

Inspection dates

1–3 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Outcomes for pupils

Good

Sixth form provision

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The quality of teaching is good and as a result, pupils make good progress and achieve a variety of suitable qualifications.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' patient support and encouragement.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of pupils' achievement and use this well to set increasingly demanding learning tasks.
- Senior leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve in their learning. Staff work successfully to provide a curriculum that meets pupils' individual needs.
- The school enables pupils to improve their behaviour, often from very low starting points, and prepare appropriately for further study and employment.
- The proprietors provide strong support for the headteacher and have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Senior leaders make outstanding provision for pupils' welfare and safety. Staff provide high levels of supervision and pupils feel very safe.
- Sixth-form provision is good and enables learners to complete appropriate qualifications and to make suitable choices about the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A minority of pupils do not attend regularly, which reduces the amount of progress they make.
- Proprietors and senior leaders do not have a precise enough understanding of how pupils' progress compares with national expectations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attendance of the small number of persistent absentees.
- Ensure that proprietors and senior leaders have an accurate understanding of how information on pupils' progress compares with national expectations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides effective leadership through a clear vision for what disadvantaged pupils can achieve. The staff respond positively to the culture of high expectations and appropriate challenge for all pupils.
- Senior leaders and staff tackle the challenges of removing pupils' complex barriers to learning with resilience and dedication. They place a strong emphasis on the development of respectful, positive relationships and do not give up on their determination that all pupils will achieve well.
- The actions taken by the staff enable pupils to tackle their individual challenges. As a result, all pupils make good progress over time.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and believe the school is well led and managed. There is effective, continuous communication between senior leaders and staff, which results in strong teamwork and a consistent understanding of the needs of individual pupils.
- The headteacher ensures that all the required aspects of staff training are successfully implemented. Staff also have good access to individual opportunities to extend their own professional training and development.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching is good and that all pupils make good progress, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Staff have implemented robust arrangements for the accurate assessment of pupils' current achievements. However, leaders and proprietors do not have a precise enough understanding of how pupils' progress in the school compares with national expectations.
- The curriculum is sufficiently broad to meet pupils' academic and personal needs. Effective arrangements are in place to provide suitable off-site work-related courses. Arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are excellent, including strong emphasis on therapeutic approaches to their emotional and social well-being.
- Staff work very effectively with residential care staff and parents to improve the life chances of disadvantaged pupils so that they are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Particular attention is given to the successful improvement of attendance and engagement in learning. However, the attendance of a minority of pupils remains too inconsistent.
- The restricted nature of the school site limits the headteacher's ambitious plans for a more extensive curriculum. The proprietors, together with the headteacher, are implementing ambitious plans for the relocation of the school to new, purpose-built premises.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
 - Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and, through regular meetings and reports, ensure that the proprietors are fully informed.
 - Proprietors provide appropriate support for the improvement of the school and ensure suitable accountability by the headteacher and staff.
 - Arrangements for the appraisal of staff performance are secure and effective. Staff are rewarded for undertaking additional areas of responsibility. Any underperformance is addressed swiftly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make the safety of pupils a high priority. Appropriate action is taken to reduce risks related to the premises, pupils' behaviour and offsite activities.
- Staff provide high levels of supervision for pupils. They communicate with parents and carers every day and work cooperatively to ensure that each pupil is appropriately supported and safe.
- Staff are all regularly trained in safeguarding, and arrangements for the safe recruitment of suitable staff are rigorous.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is good and enables all pupils to achieve success in external examinations and awards.
- Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' learning needs. They use this knowledge well to plan appropriate and challenging learning activities that stimulate pupils' interest and as a result, they make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy positive relationships with teachers and as a result, they trust and value highly the intensive support they receive.
- Pupils gradually learn to respond positively to challenging tasks that make them think and work things out for themselves.
- Teachers assess pupils' learning and progress continuously and accurately. Test papers and assessment activities are discussed in detail with pupils and they are helped to understand how they may improve their future work.
- Teachers achieve a suitable balance between detailed dialogue and opportunities for pupils to try things out for themselves and develop the necessary skills to make decisions for themselves. There is a strong focus on speaking and listening, and teachers use a variety of challenging questions to deepen and extend pupils' learning.
- Teachers demonstrate great patience and perseverance when pupils are reluctant to engage in new challenges. Over time, pupils take on greater responsibility and value the quality of teaching that they receive.
- The school places a suitable emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy. Pupils enjoy reading and contribute willingly to reading aloud in class. They are often reluctant to write, but work in their books shows good development in the quality and presentation of their writing.
- Pupils respond positively to the challenges of increasingly difficult work in mathematics. In a Key Stage 4 lesson, pupils surprised themselves with their recall of basic calculations in algebra and progressed well with solving equations.
- Pupils develop increasing knowledge and understanding in science and in the use of computers. They also appreciate the breadth of opportunities in the curriculum, including creative work in art and physical education.
- Once they have adjusted to the expectations of the school, pupils develop pride in their achievements and respect for the adults they work with. A number of themes in personal and social education help them to understand themselves and the wider community in which they live.
- Thorough reports are prepared for parents and placing authorities. These enable all relevant adults to understand how staff help pupils to overcome their complex barriers to learning, and be successful.
- Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. They are relentless in their actions to ensure that each individual pupil makes strong progress so that they are suitably prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards for teaching and assessment are met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils develop their self-esteem and take pride in their achievements. Although this takes time for the majority to achieve, all pupils respond sufficiently positively to face the challenge of external examinations by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Parents and placing authorities value the patience and persistence of staff in helping pupils overcome their significant social and emotional barriers to learning. Teaching staff, therapists and care staff work well together to support perceptible improvements in pupils' emotional well-being and mental health.
- The school provides a safe environment, supported by continuous supervision of pupils and excellent attention to minimising risks.

- Pupils respond positively to the high quality of impartial careers advice provided by the school. Staff accompany pupils to visits and interviews at colleges of further education. This enables them to overcome their uncertainties about moving on to the next stage of their education and preparation for employment.
- Pupils develop appropriate spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness as a result of many opportunities to discuss and reflect on the challenges and opportunities facing them in the local and wider communities.
- All the independent standards are met for pupils' personal development and welfare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils who have previously had poor behaviour, including that resulting in permanent exclusions from their previous placements, make excellent gains in their behaviour and attitudes to learning over time.
- Teachers and support staff give pupils the respect, care and attention they need to learn well. As a result, high levels of trust exist between staff and pupils.
- Pupils improve their attendance over time. However, overall attendance is below the national average, although the great majority of pupils make strong improvements from their previous poor or non-attendance.
- A small minority of pupils have uneven attendance patterns and periods of persistent absence. Their irregular attendance restricts the quality of their learning and achievement.
- Senior leaders, proprietors and staff place a high priority on the improvement and stabilising of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. As a result, pupils are rarely excluded from school. Staff work consistently well to enable pupils to understand the personal and community consequences of any poor behaviour.
- Pupils achieve creditable outcomes in external examinations because they cooperate and engage well in their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that a full range of policies and procedures is in place, so that the independent school standards for this aspect of the school's work are met.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make strong progress over time from mostly low starting points. Almost all pupils admitted to the school have missed significant periods of recent education or have previously refused to engage in learning. The school is successful in ensuring that all pupils achieve qualifications, which will enable them to continue in further education and preparation for employment.
- Pupils make progress in small steps. For some, there are setbacks arising from individual emotional or mental health barriers. Over time, pupils learn to value the opportunities provided and to build successfully on their previous knowledge and learning.
- The majority of pupils make good progress with their reading and writing. They show a good understanding of the texts they are reading and are able to express their own interpretations and meanings.
- Pupils consolidate their ability to apply the basic rules of number, and to calculate and apply their understanding of mathematics to everyday activities. They extend their understanding of geometry and algebra appropriately. In a short time, they develop sufficient confidence to achieve success in entry-level and functional skills courses.
- The school's records, based on accurate continuous assessment, show that current pupils, none of whom has attended for more than one year, are making good progress in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with identified special educational needs begin to close the gaps in their previous learning. They make good progress from their starting points, at least in line with national expectations.
- All pupils leave at the end of Key Stage 4 with qualifications in English and mathematics, ranging from entry-level certificates to functional skills at level 1 or level 2 and GCSE foundation grades. This represents good progress from their low starting points on entry to the school.
- Pupils also have appropriate access to external examinations in additional subjects. The school responds effectively to individual choices and preferences. The most recent cohort of leavers achieved foundation, or occasional higher awards in science, art, religious studies, personal and social education, and music.

- Pupils at Key Stage 4 also experience success in suitable work-related taster courses, which assist them in making decisions about careers and future training opportunities. This has resulted in some pupils attending part-time vocational courses and achieving awards at level 1 in their chosen vocational area.
- All those pupils who left at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015 moved on to places at colleges of further education.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school requirements related to pupils' outcomes are met.

Sixth form provision

is good

- The school makes good provision for a small number of post-16 learners. Senior leaders work closely with parents, and staff in learners' residences to ensure that post-16 timetables match each learner's aspirations and plans for future employment.
- Senior leaders and staff ensure that school policies for the management of behaviour, the assessment of risk and safeguarding are implemented robustly.
- The school's post-16 arrangements provide continuity and stability for learners who live in the proprietor's residential accommodation and who are not ready to respond to the challenges of a larger educational establishment. Individual arrangements are made with sensitivity and understanding of each learner's continuing educational needs.
- Learners develop increased self-awareness and successfully address any behavioural difficulties that have restricted their previous learning.
- Post-16 learners are enabled to complete functional skills awards in English and mathematics or GCSE courses. In addition, they have access to appropriate work-related courses, such as childcare or sport, which build successfully on their chosen areas of interest.
- The quality of teaching is good and learners successfully extend and consolidate their previous learning. Teaching staff work closely with residential staff to develop learners' confidence and readiness to move on successfully to adult life. The school continues to develop learners' skills in English and mathematics, with the opportunity to build on qualifications achieved at Key Stage 4.
- Post-16 learners value the additional time and personal support they receive. They appreciate the advice they receive about future options for study and employment. The school works effectively with the local independent careers service to ensure that learners understand their future options.
- The small number of post-16 learners who have completed their studies at the school have moved on successfully to placements in further education and training.
- Arrangements for the extension of post-16 provision are included in the proprietors' ambitious plans for the future relocation of the school premises.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school requirements related to post-16 provision are met.

School details

Unique reference number	128078
Inspection number	10008523
DfE registration number	855/6021

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Residential special school
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	8–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Barford Children's Services
Chair	Mandy Cheriton-Metcalf
Headteacher	Jennifer Collighan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,270
Telephone number	01162 876218
Website	www.barfordchildrensservices.com
Email address	JCollighan@barfordchildrensservices.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2012

Information about this school

- Oakwood School provides full-time education for up to 20 pupils in the age range eight to 18 years who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties, together with associated challenging behaviour.
- There are currently eight boys and girls on roll, aged 13 to 17 years, including a small number of post-16 learners.
- Most pupils live in residential accommodation provided by the proprietors, Barford Children's Services. The majority are in public care. Five pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The previous inspection took place in December 2012, when the school was judged to provide a good quality of education.
- Teaching and learning currently take place at the main school site, together with outreach locations on the sites of two children's homes, a residential setting and a local library.
- The school uses the services of the local Vocational Education Support Agency to provide work-related experiences for pupils. There were no pupils engaged in these services during this inspection.
- The mission statement of the school is 'to provide high quality education to each child according to individual needs within a caring and nurturing environment'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work on the main school site and at two additional teaching locations.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff with management responsibilities, teachers and teaching assistants.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Discussions were held with a small number of parents and pupils.
- Consideration was given to eight questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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