



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

## **Advice Note for a Material Change Visit**

**Birchfield School**

**April 2020**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**



## School's details

<b>School</b>	Birchfield School			
<b>DfE number</b>	893/6014			
<b>Address</b>	Birchfield School Harriott's Hayes Lane Albrighton Wolverhampton West Midlands WV7 3AF			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 372534			
<b>Email address</b>	smorris@birchfieldschool.co.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sarah Morris			
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Phillip's Education Group			
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	114			
	<b>EYFS</b>	16	<b>Juniors</b>	91
	<b>Seniors</b>	7		
<b>Date of visit</b>	23 April 2021			

## 1. Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Birchfield School is a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of 4 and 13 years, including an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting which is within the main school. Established in 1935 as a preparatory school, it moved in 1962 to its present rural site near Albrighton in Shropshire. In November 2020, the school joined the proprietary body St Phillip's Education Group and now operates as Birchfield School Limited. An educational advisory group supports the proprietor in overseeing the work of the school. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 13. There are two pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Most pupils with SEND have dyslexia and related learning difficulties. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- 1.2 The previous ISI inspection was an additional inspection in January 2018.

### Purpose of the visit

- 1.3 This was an announced material change visit at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to extend the age range of the school from 4-to 13 to 4 to 16 and increase the number of pupils from 164 to 260.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2 (curriculum)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 4 (framework for pupil performance)	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 25 and 29 (premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

## 2. Inspection findings

### Quality of education provided – curriculum [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 A suitable written curriculum policy is implemented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for all required areas of learning. Planning takes into account the needs and aptitudes of all pupils including those with an EHC plan and planning has begun for the needs of pupils in the age range 14 to 16. Support from external specialists is provided for pupils if required. The curriculum is appropriately structured to ensure that all age groups have opportunity to learn and make progress. The personal, social, health and economics (PSHE) programme reflects the school's aims and ethos and promotes mutual respect appropriately, including for those with protected characteristics. All pupils are provided with appropriate relationships education and older pupils in Years 7 and 8 with relationships and sex education and careers advice. Current arrangements suggest that the school is likely to meet the standards when the age range of pupils is extended.

### Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 Teaching staff demonstrate good subject knowledge and prepare and deliver lessons that stimulate pupils' interest and motivation to learn. These well-planned lessons take into account the needs and aptitudes of pupils with a range of needs and extend the most able appropriately. This ensures an equality of opportunity for all. Current arrangements suggest that the school is likely to continue this when the age range of pupils is extended. A suitable structure for assessment ensures that pupils progress is tracked to enable appropriate interventions to be provided where necessary. Pupils behave well in lessons and respond promptly to the high expectations set by staff. Throughout the school, resources are of good quality, appropriate for respective age ranges and support learning well. During discussions, pupils commented that teaching staff are passionate about their subjects, are always supportive and that they enjoy their learning.

### Quality of education provided – framework for pupil performance [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 4]

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 Suitable assessment processes ensure pupils' attainment is appropriately tracked to ensure their continuing good progress across the age range. A suitable outline of the assessment structure for the extended age group is in place.

### Quality of education provided – spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.7 The school meets the standard.
- 2.8 The PSHE programme ensures that all pupils receive suitable guidance to support their personal development needs. There is a strong focus on the promotion of British values throughout the school, encouraging respect, tolerance and empathy towards the needs of others, including those with protected characteristics. This was evident in the positive interactions observed in lessons, between pupils and between staff and pupils. Current arrangements suggest that the school is likely to continue to meet requirements when the age range of pupils is extended. During discussions, pupils articulated that rules are necessary to ensure equality and fairness within society. Visitors to the school, trips to

religious venues and a range of themed opportunities for sustainability and current affairs engender pupils' understanding of differing cultures and the needs of a diverse world. Pupils develop age appropriate democratic knowledge through classroom debates, debating club and school council membership elections.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]**

### **Safeguarding policy**

- 2.9 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.10 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

### **Safeguarding implementation**

- 2.11 The school meets the standard.
- 2.12 Safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively in line with current statutory guidance, including in the EYFS. The school provides appropriate support for pupils' needs, including listening to children, giving a response and taking appropriate action when concerns are raised. The school's arrangements are sufficient to meet the needs of older pupils when the proposed change in age range is implemented. All staff have received suitable training on recent changes to statutory guidance and online safety. New staff complete a comprehensive induction process to ensure they understand their safeguarding responsibilities, including details of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Part 1 and Annex A, the staff code of conduct, whistleblowing procedures, procedures for children missing education and the school's behaviour policy. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy have sufficient status and authority to undertake their roles, and have appropriate levels of training, which is in line with local procedures. The DSL provides regular informal updates to staff and opportunities for discussion on any changes to safeguarding policy and its implementation.
- 2.13 Staff have a full understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They recognise the importance of 'early help' strategies, know how to report any concerns about pupils or other staff, and do so appropriately. They understand the varied types of pupil-on-pupil abuse and the seriousness of such behaviours. They understand how to report any concerns about senior leaders. Appropriate records for safeguarding concerns are maintained, which are regularly monitored by the DSL. These show timely and appropriate liaison with both parents and local agencies. Supported by an experienced advisory group, the proprietor undertakes an annual safeguarding review with due diligence, demonstrating rigour in their oversight of arrangements. Suitable recruitment procedures are provided for. Pupils, during discussions, commented that they are aware of safeguarding arrangements in school, including for on-line safety; they articulated that staff are very approachable, should they have a concern or worry.

## **Premises and accommodation – medical facilities, maintenance and outdoor space for PE and play [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23, 24, 25 and 29]**

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 All areas of the school are maintained in a good state of repair and regularly monitored for safety; any maintenance issues are promptly rectified. The school has taken appropriate steps to ensure that the premises provide suitable accommodation for the proposed changes in age range. Recent renovation of existing buildings has ensured that classrooms and specialist teaching areas such as the science laboratory and art and design technology facilities are ready to provide appropriate accommodation for older pupils up to the age of 16. Classroom areas are suitably sized, have good acoustics to promote

learning and are well organised, to accommodate the numbers of pupils within each year group. Toilet and washing facilities are plentiful around the school and are appropriate for both the ages and needs of pupils. Medical facilities are appropriate for the number and age range of pupils. External areas are spacious, enabling provision for pupils' physical education and outdoor play and are suitable for all ages of pupils.

### **Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]**

- 2.16 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.

### **Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]**

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently. Planning for the proposed change in age range is suitably thorough to make it likely that the standards can be met with regard to older pupils. Proprietorial review is thorough to ensure that policies are effectively implemented in practice and actively promote the well-being of all pupils.

### **3. Regulatory action points**

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this visit, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this visit.

## 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 It is recommended that the application for the material change be approved. The school has taken all appropriate measures to support the proposed change to the age range and increased number of pupils attending the school. This includes the appointment of additional specialist staff and significant changes to the premises and facilities, with a particular emphasis on ensuring appropriate provision for older pupils to the age of 16. Policies, the curriculum and supporting plans and schemes of work for the older age group have been developed to support appropriate provision for pupils through to GCSE. An assessment process appropriate for the older age range has been outlined. The renovation of existing buildings previously used for accommodating boarders and the addition of refurbished buildings for specialist subject teaching will provide suitable accommodation for the proposed increase in pupil numbers from 164 to 260.



## **5. Summary of evidence**

- 5.1 The inspector held discussions with the head teacher, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the proprietor and chair of the advisory group. She visited different areas of the school, observed lessons and talked with groups of pupils. She scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.