

Birchwood School

Ainscough Road, Birchwood, Warrington WA3 7PW

Inspection dates

10 October 2023

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 31(1), 32(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has put in place a suitable and up-to-date safeguarding policy. This policy is available on the school's website. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being. Safeguarding concerns and any subsequent actions taken are recorded in detail. The school contacts external agencies swiftly, should the need arise. These procedures are likely to remain suitable if the request for an increase in pupil numbers is granted.
- The proprietor body also makes the required pre-employment checks on staff and records them appropriately. The proprietor body's processes to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are likely to remain appropriate should the material change be agreed.

Paragraph 11, 12

- The proprietor body has ensured that appropriate health and safety policies and procedures are in place. The policy covers all required elements of health and safety, including fire safety. This policy will likely remain appropriate if the material change is approved.
- The proprietor body has ensured that an appropriate fire risk assessment is in place. Frequent checks are made on emergency lighting checks, fire extinguishers and fire alarms. Fire drills take place regularly.

Paragraph 14

- The proprietor body ensures that staff are deployed effectively in order to ensure pupils' welfare and safety. The proposed ratio of staff to pupils, along with the school's behaviour policy and existing practice around behaviour management, indicates that the supervision of pupils is likely to be appropriately organised.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The proprietor body has ensured that a clear risk assessment policy is in place. It also has many risk assessments that cover all aspects of activities that take place in and out of school. Pupils have individualised risk assessments. The risk assessment policy and associated risk assessments are likely to remain appropriate should the material change be granted.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the material change is granted.

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

Paragraph 17, 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3)

- The proprietor body ensures that the school completes the required checks on the suitability of staff before they work at the school.
- The proprietor body ensures that all appropriate pre-employment checks are included on the single central record. Consequently, it is likely that these standards will remain met if the increase in pupil numbers is granted.

Paragraph 19(2) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)

- The school makes occasional use of supply staff. The proprietor body ensures that the required checks are in place before supply staff work at the school. This is likely to be the case if the material change is approved.

Paragraph 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(6)

- Checks under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 are included on the school's single central record. These checks ensure that leaders, including members of the proprietor body, are suitable to manage a school. This is likely to continue to be the case if the material change is approved.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 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 school building has been extensively refurbished by the proprietor body to include additional space, which includes a spacious teaching room, a library and toilets.
- Toilet facilities are suitable, with an appropriate supply of cold water for toilets and hot and cold water for hand washing. The water temperature for hand washing does not present a scalding risk. Toilets are very well maintained. There are signs indicating that the water is not suitable for drinking.
- Drinking water is readily available and the source is suitably labelled and separate from the toilet areas. Pupils have access to drinking water throughout the day.
- There are separate boys' and girls' changing and shower facilities on the school site. These are clean and well appointed.

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

- The medical room has a bed, bedding and first-aid kit. There is also a lockable medicine cupboard. The room contains a sink with hot and cold running water. There is easy access to a toilet nearby.

Paragraph 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)

- The premises are maintained to a high standard. Pupils' health, safety and welfare are ensured.
- Classrooms and other areas are spacious and have suitable light and acoustic conditions. External lighting is provided to ensure that people can enter and leave the building safely during hours of darkness. Access through main doorways and gates is via keypads and magnetic fobs.

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

- Pupils have access to a large outdoor area that is safe. It is an appropriate space for pupils to play in when not in lessons. Physical education activities are regularly timetabled in accordance with the school's curriculum requirements.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

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 shows a good knowledge and understanding of the standards. Members of the proprietor body work closely with leaders to assure themselves that standards are met. They hold leaders to account effectively to ensure that the school continues to meet the standards.
- The proprietor body has ensured that all standards checked during this inspection are likely to be met if the proposed increase in pupil numbers is granted.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed material change is granted.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an appropriate accessibility plan in place which ensures that Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 is likely to be met.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	148566
DfE registration number	877/6014
Inspection number	10307718

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Birchwood Children's Services Ltd
Chair	Salman Ugardar
Headteacher	Deb Chappel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,500 to £80,000
Telephone number	01925 202448
Website	www.bwchildservices.com
Email address	deb.chappel@bwchildservices.com
Date of previous standard inspection	21 to 24 June 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	8 to 19	No change	No change
Number of pupils on the school roll	25	30	30

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	25	30
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	25	30
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	25	30
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	25	30

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5	6
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	2	3

Information about this school

- The school is based in Ainscough Road, Birchwood, Warrington WA3 7PW.
- The school caters for pupils with autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. A variety of local authorities place pupils at the school.
- There are currently 22 pupils on the school's roll. The school is currently registered for a maximum of 25 pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This material change inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor body requested an increase in pupil numbers. This is the first material change inspection in respect of this particular change that the school has applied to make.
- The inspector only inspected the education provision at this school.
- The last full standard inspection took place in June 2022.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders, staff and the chair of the proprietor body. The inspector spoke with a group of pupils about their experience of school and about safeguarding matters. The inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector had a tour of the premises and checked the suitability of the premises against the relevant standards.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents and policies in relation to the health, well-being and safety of pupils. This included the safeguarding policy.
- The inspector scrutinised the single central record and discussed leaders' safer recruitment processes.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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