

Ryecroft School

Kent Street, Walsall WS2 7AN

Inspection date

17 July 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(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i) and 3(i)

- The proprietor body's vision is that every child will achieve to the best of their ability. This is supported by the proposed school's values, which include commitment and creativity. Leaders at all levels explain and demonstrate how they will meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) linked to autism. The proposed curriculum is based on the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework, the national curriculum and examination syllabuses. Curriculum plans and schemes of work map out the order of learning that pupils will follow. The plans indicate that pupils are likely to access a broad range of experiences in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic, and creative education. Teachers will be expected to use the curriculum plans as a starting point to plan learning activities, which leaders assert will be tailored to the needs and interests of individual pupils. The curriculum is likely to support pupils' development so they can access the next stage of their education or training.
- After receiving a referral for a place in the school, leaders assert that they will examine the pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan) to check if the school can meet the pupil's needs. It is intended that pupils will undertake an initial assessment when they join the school. This will check on pupils' prior knowledge in a range of subjects. This process will be supported by the therapy team, which comprises speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. The assessment information will inform which of the three curriculum pathways pupils will follow. The three pathways range from a play-based curriculum to a more formal curriculum. Where appropriate, pupils will have the opportunity to study a range of relevant qualifications.
- The proposed school plans to establish a sixth-form provision because some pupils may not be ready to move onto a more traditional post-16 setting. The sixth-form provision is intended to provide students with more time to prepare for adulthood. In addition, some pupils may have the potential to complete relevant qualifications if they are given more time to achieve this in the sixth form. However, leaders are keen

to make pupils aware of alternative post-16 options if they are ready to access them.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these independent school standards (the standards) are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 2(2)e, 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii) and 2(2)(e)(iii)

- Supported by the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum and the Gatsby benchmarks, the proposed school has developed a suitable plan to make sure that pupils are likely to receive impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance. The school intends to support pupils to identify their individual careers aspirations. They will then support pupils to identify the qualifications they need to achieve to pursue their career choice. This process will be supported by an impartial careers adviser. Leaders plan to organise internal and external work experience placements to give pupils experience of the world of work. This could be in-house work experience, such as working in the school kitchen.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(j) and 4

- The proposed school intends to develop pupils' confidence, self-esteem and levels of independence. Pupils will have the opportunity to follow the 'attaining character education' curriculum, which has been designed by school leaders to develop skills such as negotiation, perseverance and early leadership. This will be supplemented by daily routines and enrichment activities such as school trips to places of interest.

- Leaders articulate how teachers and support staff will make reasonable adjustments so that pupils can access a wide range of learning. This will include building on pupils' interests, making use of the outdoor environment, using a range of visual resources and much more. The special educational needs and disabilities coordinator has already audited the EHC plans of pupils who are intending to join the school to organise the required staff training, which includes intensive interaction and signing.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have teaching and leadership experience in other schools. As the school grows, leaders intend to appoint more teachers with subject specialisms, as well as teachers who have experience of, or a desire to work with, pupils with SEND. Across the schools within the group, there are subject and teaching leads, which support networking and the sharing of subject expertise.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g) and 2A(2)

- The relationships and sex education (RSE) policy sits alongside the PSHE policy. It outlines provision for both primary and secondary-age pupils. The proposed school intends to consult with parents and carers at planned induction days this term about the content of the RSE policy and curriculum. The RSE policy references the right of parents and carers to withdraw their child fully, or partly, from sex education lessons.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii),

5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii) and 5(d)(iii)

- Developing pupils' understanding of self-care, including healthy lifestyles and good hygiene, is a school priority. The proposed school has considered how this will be achieved through the curriculum, daily routines and enrichment activities. The school has clear self-care end goals in mind, but they are aware that some pupils may need additional support to achieve these.
- Developing pupils' social skills is evident across the curriculum. This is supported by a range of activities to support community engagement such as visiting local shops, a local farm and leisure centres. The proposed school is aware that many of the prospective pupils will need varying levels of support with their social skills due to their individual needs.
- There is no evidence in curriculum plans and wider documentation to suggest that fundamental British values will be undermined. Rather, leaders explain how these values will be promoted through the curriculum and other activities, such as 'culture days'.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b) and 32(1)(c)

- The proposed school's safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent government guidance and will be available on its website if the proposed school opens.
- It is intended that the headteacher will be the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). He completed suitable training in relation to this role in July 2024. It is planned that the deputy headteacher will be the deputy DSL and she completed her training in October 2023. Through monthly forums organised by the proprietor body, those responsible for the leadership of safeguarding plan to stay abreast of safeguarding updates.
- Proposed safeguarding training for staff will focus on government guidance updates, types of abuse, dealing with pupil disclosures and child-on-child abuse. Leaders are knowledgeable about the increased vulnerability of pupils with autism.
- The planned PSHE curriculum will cover areas such as positive relationships and appropriate touch. Pupils will be encouraged to express their feelings if they are worried about something.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

- The proposed school has produced a detailed person-centred behaviour policy. The school's approach to behaviour management links with its values, which include being caring. The proposed school is keen to support pupils to recognise and manage their emotions. In turn, they anticipate that this will support pupils to engage purposefully in their learning. Rewards will be immediate and personalised to pupils' interests. Consequences will be underpinned by a restorative approach to help pupils reflect on, and learn from, their behaviour choices.
- The proposed school has a suitable anti-bullying policy in place. Pupils will be taught

about the different types of bullying through the PSHE curriculum. In addition, links will be made to relevant fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance. The proposed school has strategies in place if bullying does occur that focus on supporting both the victim and the perpetrator.

- The proposed school intends to keep detailed records of any behaviour and bullying incidents in an online system. This is the same system that will be used to record safeguarding incidents and concerns. This should enable leaders to identify any behaviour patterns and possible trends.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- A detailed health and safety policy and other related policies are in place. Currently, three members of staff are trained in first aid.
- It is intended that fire safety checks will be carried out on a regular basis by the site manager. These will be recorded in the fire logbook and then uploaded to an online system. The health and safety committee will monitor the online records. It is intended that fire safety will be included in the staff induction process.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

- There are currently no pupils attending the school. The information that the proposed school plans to include on the admissions register is in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance.
- The staff-to-pupil ratio suggests that pupils will be supervised adequately throughout the school day.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c) and 21(6)

- The proposed school has appropriate recruitment procedures in place. It is likely that all the necessary pre-employment checks will be made before an offer of employment is given.
- The headteacher and the regional director have undertaken safer recruitment training. It is intended that the headteacher will sit on every recruitment panel.
- The format of the single central record contains the full range of pre-employment checks. It is stored centrally in an electronic format. It is intended that the headteacher will update the single central record when new members of staff are

recruited. It will be checked by the regional director every half term as part of his quality assurance visits.

- The school does not intend to use supply staff due to the needs of the pupils that they intend to admit. However, leaders are clear about the checks and procedures that would need to be followed if they did.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The proposed school building was previously a school and is surrounded by housing. The premises have been refurbished and decorated to an exceptionally high standard. All rooms are well lit and have good acoustics. There are 11 classrooms, including a computer suite, a gym and a cookery room. In addition, there is a spacious dining room and lots of storage space. There is suitable space for the proposed number of pupils to learn.
- There are sufficient individual unisex toilets available to pupils. Staff toilets are separate. All have hot and cold running water and handwashing facilities. The medical room is spacious and contains a shower and a washing facility. The medical room is close to a toilet.
- There are showers and a wet room in the proposed school if pupils need to use them. Moreover, the proposed school intends to use the local swimming pool and leisure centre to support the delivery of the physical education curriculum. Leaders are aware of the need to carry out suitable risk assessments for the leisure centre and pool in line with their health and safety arrangements.
- There is an outdoor area that can be used for pupils to play and socialise. This includes an early years outdoor area. In addition, there is a grassed area, which leaders intend to develop for horticultural use. A multi-use games area has also been constructed adjacent to the playground. The area is suitably secure and well lit.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d) and 32(3)(f)

- All policies, documents and information required for the pre-registration inspection were provided prior to or during the inspection. Where relevant, policies reflect the fact that the proposed school will cater for pupils with autism.
- Leaders have overseen the construction of a school website, which is on the verge of being launched. The website includes the school's vision, values and aims, relevant contact details and other useful information. Many of the policies for the proposed

school have already been uploaded to the website.

- Leaders have a clear understanding of how relevant staff, including external agencies, will contribute to the annual review process for pupils with an EHC plan. It is anticipated that parents and pupils will play a key role in this process. If required, staff will gain the views of pupils using a range of communication styles.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The complaints policy explains the steps that parents need to take if they have a concern about the proposed school. The aim is to resolve complaints informally where possible, but more formal steps are outlined, including a panel hearing. The policy sets out suitable timeframes for dealing with complaints.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has a clear rationale for why it wants to open the school linked to its vision that every pupil will achieve their full potential. In addition, there is an increased demand for specialist school places for pupils with autism in the local area. The proprietor body has a positive track record of running similar schools.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked closely with the regional director and other leaders to prepare the proposed school for registration. The proprietor body has established multi-layered monitoring systems to provide them with insight into the performance of their individual schools, including this one. These systems are supplemented by a range of quality assurance and support systems that are threaded in and across schools within the group. As a result, it is likely that the proprietor body will support and challenge school leaders to ensure they fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- Leaders at all levels demonstrate a thorough understanding of the standards. They have a range of plans to develop the proposed school even further, building on what they have already achieved in preparing for the pre-registration process.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has ensured that a suitable accessibility plan is in place. It focuses on the curriculum, the sharing of information and the physical environment. An action plan to further promote accessibility is also included. The plan meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- The planned curriculum and the expertise of leaders and staff are likely to ensure that the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS are met. In addition, there is clear evidence that the proposed school will meet the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. Due to the level of cognition of some of the prospective pupils, the EYFS statutory requirements will likely underpin the curriculum beyond the Reception class.

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	150913
DfE registration number	335/6014
Inspection number	10351933

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	P Bloom Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Daryl Hill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£68,250 to £83,450
Telephone number	01922 687381
Website	www.ryecroftschoo.co.uk
Email address	info@ryecroftschoo.co.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	4 to 18	4 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

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	60
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	30
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	4

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school building is located in Walsall in a residential area.
- The proposed school intends to cater for boys and girls from four to 18 years of age.
- The proposed school will cater for pupils with a diagnosis of autism. It is anticipated that all pupils will have an EHC plan. Pupils will be placed in the school by local authorities, including Walsall, Sandwell and Dudley. The proprietor body runs several other schools as part of the 'Options Autism' group.
- The proposed school will not have a religious denomination.
- The proposed school does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the DfE to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet the standards if it is given permission to open. This is the proposed school's first pre-registration inspection.
- Many documents were reviewed by the inspector prior to the inspection. Additional documents, including the school's single central record, were scrutinised on site.
- As the inspection included a full-day, on-site visit, a tour of the premises was completed.
- The inspector met with the regional director, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the regional property manager and the group project manager. He also met with the chair of the proprietor body.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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