

Silver Birch School

170 Packington Avenue, Shard End, Birmingham B34 7RD

Inspection date

16 February 2022

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection in September 2021, some pre-employment checks for staff, as set out in 'Keeping children safe in education 2021', had not been carried out. Other necessary checks were not recorded correctly in the school's single central record. The school's safeguarding policy did not comply with the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DfE). For example, there was no reference to the school's procedures for dealing with peer-on-peer abuse.
- Since that time, the proprietor and leaders have acted swiftly to address the failings that were identified. They have placed serious emphasis on reviewing the culture of safeguarding at the school. They have worked in partnership with another local school to learn from their practice. This action has provided leaders with the information they require to make improvements and instil a strong safeguarding culture.
- All staff have benefited from a programme of safeguarding training since the previous inspection. Leaders keep records to document this training. For example, staff have completed safeguarding training about the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. Leaders check that adults know and understand how to keep pupils safe. Staff complete safeguarding 'quizzes' to demonstrate this understanding.
- Leaders have included all staff in their work to introduce a new safeguarding policy. Staff have discussed recent safeguarding guidance issued by the DfE and considered how it applies to the local context of the school. Adults are confident about what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Staff have an 'it could happen here' approach and are alert to any signs that a pupil needs help. They act quickly to support pupils when necessary.
- The school's safeguarding policy is now informed by the most recent guidance from the Secretary of State. It sets out the school's approach to dealing with a range of safeguarding issues such as peer-on-peer abuse and sexual harassment. Leaders ensure that the policy is provided to parents on request.
- Safeguarding records are maintained appropriately. These records show staff acting in a timely way to support pupils who need help. For example, staff make same-day referrals

to the local authority to protect pupils when necessary. Leaders work well with external agencies, including social workers, to promote pupils' well-being.

- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Pupils are confident to approach all members of staff with problems or worries. These strong relationships ensure that adults know pupils very well. Consequently, pupils feel safe in school.
- Leaders have taken the necessary action to ensure that pre-employment checks for staff are completed and recorded accurately on the school's single central record.
- The standard is now met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii) and 21(3)(b)

- Leaders were unaware of their statutory duty to carry out some of the necessary pre-employment checks on staff at the time of the previous inspection in September 2021. They did not check whether staff were subject to a prohibition order, interim prohibition order or a direction made under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. Other information, such as dates of checks made in relation to staff's identity and their right to work in the United Kingdom, was not recorded on the single central record. Consequently, the school's single central record was incomplete and not compliant with the independent school standards.
- The proprietor and leaders acted quickly to improve the school's approach to checking the suitability of staff after the previous inspection. Leaders now complete the necessary pre-employment checks on staff. These checks include ensuring that staff are not subject to a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order or a direction made under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The proprietor has put a system of checks in place to ensure that the school's single central record continues to comply with statutory guidance.
- Leaders have made the required changes to ensure that the school's single central record complies with DfE guidelines. They have revised the format of the single central record so that it contains all necessary information. For example, the dates that pre-employment checks of applicants' identity and their right to work in the United Kingdom are now set out clearly on the record.
- The standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- At the time of the previous inspection in September 2021, leaders had failed to follow statutory guidance relating to pre-employment checks on staff. The specified content required in the single central record and the school's safeguarding policy did not have regard for the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Vetting of staff in relation to prohibition orders had not been carried out. Necessary information, including staff's right to work and identity checks, was not dated on the single central record. The safeguarding policy did not set out clearly the school's approach to dealing with peer-on-peer abuse.

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor and leaders have successfully implemented their action plans to strengthen the culture of safeguarding at the school. They have a strong commitment to the school. They are determined to ensure that pupils' welfare and safety is promoted through school procedures and policies. They are able to demonstrate how they will consistently meet the standards that were previously unmet.
- Leaders have put systems in place to ensure that all necessary checks are made about the suitability of staff. They have revised the school's single central record to ensure that these checks are recorded accurately. They introduced a new safeguarding policy and checked that all staff understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities.
- As a result, the standard is now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

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

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(2) The register referred to in sub-paragraph (1) may be kept in electronic form, provided that the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(i) S's identity was checked;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made;
 - 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e),
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 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—
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	138971
DfE registration number	330/6013
Inspection number	10225548

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Proprietor	Noel Thomas
Headteacher	Noel Thomas
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,000
Telephone number	0121 747 4430
Website	https://silverbirchschoo.com/
Email address	noelthomas@silverbirchschoo.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	11 to 13 June 2019

Information about this school

- Silver Birch School is a small, independent day school situated in Shard End, Birmingham. The school offers up to 24 places to pupils aged 14 to 16 who have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The proprietor took on the role of headteacher in October 2021.
- Pupils are referred to the school by local authorities and directly from schools. Three different local authorities currently place pupils at the school.
- All of the current pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), and several others are being assessed for an EHC plan.
- The school is located within Shard End Well-Being Centre. Pupils have access to facilities within the centre, including a sports hall, a gym and a dining area.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected in June 2019, when it was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The DfE required school leaders to prepare an action plan following a material change inspection in September 2021. Ofsted evaluated the plan on 16 December 2021. The plan was judged to be acceptable.
- The inspection was conducted without notice and lasted for one day.
- The inspection was focused on safeguarding and leadership and management.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher and designated safeguarding lead.
- The inspector met with members of staff, including the school business manager.
- The inspector held a discussion with a group of pupils.
- The inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding policy and looked at the single central record of employment checks on staff.

The school's proposed change to the age range of pupils

The school has applied to the DfE to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**

Inspection team

Jonathan Leonard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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