

Silver Birch School

Briercliffe Road, Harle Syke, Burnley, Lancashire BB10 2HA

Inspection date

21 October 2025

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) to 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2) to 2(2)(b)

- The curriculum policy is clearly defined. The proprietor plans to ensure that pupils have opportunities to engage with linguistic, technological, human, social, aesthetic and creative subjects. The intended curriculum embraces the full breadth of national curriculum subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Staff will be expected to use a validated phonics programme, supported by a range of appropriate resources.
- The schemes of work for most subjects clearly outline the knowledge and skills that the school will deliver across the proposed age range. The proposed school has appropriate plans to tailor the curriculum to meet each pupil's individual interests, aptitudes and abilities. Every pupil will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and the curriculum will reflect this personalised approach. For instance, there is consideration of alternative qualifications and routes for pupils in key stage 4 to ensure that their needs are met well.
- Timetabled personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons will actively promote fundamental British values. Schemes of work detail a broad range of topics, such as healthy relationships, that pupils will be taught. Pupils will learn to respect others, including individuals of different faiths and cultural backgrounds.
- The proprietor intends to enrich the curriculum by organising a variety of activities, including educational trips and visits. These will be designed to build pupils' confidence and independence.

Paragraph 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) to 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor plans to offer pupils practical courses that support future employment. The school will organise visits to local colleges and workplaces to broaden pupils' understanding of career options. A structured careers programme will provide impartial advice for older pupils. Plans also include helping pupils to build the skills needed for adult life.

Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(b) to 2A(3)

- The proprietor has established a suitable relationships and sex education (RSE) policy. Leaders intend to engage with parents and carers to consult about the curriculum. The proposed school will ensure that this policy is available on the school's website once this goes live.

Paragraph 3, 3(a) to 3(j)

- The proprietor has recruited five full-time teaching staff. These staff have appropriate teaching expertise and experience, especially to support pupils with additional needs. There is a suitable recruitment procedure in place for when the school will expand its staffing based on the growth of the pupil cohort.
- The existing planning reflects a focus on evidence-based teaching practices to help teachers to deliver the curriculum well. The proposed school is well positioned to meet the needs of the intended pupil cohort.
- Classrooms are well resourced. Leaders have invested in a range of materials to support and enhance pupils' learning. For example, the proposed school intends to use some commercial schemes to ensure that pupils benefit from quality resources and evidence-based approaches to learning. In a small number of subjects, the school is finalising its development of resources to ensure that pupils develop a breadth of knowledge for the subject matter intended to be taught. The proposed school intends to adapt these resources once more detail of the additional needs of the pupils is known.

Paragraph 4

- The proprietor has developed a clear and purposeful assessment policy. The proposed arrangements indicate that staff will be able to monitor pupils' academic and personal development closely. Assessment will inform teaching, support curriculum planning and help set meaningful goals for pupils. The assessment practices are designed to help teachers sustain improvement in pupils' learning as well as identify individual learning needs.
- All of 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) to 5(d)(iii)

- The proprietor has set out an appropriate policy to support pupils' personal development, including developing their values, beliefs, social awareness and understanding of diverse cultures and communities. The proposed school's policies and schemes of work are designed to help pupils to understand and demonstrate mutual respect, tolerance and empathy. Pupils will be supported to explore a wide range of topics, including health, welfare and ethical issues.
- The proprietor intends to actively teach about all protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, helping pupils to recognise and respect diversity.
- The policies linked to RSE and PSHE reflect a strong commitment to a balanced and

non-partisan approach when teaching political views. The proposed school intends to ensure that pupils are encouraged to consider different perspectives with fairness and integrity.

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

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- The proprietor has established a clear and comprehensive safeguarding policy that reflects current statutory guidance. The proposed school intends to implement rigorous procedures to help staff identify and respond to concerns swiftly and appropriately.
- The safeguarding policy outlines effective systems for recording and reporting safeguarding matters. This is to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities and act in pupils' best interests. The school proposes to provide regular training to help staff to maintain vigilance and confidence in safeguarding practice. This includes training on the use of physical intervention and bullying.

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

- The proprietor has designed a clear behaviour policy that intends to promote high expectations and positive pupil conduct. The proposed arrangements will help staff to support pupils in developing self-discipline, respect and responsibility. The policy outlines appropriate strategies for managing pupils' behaviour, including rewards and sanctions.
- The proposed school intends to implement effective procedures to record and monitor serious incidents, ensuring that patterns are identified and addressed.
- The proposed school's anti-bullying policy is suitably detailed and reflects a proactive approach to prevention and response to bullying incidents. Staff will be supported to recognise, report and resolve any bullying concerns confidently.

Paragraphs 11 and 12

- The proprietor has developed a suitable health and safety policy that reflects statutory requirements and promotes a safe learning environment. The proposed school intends to implement clear procedures to help staff to manage risks and maintain high standards of safety across the school site. For example, there are regular fire safety checks carried out to ensure that the site is compliant with legal regulations. Fire exits and escape routes are suitably signposted across the site. The proposed school is swiftly addressing any recommendations that have emerged from recent fire safety checks.
- The proprietor has clear plans in place to ensure that the proposed school's water safety checks and equipment checks are carried out. There are clear systems to carry out checks on dangerous substances as well as electrical safety.

Paragraph 13

- The proposed school has a clear and comprehensive first-aid policy. It intends to implement procedures that ensure that first aid is administered promptly and

competently. The proposed school will ensure that staff receive appropriate training to help them to respond effectively to medical needs and emergencies.

Paragraph 14

- The proprietor has set out clear arrangements to ensure that pupils are properly supervised throughout the school day. The proposed school intends to deploy staff appropriately across the site and during activities to maintain a safe and orderly environment. For instance, the school intends for eight pupils to be using each classroom at any one time. The proposed staffing model reflects a strong commitment to safeguarding and pupils' welfare through effective supervision.

Paragraph 15

- There are clear procedures to maintain both the admission and attendance registers in full compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The proposed school intends to implement secure and accurate information management systems to help staff record pupils' details and daily attendance consistently.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The proprietor has established a clear and comprehensive risk assessment policy. The school proposes to implement this effectively to help staff to identify, assess and manage risks across the school. For example, the proposed school intends to develop tailored risk assessments for pupils with additional needs. The school also has risk assessments to ensure safety during any off-site visits.
- The proposed procedures are designed to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare by ensuring that appropriate action is taken to reduce or eliminate identified risks.
- 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 17, 18(2), 18(2)(a) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(a)(vii), 12 (3)(b), 21(6)

- The proprietor maintains a compliant single central record that contains all the required pre-employment checks. Suitability checks are completed before staff take up post, including verification of medical fitness and online checks.
- All required checks for the chair of the proprietor body, the chair of governors, executive headteacher, director of education and appointed staff have been completed. The proposed school has clear plans for recruiting additional staff as the pupil cohort size grows. The school has scheduled safeguarding training as part of its staff induction.
- 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) to 23(1)(c), 28(1) to 28(2)(b)

- The proposed school will operate from one site located at 869 Briercliffe Road, Harle Syke, Burnley, Lancashire BB10 2HA. The accommodation includes three teaching rooms, four toilets and washing facilities, motor mechanics and hair and beauty room, a dining room and appropriate spaces for medical care, administration and pupil support. The premises are likely to be suitable for the proposed age range and number of pupils.
- Toilet and washing facilities are appropriate for pupils' use. These include individual cubicles for male and female pupils that are lockable from the inside, with a mixer tap to minimise scald risk.
- Pupils will have access to drinking water throughout the day via clearly marked water dispensers.

Paragraph 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- The proposed school has suitable accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils. This space is appropriately located and equipped to support pupils who require first-aid treatment. This includes a lockable medicine cupboard and first-aid kit.
- The medical room is suitable for pupils who are sick or injured. There is access to washing facilities and a toilet within the room.

Paragraphs 25 to 27(b)

- The school premises has appropriate lighting, acoustics and ventilation. The facilities promote a comfortable and healthy indoor learning environment.
- Classroom space is adequate for the proposed curriculum and the number of pupils the school proposes to accommodate. Rooms are appropriately sized and resourced for safe movement and supervision.

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

- The school has a small outdoor space for pupils to play and spend time during breaks. Suitable fencing is in place to ensure pupils' safety.
- The majority of physical education lessons will take place at a local sports centre. Risk assessments will be in place to ensure pupils' safety during travel and while using external facilities.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(c), 32(1)(f) to 32(3)(i), 32(2) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii) to 32(3)(g)

- The proprietor has developed a website but has not fully launched it yet. However, arrangements are in place to ensure that parents are informed of the school's contact details and have access to key documentation, including safeguarding policies. Once operational, the proprietor will include all required information, such as the school's name and address and the headteacher's contact details, on the website. Key documents, such as the safeguarding and complaints policies, will be published on the

school's website and available in hard copy. For example, parents will be able to request printed copies of the behaviour policy or curriculum overview.

- The school plans to issue termly and annual reports to parents outlining pupils' progress and attainment.
- Financial review systems are in place to monitor the income and expenditure of funds received from local authorities.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- The proprietor has a comprehensive complaints policy that outlines all the required stages and timescales for managing concerns effectively. The policy includes procedures for both informal and formal complaints. This is to ensure that findings and recommendations are shared with relevant parties, including parents, where appropriate.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- Leaders have demonstrated the knowledge and skills that are needed to ensure that the standards are met. For example, the school's designated safeguarding leaders are appropriately qualified. In addition, the proprietor has completed site-specific risk assessments, including fire safety, lone working and has considered supervision ratios. Leaders have proposed a structured programme of staff induction and ongoing professional development to ensure that the needs of pupils are met well. For instance, the school has ambitions to broaden its curriculum through equipping staff with the skills and knowledge to offer vocational subjects. Such arrangements reflect a strong understanding of the standards and a commitment to ensuring that the school operates safely, effectively and in the best interests of pupils.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's accessibility plan fully reflects the statutory requirements.

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	152132
DfE registration number	888/6140
Inspection number	10421691

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	Independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Proprietor	Prosperity Children's Services Limited
Chair	Edward Gerald Smethurst
Headteacher	Rebecca Warhust (executive headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£68, 250
Telephone number	01282 798764
Website	https://silverbirchschoo.org
Email address	info@silverbirchschoo.org

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11 to 16	11 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	30	30

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	30
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	30
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	30
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	30

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5	10
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0

Information about this proposed school

- This proposed independent special school is located at Briercliffe Road, Harle Syke, Burnley, Lancashire BB10 2HA.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 30 mixed-gender pupils, aged between 11 and 16 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by providing them with a small, nurturing learning environment.
- The proposed school will cater for pupils with an EHC plan who may have experienced significant disruption in their education and/or home lives. Pupils may have a range of needs, including social, emotional, and mental health, autism, cognition and learning and communication difficulties.
- The proprietor body is Prosperity Children's Services Ltd. This company is registered at Companies House. The director is the chair of the proprietor body.
- The proprietor intends that there will be a governing body. The chair of the governing body and other governors have been appointed.
- The proprietor does not intend to use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to determine if the school is likely to meet the independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the request to register this school.
- This is the proposed school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and the director of education. She also met the chair of the proprietor body and spoke to a local authority representative.
- The inspector made a tour of the site that is intended to be used by the school to check the suitability of the proposed premises against the relevant standards. She also looked at a wide range of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour, health and safety and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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