

Birchwood School Bolton

Milnthorpe Road, Brightmet, Bolton BL2 6PD

Inspection date

6 August 2024

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

- The proposed school intends to provide full-time education for pupils. It has designed a curriculum to meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The plans for the curriculum are based on those already used successfully in the other school operated by the proprietor. The profile of pupils' ages and needs at the proposed school is anticipated to be similar to that of the proprietor's other school.
- Plans and schemes of work for each key stage follow the national curriculum where appropriate. Pupils will be taught a broad range of subjects. The school has also developed a specialist curriculum for pupils who need it. This curriculum will emphasise pupils' language and communication development. Pupils at the early stages of reading will follow a recognised phonics programme.
- At key stage 4, pupils will work towards recognised qualifications. These are likely to include functional skills qualifications and a range of nationally accredited vocational programmes. The school proposes to offer a similar range of options at key stage 5.
- The proposed school does not anticipate admitting a large number of students aged 16 to 19 to the school. Nevertheless, it has made provision for suitable schemes of work which are likely to meet these students' needs.
- Pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education will be taught through timetabled lessons. Aspects of PSHE education will also be woven into the wider curriculum. Pupils' social and emotional development is considered a central part of the proposed school's provision. The PSHE education curriculum will also include the development of life skills and age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education.
- All secondary-age pupils will receive careers education. The proposed school has made suitable arrangements for the provision of impartial careers information, advice and guidance. This will be tailored to the individual needs and interests of pupils.

- The proposed school intends for pupils to be well prepared for, and contribute successfully to, life in British society.

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

- The proprietor is in the process of recruiting the staff who will work at the school. The school has a clear idea of the calibre and expertise that it is looking for in its new teachers and other staff.
- Teaching in the proposed school is likely to enable pupils and students to make progress in line with their age and aptitudes. Evidence from the school's intended curriculum documents supports this. Staff will be expected to match their subject teaching strategies to pupils' needs.
- The proposed school is well resourced, with a range of appropriate books and equipment that will be appealing to the intended age range of pupils.
- The proprietor and leaders are committed to providing a high-quality education for pupils. Their knowledge, skills and experience will enable them to support teachers to do this successfully if the school opens.

Paragraph 4

- The school has a suitable assessment policy in place. This sets out how staff will use information from a variety of assessments that will be carried out when pupils join the school. This is likely to help staff plan pupils' learning in detail. Staff will use continuous assessment of pupils' learning to ensure that pupils make progress towards the targets in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Leaders intend to provide parents and carers with information about their children's progress on a regular basis. This information will also be provided to local authorities to support statutory reviews of pupils' EHC plans.
- The independent school standards ('the standards') in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b)–5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d)–5(d)(iii)

- The proposed school has planned for each subject to contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Schemes of work also show that the active promotion of fundamental British values will be an important part of the school's provision. This includes values such as tolerance and respect, together with the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of being a British citizen.
- The proposed curriculum also shows how pupils will learn about different faiths, cultures and religions.
- The proposed school intends to provide activities to support pupils' social development such as guided exploration of the local area and visits to shops and cafes. These activities will be designed to help to prepare pupils for adulthood.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- The proprietor 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 proposed school.
- The proprietor plans to appoint a suitably qualified designated safeguarding lead (DSL). In addition, it is intended that other senior staff will also be trained to DSL level. Furthermore, all new staff will receive appropriate induction, safeguarding training and regular updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism, sexual exploitation, and online safety.

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

- The school's proposed behaviour policy sets out suitably high expectations of pupils' conduct, alongside leaders' and staff's responsibilities. The proposed school has taken the needs of pupils with SEND into consideration when devising the policy. There is an appropriate system which the proposed school intends to use to record incidents of serious misbehaviour and the response to them.
- The school's proposed 'preventing bullying' policy is appropriate. It explains the various types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. This policy makes clear how the school intends to respond to bullying, including by educating pupils about respect and tolerance for others.

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

- The proposed school has a comprehensive health and safety policy written to ensure compliance with relevant laws. There are systems in place to ensure frequent checks on the state of the premises. Appropriate records of these checks, and any associated maintenance, are in place.
- The proprietor has arranged for a wide range of external audits and assessments to be carried out by competent and well-qualified contractors. These include fire-safety, gas-safety and electrical-installation checks. A programme of routine inspection and maintenance has been established to ensure that the standards in this part are likely to continue to be met.
- The proposed school has an appropriate first-aid policy in place. It is intended that staff will undergo first-aid training before the school opens.
- Documentation provided by the school includes detailed risk assessments that demonstrate a secure understanding of the management of risk. The school was able to provide examples of how these risk assessments may be appropriately modified based on individual pupil's needs.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a) to 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(c), 21(6)

- The proprietor understands their responsibility to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. It understands the requirement to complete the required pre-employment checks on staff before they begin working at the school.

- An electronic single central register (SCR) is in place. It is well-organised and enables the school to record the essential checks made as part of the recruitment process. All of the required checks have been completed for the staff who have already been appointed, including the members of the proprietor body.
- The school does not anticipate needing to employ agency staff. Nor does it intend to use volunteers. Nevertheless, the school is clear about its responsibility to check the suitability of such people if this does occur. The SCR has been set up to record these checks should they be required.
- The proprietor has carried out the appropriate checks to ensure that those who hold leadership or governance roles have not been prohibited from the leadership and management of a school under section 128 of the 2008 Act.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a) to 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a) to 24(1)(c), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a) to 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)

- The proposed school's extensive premises have been refurbished to a high standard. The building is suitably equipped to meet the requirements of the intended curriculum and to provide for pupils' welfare and safety.
- There is sufficient classroom and social space for the intended final number of pupils. The proprietor has also provided the facilities that are necessary for the pupils that the school will cater for, such as therapeutic areas and comfortable 'break-out' spaces. Provision has been made for specialist art rooms, a hair salon and a pupil kitchen where food technology and life skills lessons will be taught.
- All building work has been completed. Corridors are spacious and free from clutter. The toilet and washing facilities, showers and medical facilities are suitable. Toilets can be locked from the inside to provide the user with privacy. The premises are fully accessible to users with disabilities. This includes the first floor, which is accessible by stairs or lift.
- Classrooms, corridors and shared areas, such as the main hall, are well lit. Rooms are well ventilated and fit for their intended purpose.
- The arrangements for the safety of people who use the premises have been carefully considered. External lighting has been installed, as well as automatic emergency lighting, to aid the safe entry to and exit from the building.
- Drinking-water is clearly labelled and is available throughout the building. Washing facilities are also available throughout the building. The temperature of the hot water does not pose a scalding risk.

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

- The proposed school has an attractive outdoor area which is safe, secure and well-maintained. It will be available for pupils to play outside as well as for PE lessons. However, the space is not currently large enough to accommodate the school's full proposed number of pupils. There are plans to expand the available space through the acquisition of adjoining land, however this is unlikely to happen before the school

opens. Due to this, the inspector recommends that the school's requested maximum capacity should be reduced.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)–32(1)(k), 32(2)–32(2)(d), 32(3)–32(3)(g)

- The website for the proposed school is well organised. It provides parents with the policies and information required.
- The website is set up so that the school can publish further required information once it is open. For example, inspection reports and information about pupils' academic performance.
- The school has established suitable templates for regular reporting to parents about their child's progress, attainment and emotional well-being. In addition, the school intends to provide detailed information to local authorities about the provision for each pupil who has an EHC plan.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a)–33(k)

- The proposed school's complaints policy meets the requirements of the standards. It sets out the process for making a complaint, both at an informal and a formal stage. The policy sets out appropriate timescales and what complainants can expect at each stage. It also identifies a suitable person to act as an independent reviewer.
- The complaints policy is available on the proposed school's website.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed 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, and others with leadership and management responsibility in the school, demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding appropriate to their roles.
- The staff already appointed, including the headteacher, have suitable qualifications and experience to carry out their roles effectively. Further expertise will be provided by staff from the proprietor's other school.
- The school has sensible plans for increasing the school's intake gradually. This is linked to a sound staff recruitment strategy. This is likely to ensure that the needs of pupils can continue to be met as the proposed school grows.
- The proprietor has ensured that there are appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the standards and ensuring that they are consistently met.
- The proprietor has made arrangements for an independent governing body. This governing body will provide oversight and strategic guidance to the school. Further recruitment of skilled governors is planned if the school opens.

- The proprietor is aware of how vulnerable the pupils who will attend the school are likely to be. It has ensured that the premises of the school are suitable to help ensure the welfare, health and safety of these pupils.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proposed school's premises have been refurbished to be accessible to people with disabilities. The proposed school intends to adapt the curriculum and relevant policies to meet pupils' learning needs.
- The proprietor has ensured that the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are 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	150807
DfE registration number	350/6021
Inspection number	10357067

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Birchwood Children's Services Ltd
Chair	Deborah Chappel
Headteacher	Deborah Chappel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£80,000 - £110,000
Telephone number	01204 201396
Website	bwchildservices.com/birchwood-school-bolton-home/
Email address	deb.chappel@bwchildservices.com

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	5 to 18	5 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	120	80

Reason for inspector's recommendation

- At the time of this inspection, the proposed school's outdoor space was not large enough to accommodate 120 pupils safely. The school has plans to increase the size of its outdoor space, however these plans are unlikely to be realised before the school's proposed opening date.

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	80
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	80
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	80
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	As required

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	3	25
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	4	30

Information about this proposed school

- This proposed school will operate from two-storey premises located at Milnthorpe Road, Bolton BL2 6PD. The building is a former residential care home for adults which has undergone extensive renovation. It will be used solely by the proposed school.
- The school intends to cater for pupils with autism. It is expected that all pupils will have an EHC plan. Places at the school will be commissioned by local authorities.
- The proprietor is Birchwood Children's Services Limited. There are two directors, one of whom is the chair of the proprietor body and is also the proposed headteacher. In addition, it is intended that the school will have an independent governing body.
- The proprietor also operates one other registered independent school.

- The school does not anticipate having a large number of students over 16 years of age. The school intends only to admit such students if they are continuing their studies from key stage 4 because of their specific needs.
- The school does not intend to use any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to determine if the school is likely to meet the standards if the DfE approves the request to register this proposed school.
- This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, the other director of Birchwood Children's Services Limited, the chair of the proposed governing body and leaders from the proprietor's other school.
- The inspector made a tour of the school site, both internally and externally, to check the suitability and safety of the premises.
- The inspector scrutinised and evaluated a wide range of documents provided by the school, including safeguarding information, statutory policies and the proposed school's curriculum.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024