

Balance Alternative Provision

The White Building, Lock Hill, Ferrybridge, Knottingley, West Yorkshire WF11 8NE

Inspection date

25 October 2023

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

Paragraphs 2(1)–2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i), 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)–2A(1)(g), 2A(2), 3–3(g) and 4

- The school's proposed curriculum is broad in content and well sequenced. The core curriculum consists of English, mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and science. If well implemented, this curriculum will ensure that pupils have the linguistic, mathematical and scientific knowledge and skills to support them when they transition back to mainstream education.
- Pupils will be dual registered with their host school. Leaders understand how to adapt the learning offer to ensure that lessons are accessible to those pupils who arrive at different points in the academic year or for those who attend part time. Leaders intend to adapt lessons for individual pupils using information gathered about pupils' attainment from the host school as well as through their own baseline assessments.
- Pupils will receive daily, discrete PSHE lessons to support their social and emotional development. In the PSHE curriculum, age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) lessons are planned. The content also covers fundamental British values and equality.
- There is a written policy for RSE in place that explains parents' rights to withdraw their child from all, or part of, the sex education provided as part of the RSE curriculum offer. This policy is accessible online so that parents can view this.
- Pupils who struggle to read will receive daily phonics interventions from a subject specialist. Staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver the curriculum well.
- During the afternoons, staff will provide a thematic curriculum that covers the breadth of the foundation subjects, with opportunities to develop pupils' vocational interests.
- There is a comprehensive careers programme in place, with planned opportunities for pupils to meet with a careers guidance officer. Leaders aim to ensure that the Gatsby benchmarks are covered.

- Leaders will make regular checks on pupils' knowledge in English, mathematics and science. This includes checks on their well-being. Half-termly reports will be sent to the host school. The reporting form is comprehensive. It will cover what pupils have learned during their time at the school and what they need to work on in the future.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met.

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

All paragraphs

- Throughout the proposed curriculum, there are specific references to values, such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect. Pupils will learn about different faiths and beliefs. The proposed curriculum encourages respect for other people, paying regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.
- Leaders understand their responsibility to preclude the teaching of partisan political views. Arrangements are in place to ensure that visitors are not able to promote such views.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

- A suitable safeguarding policy that has regard to the appropriate statutory guidance is available on the school's website. Leaders have secure reporting procedures and systems in place ready for staff to report any safeguarding concerns. There is a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a deputy DSL who have received the appropriate training to fulfil this role.
- The proprietor has undertaken safer recruitment training.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c) and 10

- The behaviour policy is an appropriate document that sets out clear expectations of pupils' conduct. It also describes the process for staff to follow, so that pupils can be supported in managing their behaviour.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The health and safety policy has been published on the school's website. Leaders make regular checks on the premises, such as legionella testing. Leaders were able to share the detailed records they keep of their compliance checks.
- Leaders use an external company to audit the fire equipment and check for compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Leaders make regular checks on the fire safety systems and equipment, including the emergency lighting. They understand why some checks and procedures such as fire drills need to be made more frequently when new pupils join the school. All classrooms are included as part of the existing fire procedures, including in the provision of fire extinguishers and alarms. During the tour of the school, it was evident that fire escapes are clearly identified and are not obstructed.

- The appointed person for first aid has received the appropriate training. There is appropriate signage around the building alerting staff and pupils to who this is and the nearest first-aid boxes. Any accidents that take place will be recorded in an accident book. Leaders will notify parents and carers immediately if an accident occurs.
- A suitable number of staff are deployed effectively meet pupils' needs in the current alternative provision setting. Leaders plan to employ further staff as the number of pupils increases in order to ensure that suitable supervision is in place.
- The admissions register will record the appropriate details of all pupils joining the school. The current attendance register for the alternative provision is maintained in accordance with the registration regulations. The codes used to record pupils' attendance at the alternative provision are correct.
- The risk assessment policy is available on the school's website. Risk assessments are comprehensive.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 17, 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c) and 21(1)–21(7)(b)

- Leaders make the correct pre-employment checks, using up-to-date guidance, to ensure the suitability of staff before they start working at the school. These checks include identity checks, the right to work in the United Kingdom and an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- All pre-employment checks for the current staff employed at the unregistered alternative provision are recorded on the school's single central record. This includes checks under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. These ensure that leaders, including members of the proprietor body, are suitable to manage a school.
- The school does not use supply staff to cover staff absence. However, leaders are aware of the procedures that they should follow in the event of employing agency staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with pupils.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)–28(2)(b) and 29(1)–29(1)(b)

- The premises are well maintained and provide a safe environment for pupils to learn and play. The school is tidy and maintained to a high standard. Classrooms, stairs and corridors are well lit, ventilated and carpeted to ensure good acoustics. The space available for pupils during social times is appropriate.
- The school has a suitable medical room with handwashing facilities situated on the first floor next to a toilet. This room contains a bed and first-aid equipment.

- There are suitable toilet facilities next to the teaching spaces. Shower facilities are available on the school premises. The water temperature does not present a scalding risk to pupils.
- The school has an adequate supply of running water. Suitable signage indicates the availability of drinking water.
- Pupils have access to an outdoor area that is safe. Pupils can play when not in lessons and engage in physical education (PE). PE activities will be regularly timetabled in accordance with the school's curriculum requirements. Some of these sessions will be conducted at a local sports centre. Leaders have risk assessments in place to ensure pupils' safety when using this site.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

All paragraphs

- The school's website provides access to a range of policies relating to the independent school standards, such as the safeguarding policy, risk assessment policy and information about how to make a complaint.
- There is a range of documentation available on the school's website, including curriculum information. It contains the details of the proprietor and head of provision's contact details.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the processes they must undertake to support pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Leaders know how to account for the funding of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 and 33(a)–33(K)

- The complaints policy meets all statutory requirements. It outlines all the required stages. During the inspection, a small amendment was made to the policy for clarification.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- Leaders have high aspirations of what they want pupils to achieve. Leaders aim to equip pupils with the skills and knowledge needed to become resilient, independent learners and to teach them to make appropriate choices. There is a clear vision in place underpinned by the core values of 'resilience, respect and responsibility'.

- Leaders demonstrate the knowledge required to run this independent school successfully. They have a commitment to providing an appropriate quality of education for pupils.
- Leaders ensure that systems are in place to monitor and track behaviour and safeguarding concerns. This means that pupils are protected from harm and neglect and the risks associated with their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role to ensure that the independent standards are met.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have an appropriate accessibility policy in place that 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.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	150171
DfE registration number	384/6014
Inspection number	10305670

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	Day school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Balance AP Ltd
Chair	Lucy Greaves
Headteacher	Andrew Dean (Head of Provision)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£120 to £135 a day
Telephone number	07824 905193
Website	www.balanceap.co.uk
Email address	info@balanceap.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	19
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	3 (part time)
Total hours operating as a school per week	37.5
Total hours of teaching provided per week	22.5

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16	11 to 16	11 to 16

Number of pupils on the school roll	Up to 10 a day	Up to 24 a day	Up to 24 a day
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Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	2	15
Number of part-time pupils	13	Not known
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	12	Not known
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	3	Not known
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	0	Not known

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	2	3
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	1
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	1

Information about this proposed school

- Balance Alternative Provider is an independent school that supports pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and those with autism. Some of the pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils are dual registered.
- Leaders do not currently make use of supply staff. However, they know the checks that they must make if they use supply staff in the future.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was running as an unregistered school provision for 15 pupils.

- The school does not have a religious character.
- Leaders do not intend to use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education. The purpose of the inspection was to determine whether the school is likely to meet the independent school standards prior to opening as a registered school.
- This was the school's second pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, the executive headteacher, the deputy executive headteacher and the head of school.
- The inspector reviewed documents and policies associated with the independent school standards. The inspector toured the premises, accompanied by the proprietors.

Inspection team

Jenny Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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