

Inspection of Willow Tree Park

Willow Tree Park, Beech House, Booths Lane, Lymm, Cheshire WA13 0GH

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 January 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive each morning excited and enthusiastic to get their day started. The atmosphere in classrooms and around corridors is energetic and positive. Pupils are happy to be in school because they have adults who look after and support them exceptionally well. They feel valued as individual members of the school. Adults place the needs of the child at the heart of all they do. They are aspirational for pupils in school. In lots of ways, these aspirations are fully realised. From their individual starting points, pupils achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour, including students in the sixth form, is commendable. Pupils engage enthusiastically in their learning. Highly skilled staff support pupils' behaviour when needed. In many cases, staff support pupils to manage their own behaviour, helping them to develop the skills needed for later life. The school is exceptionally successful in doing so.

Provision for pupils' wider development is remarkable. The school takes every opportunity to provide pupils with a vast range of experiences. These include sporting, arts, music and drama opportunities that develop pupils' interests and talents. In addition, opportunities for older pupils to develop confidence and social skills, such as the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, are well considered.

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

Pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have a wide range of academic and social needs. The school has carefully crafted a curriculum that matches these needs well. All programmes lead to recognised qualifications where possible, including GCSEs or vocational awards. Knowledge is carefully sequenced from pupils' starting points to ensure that they can achieve the best outcomes. Across many areas of the curriculum, teachers use the information from the checks they make on pupils' learning to skilfully plan for pupils' next steps. This helps pupils to build up a secure, rich body of knowledge over time.

The sixth-form curriculum is particularly well crafted. There is a strong emphasis on students learning skills for adulthood. Teachers in the sixth form are exceptionally skilled in delivering the curriculum. As a result, sixth-form students are remarkably well prepared for their next steps beyond the school.

The school places significant importance on reading. Books are celebrated across the school. Pupils have a thirst for reading, including books which celebrate different cultures and faiths. For those pupils at the early stages of reading, the school has put in place a carefully structured phonics programme. This supports these pupils to develop their early reading and early communication skills. As a result, pupils' reading improves well from their starting points.

In recent times, the school has turned its attention to developing pupils' early writing skills. It has made a positive start in developing this area of the curriculum.

However, while some teachers are skilled at implementing the school's approach to teaching writing, some are still developing their skills in this aspect of the curriculum. At times, this means that some activities which teachers give to pupils do not give them enough opportunity to practise their writing skills. This can hinder how well a few pupils develop as writers.

Some pupils join the school with a history of very low attendance. The school has highly developed and effective transition plans for pupils when they join the school. This means that those pupils quickly improve how regularly they attend school. This results in pupils' attendance across the school being exceptionally high.

Pupils' wider development is integral to the school. Pupils learn about different religions, faiths and beliefs in a carefully considered way. Visitors add to these experiences. For example, the school arranges for religious leaders to come to school to speak with pupils. Pupils are taught about fundamental British values such as rule of law. Pupils have a deep understanding about how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They then apply this to their 'student well-being charter' which empowers them to look after themselves and others. Secondary-aged pupils receive clear and varied careers information and guidance. Students in the post-16 provision attend suitable work experiences to further develop their employability skills.

The proprietor and the company's central team know the school well. They support and challenge the school in equal measure to ensure that pupils who attend receive a high-quality education. The proprietor seeks external expertise to identify where this could be further enhanced. The school acts swiftly on recommendations made. This extends to every aspect of the school. Staff are a united team. They value everything that the school does for their workload. This includes ongoing professional development to support them in meeting pupils' needs.

The proprietor and the school ensure that the independent school standards ('the standards') are consistently met. They ensure that the environment is well maintained. Appropriate checks are made on staff and there is compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Staff do not consistently select the most appropriate approaches to support early writing. This means that some pupils do not develop these essential skills as effectively as they could. The school should ensure that staff are well trained to

select activities that develop these skills effectively, so that pupils learn to write well.

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	134186
DfE registration number	877/6001
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10342042
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	4 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	23
Proprietor	Bright Futures Care
Chair	Rachelle Russell
Headteacher	Alicia Highton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£78,134 to £105,834
Telephone number	01925 750249
Website	www.brightfuturescare.co.uk
Email address	brightfutureschool@brightfuturescare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 to 25 November 2021

Information about this school

- The school is a small independent special school. The main school address is Bright Futures School, Booth Lane, Lymm, Warrington WA13 0GH.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's provision.
- Inspectors discussed the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met members of the proprietor body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (including early reading), mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work from other curriculum subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of the school, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and honest culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority SEND team.
- School policies and other documents were examined to check compliance with the standards and to provide other inspection evidence. These included: minutes from meetings between the headteacher and the proprietor body; information on pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance; and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

- As part of their checks on the school's compliance with the standards, inspectors made a tour of the school premises accompanied by the school business manager.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Sexton

Ofsted Inspector

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