured from the inside. There is running hot and cold water. The hot water is at an appropriate temperature. There are signs indicating that the water is not suitable for drinking. Pupils will have access to drinking water throughout the day.
- There are separate boys' and girls' changing and shower facilities on the proposed school site. These are clean and well appointed.

*Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)*

- A medical room has been set aside, with suitable washing facilities in the room. There is easy access to a toilet. A bed, bedding and first-aid kit were in the medical room at the time of the inspection. There was also a lockable medicine cupboard.

*Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)*

- Accommodation throughout is of a high standard and meets all requirements for health, safety and the welfare of pupils. This includes suitable acoustics and lighting. Teaching rooms have a suitable source of natural light. The exterior and interior lighting is of an appropriate standard. Access through main doorways and gates will be via keypads and magnetic fobs.

*Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)*

- Pupils will have access to a large outdoor area that is safe. It will be an appropriate space for pupils to play in when not in lessons. PE activities are regularly timetabled in accordance with the school's curriculum requirements.
- All of the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

## Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(1)(j), 32(1)(k), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f), 32(3)(g)*

- The proprietor body is intending to have a school website that will contain information about the school, although this had not been constructed at the time of this inspection. It is fully aware of the requirements that a school should publish on its website.
- In the meantime, there are suitable information packs for parents and pupils when they join the school. A comprehensive range of policies for parents are in place, including information on admissions, behaviour, safeguarding and providing remote education. All documents will be made available to parents on request from the school office, as well as being available on the school website when it is set up.
- Leaders intend to provide termly and annual reports on pupils' progress and attainment to parents. Reports will be detailed and provide a holistic picture of a pupil's progress. They will also report on pupils' personal development and emotional health and well-being. Leaders are aware that any inspection reports and examination

results need to be made available once released.

- All the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)*

- The complaints policy is comprehensive. It outlines all the required stages. It includes appropriate timescales and information about the storage and sharing of written records. The policy is detailed and ensures transparency of the school's intended complaint procedures.
- All the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

*Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)*

- The proprietor body has an appropriate understanding of the independent school standards and it plans to monitor compliance regularly.
- Leaders demonstrate the knowledge required to successfully set up and run this independent school. They have experience of, and a commitment to, providing an effective quality of education for pupils with SEND. They are likely to fulfil their responsibilities to actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- All of the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility plan fully reflects the school's statutory requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Proposed school details

Unique reference number	148566
DfE registration number	877/6014
Inspection number	10182099

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Birchwood Children's Services Ltd
Chair	Deb Chappel
Headteacher	Deb Chappel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000–£85,000
Telephone number	01925 202 448
Website	None
Email address	<a href="mailto:deb.chappel@bwchildservices.com">deb.chappel@bwchildservices.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	8 to 18	8 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	25	25

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	25



Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	25
Of which, number of pupils or an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	25
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Not known

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	6
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	13

## Information about this proposed school

- This proposed independent special school is located in a former residential care home. The central section of the building has been converted into a school. The proposed provision has undergone extensive renovation and will be used solely by the school. The building is set within its own grounds. At a later date, the proprietor body intends to renovate the two wings of the building and register this part of the building as a children's home.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 25 mixed gender pupils, aged between eight to 18 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and have an education, health and care plan. Referrals will be taken from north west local authorities, including Warrington.
- The school prospectus states they intend to 'inspire a better future for each pupil who attends the school'. They aim to 'celebrate each pupil for what they achieve, help them to see themselves as complete and unique and enable them to go out into the world with confidence'.
- The proprietor body is Birchwood Children's Services Limited. There are two directors, one of which is the chair of the board of directors and is the proposed headteacher. It is intended that the school will also have a committee to oversee the governance of

the school.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine if the school is likely to meet the independent school standards prior to opening as a registered school.
- This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector held discussions with a member of the proprietor body and members of the governance committee.
- The inspector made a tour of the school to check the suitability of the proposed premises against the relevant independent school standards. She also looked at a wide range of documents and policies, including on the curriculum, behaviour and health and safety. She also checked documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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