

BIRCHFIELD SCHOOL

Harriot's Hayes Lane, Albrighton, Nr Wolverhampton, Shropshire, WV7 3AF

12 JULY 2017

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Birchfield School is a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of 2 and 13. Established in 1935 as a preparatory school, it moved in 1962 to its present rural site near Albrighton in Shropshire. Birchfield Educational Trust Limited is a registered charity and is responsible for its governance. The board of governors, which consists of a chairman and seven governors, oversees the work of the headmaster and senior leadership. At the time of the visit there were 148 pupils in the school: 85 boys and 63 girls. The school is organised into two sections: a pre-prep for 19 children in Reception and also pupils in Years 1 and 2; and a prep for pupils in Years 3 to 8. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 52. There are three pupils with a statement of SEND or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Most pupils with SEND have dyslexia, dyspraxia and related learning difficulties. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The previous ISI inspection in February 2017 was a regulatory compliance inspection.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an unannounced Additional Inspection at the request of the Department for Education which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, particularly those concerned with the welfare, health and safety of pupils: safeguarding, health and safety, and risk assessment; and the quality of leadership and management.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7 (a) and (b); EYFS requirements 3.4 – 3.8]; Provision of information to parents [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c)]

The school meets the regulations.

The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means which pay due regard to current statutory guidance. Safeguarding is correctly managed and procedures are regularly reviewed, including a formal annual review by governors. All staff, including those with designated responsibility for safeguarding have appropriate levels of training, attend regular update training and have a clear understanding of safeguarding

and their responsibilities. Pupils have been provided with safeguarding training by the NSPCC. Suitable arrangements are in place for the induction of new staff, which includes training in safeguarding. The school therefore meets the action point of the previous inspection to ensure that all staff have received suitable safeguarding training.

The school liaises effectively with the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB). It fully understands that prompt action must be taken if concerns are expressed about a child. The school seeks external advice about potential safeguarding concerns when required and understands that any referral to the appropriate authority should be made in the light of that advice. The school safeguarding records are clear, suitably detailed, well organised and follow relevant regulatory guidance. The SSCB briefing meetings are attended by designated safeguarding leaders. Consequently, the school has met the action points of the previous inspection with respect to the above matters.

The procedures set down in the safeguarding policy for dealing with allegations against members of staff have now been adjusted by the school given the uncertainty expressed by members of staff interviewed about how they should act when such allegations arise. There have been no referrals to the Disqualification and Barring Service (DBS) or National Collage for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) since the previous inspection. The pupils interviewed said that they feel happy and safe at the school and that the teachers are always willing to listen to them. Members of staff understand and adhere to the school's code of conduct; the school therefore meets the related action point raised at the previous inspection.

The school has carried out all required pre-appointment checks including those relating to prohibition from teaching and management, thus meeting the action point of the previous inspection to ensure that the regulatory guidance regarding the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors is followed effectively.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety; risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 11 and 16]

The school meets the regulations.

Members of staff are suitably trained in health and safety. Regular specialist checks are made with regard to electrical and gas appliances, water quality and legionella, and asbestos. There is a strategic approach to risk assessment and for the far greater part this has been implemented appropriately. However, the school should review its risk assessment for the possibility of unauthorised access to the site and to school buildings and implement a strengthened approach.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25]

The school meets the regulation.

The premises and accommodation are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety. Suitable records of maintenance are maintained and remedial action is taken as and when required.

Leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (a), (b) and (c)]

The school meets the regulation.

The leadership and management of the school and its governors have ensured that the school has fulfilled effectively actions required of them by the previous inspection. They demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards relating to safeguarding and staff recruitment checks are now met.

Although the arrangements in place to ensure the health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors and to assess risks posed by the possibility of unauthorised access to the school site and to its buildings are generally adequate, the need for these arrangements to be strengthened further is recognised by the school and action on this front was planned for the summer vacation immediate after this visit.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.