

Inspection of Weston Point College

Picow Farm Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4UN

Inspection dates: 31 October to 2 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Weston Point College. Many have had negative experiences of education before they started at this school and have missed extensive periods of learning. Pupils appreciate the time and support that staff give them. This helps them to settle into the school day and to be ready for learning.

Most pupils said that they are considerably happier in this school and come to school more than previously. Nonetheless, some pupils do not attend as well as they should. The school is taking significant action to help these pupils to improve their attendance.

The school's curriculum does not enable pupils to study a sufficiently broad range of subjects, nor is the curriculum clear enough about the important knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. Nevertheless, the school has high expectations for all pupils' achievement. Pupils want to succeed and many achieve well in the subjects that they have studied by the end of their time in the school. In these subjects, pupils gain qualifications that enable them to move on to the next stage of their education.

The school has high and clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand these, and staff support them well so that they can rise to them. The school has a calm and positive atmosphere, and pupils behave appropriately.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has developed a curriculum that is designed to meet the specific needs and interests of pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). It has ensured that the curriculum engages pupils and encourages them to prioritise their learning after significant amounts of missed education.

The school has not ensured that there is a broad range of subjects for pupils to study or that there is sufficient breadth within subjects. For example, pupils do not study art and design, languages or music. In addition to this, the school's curriculum plans and schemes of work do not provide teachers with the information that they need about the essential knowledge to teach pupils and the order in which they should teach it. Consequently, some pupils do not acquire the breadth and depth of knowledge across the curriculum that they need for their future lives.

Staff are skilled at capturing pupils' interests and needs in lessons. They choose activities that are appropriate to engage pupils and to give them a sense of achievement. Pupils respond well and as a result, successfully acquire new knowledge and skills over time.

The school has prioritised reading to ensure that pupils read a wide range of texts often. It has successfully established a well-resourced library which pupils regularly

visit during lesson times and social times. Most pupils read with confidence and fluency. However, the school has not ensured that pupils' reading knowledge is routinely checked. Furthermore, there is not a systematic approach to help those pupils who are still in the early stages of reading, or those with gaps in their reading knowledge, to catch up quickly and effectively. This means that some pupils do not have the reading knowledge that they need for future learning.

Pupils generally behave well in their lessons and around the school. They respond positively to requests made by staff and follow established routines. Staff are accomplished at supporting pupils with a wide range of complex needs and vulnerabilities. This helps pupils to feel safe, cared for and accepted.

The school has developed a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education curriculum. Staff adapt this curriculum successfully to ensure that pupils learn about pertinent dangers and risks and how they can make informed and safe choices in their lives. Pupils also learn about other communities and learn to consider views and beliefs that are different from their own.

The school has prioritised building pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils value the extensive enrichment programme that the school has developed. Through a wide range of carefully chosen, extra-curricular activities and experiences, pupils develop resilience and independence. They also learn how to behave appropriately in different situations, for example when eating out and socialising in restaurants and cafes.

The school has designed an appropriate, impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance programme. For example, pupils have the opportunity to complete a number of supported work placements during their time at the school. This helps pupils to think carefully about the next stage of their education and their future lives. Pupils are keen to gain the qualifications that they need. They are successful in securing places in post-16 provision.

The proprietor body does not have sufficient oversight of whether the school consistently meets the independent school standards (the standards) for the quality of education that pupils receive. It does not have adequate information about the school's curriculum. Moreover, its systems to hold leaders to account are underdeveloped. The school has the capacity to improve. Nonetheless, a lack of external governance has contributed to some weaknesses in the curriculum that have not been identified or addressed.

The school meets the health and safety and premises requirements. Classrooms are bright, clean and well resourced. There are a number of breakout spaces for pupils to use when they struggle to manage their own feelings and emotions. For example, some pupils value the opportunity to look after the guinea pigs and rabbit in school. There is a spacious outdoor area that pupils can spend time in at breaktimes and where they can participate in physical education and activities.

Policies, including an effective safeguarding policy that meets the current government requirements, are made available to parents and carers on the school's website.

Leaders have ensured that the school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The school has prioritised the workload and well-being of staff. Staff have the time and resources that they need to be able to focus on their teaching. Many staff appreciate the range of professional development opportunities that the school provides. The school also engages successfully with parents, local authorities and social workers to further support pupils' education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor body has not held leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. This has led to some weaknesses in the curriculum. The proprietor body must ensure that there are clear lines of accountability to hold leaders to account. It should also ensure that it provides effective challenge and support to school leaders.
- The school has not ensured that the curriculum is broad enough for all pupils. This means that some pupils do not acquire knowledge across a sufficiently wide range of subjects or within some subjects. The school must ensure that pupils learn a broad and rich curriculum so that they can gain the knowledge that they need for their future lives.
- The school has not ensured that the curriculum in several subjects provides sufficient information about the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. This means that some pupils do not build knowledge in a logical way over time. The school should ensure that it has identified the important knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which they should learn it.
- The school has not implemented an effective strategy to support pupils who are in the early stages of reading or have gaps in their reading knowledge. This means that some pupils are not catching up with their peers as quickly as they could. The school should ensure that it identifies and supports weaker readers to help them catch up quickly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted

Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	135749
DfE registration number	876/6013
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10286419
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Proprietor	Bridge4Learning Education Services Limited
Chair	Christopher Brannan
Headteacher	Katie Anderson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,057.80 to £52,100.69
Telephone number	01928 574667
Website	www.bridge4learning.org
Email address	katie.anderson@bridge4learning.org
Dates of previous inspection	9 to 11 July 2019

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection was on 9 to 11 July 2019. An emergency inspection, commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), was on 20 November 2020.
- The school is located at Picow Farm Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4UN.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous standard inspection.
- At the time of the previous standard inspection, the school was operating from three sites. At the time of the additional emergency inspection in November 2020, the school had closed one of the sites and was operating from two sites. Since the previous inspection, the school has closed the second site and is currently operating from the main site only.
- The proprietor named on the DfE's Get Information about Schools register is Allen Baynes. Allen Baynes is a director of the proprietor body, Bridge4Learning Education Services Limited. The proprietor body has not informed the DfE of this discrepancy.
- All pupils who attend this school have an EHC plan for social, emotional and mental health needs and have been permanently excluded from education prior to attending this school.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- At the time of the inspection, there were a very small number of students in the sixth form at the school.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the members of the proprietor body, the headteacher, other school leaders and staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to the standards and the curriculum.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses from the Ofsted survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences in school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime, in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and PSHE education. They met leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They also considered the curriculum across some other subject areas and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school premises to check the suitability of the premises and accommodation against the relevant standards.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.

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.

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