

# Austen House School

Bridge House, 1 Stuart Road, Bredbury SK6 2SR

**Inspection date**

24 November 2021

**Overall outcome**

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7, 7(b)*

- This paragraph was identified as unmet at the emergency inspection in October 2020. This was because the proprietor body had not made sure that the policy reflected closely the current guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) about safeguarding in schools.
- The evaluation of the school's action plan in February 2021 showed that the plan to remedy this unmet standard lacked detail. It did not state whether the policy reflected all of the current guidance from the DfE about safeguarding in schools.
- A new headteacher took up her post in October 2021. Together with senior leaders from the Care 4 Children (C4C) company, she reviewed the safeguarding policy. It reflects the latest government guidance, including the details of the local safeguarding arrangements between the school and external partners. It provides clear information for staff and others should a safeguarding concern arise.
- The headteacher has completed an array of training to increase her knowledge and understanding of safeguarding pupils. She has plans in place to ensure that any staff who are employed in the future will receive the appropriate training. The headteacher has plans in place to ensure that all staff are regularly updated on safeguarding processes. The school does not have its own website. However, the policy is available for parents and others from the school's office.
- Leaders have ensured that the standard in this part, checked in this inspection, is now met.

### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

#### *Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(2), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 28(1)(a), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)*

- This standard was identified as unmet during the October 2020 emergency inspection. This was because the proprietor body had not ensured that the school had toilet and medical facilities which were easily accessible for pupils. Therefore, pupils had to leave

the school premises and walk to the adjacent children's home to access the toilet and medical facilities.

- The evaluation of the school's action plan in February 2021 showed that leaders had acted to successfully remedy this failing. The action plan stated that suitable toilet and washing facilities would be provided for the sole use of pupils. Additionally, the action plan stated that the accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils would be situated within the school. Also, that drinking water would be available for pupils during school time.
- There is now a separate toilet with a lockable door from the inside. It has a washbasin with running water which does not pose a scalding risk to pupils. There is now a pleasant room which is used for a medical room. It is near the toilet and has access to running water. This is suitable for a pupil who may need medical assistance. There is a bed with a sheet, blanket and pillow.
- Drinking water is now available for pupils in the classroom. It is clearly marked.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part, checked in this inspection, are now met.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools.

### *Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)*

- This standard was identified as unmet during the October 2020 emergency inspection because the proprietor body had not ensured that all of the independent school standards (the standards) were consistently met. The school's safeguarding policy did not meet current guidance from the DfE about safeguarding in schools and pupils were not able to get access to medical and toilet facilities as early as possible. Drinking water was also not readily available.
- The action plan evaluated in February 2021, lacked detail as to how the proprietor body would refresh its members' understanding of the independent school standards. Similarly, the plan did not describe how the governing body would be set up and organised to enable leaders to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The timescales for the actions detailed were unrealistic.
- The chair of the proprietor body, senior leaders from C4C and the headteacher show total commitment to the education and well-being of pupils. They talk with confidence and knowledge about the standards. All have experience of the standards from previous roles in independent schools. Extensive training has enhanced their understanding. They know what is needed for the school to consistently meet the standards.
- The proprietor body, senior leaders and the headteacher have a clear rationale for wanting the school to become co-educational.
- Preparations have taken place in readiness for the school to welcome boys as well as girls. Policies have been reviewed to support the proposed material change at the school. Likewise, the curriculum has been amended so that it meets the needs of boys and girls.

- There is an extensive monitoring and evaluation process in place which incorporates all levels of leadership and management. Leaders and managers are well organised and know and understand their roles and responsibilities.
- The current school evaluation plan identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders have a clear plan in place to support improvement at the school.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part, checked in this inspection, are now met.

## **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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

### **The school now meets the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

#### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 23(1)(a) suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils.
- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including-
  - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
  - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 28(1)(a) suitable drinking water facilities are provided.
- 28(2) The facilities provided under sub-paragraph (1)(a) will be suitable only if-
  - 28(2)(a) they are readily accessible at all times when the premises are in use.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 132095   |
| DfE registration number | 888/6040 |
| Inspection number       | 10213797 |

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                       | Independent school   |
| School status                        | Independent school   |
| Age range of pupils                  | 11 to 18   |
| Gender of pupils                     | Girls  |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form   | Girls  |
| Proprietor                           | Care 4 Children Residential Services Ltd   |
| Chair                                | Virginia Perkins   |
| Headteacher                          | Diana Nickson  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)             | £30,000  |
| Telephone number                     | 0345 521 5155  |
| Website                              | <a href="http://www.care4children.co.uk">www.care4children.co.uk</a>             |
| Email address                        | <a href="mailto:d.nickson@care4children.co.uk">d.nickson@care4children.co.uk</a> |
| Date of previous standard inspection | 5 and 6 March 2019   |

### Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed from September 2021.
- The school was closed from March 2021 to October 2021.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the standards that it was judged to not comply with at its previous emergency inspection.
- The previous standard inspection was carried out in March 2019. At that time, the school was judged to comply with the independent school standards.
- An emergency inspection was carried out in October 2021. At this inspection, several of the standards were found to be unmet.
- The school was asked to prepare an action plan. The plan was evaluated by Ofsted in February 2021. This plan was not approved by the DfE.
- This the first progress monitoring inspection of the school.
- This inspection was conducted with 24 hours' notice to the school.
- I met with the headteacher, the regional headteacher and the head of education. I spoke, via a phone call, with the chair of the proprietor body.
- I looked at policies and schemes of work (SoW). I made a tour of the building.
- I examined the school's safeguarding policy.

## The school's proposed change becoming a co-educational school

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, I checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**

*Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b)*

- The proprietor body has a suitable written curriculum policy in place. The policy uses the national curriculum as a basis for the school curriculum. It covers all subjects expected by the independent school standards. It outlines how the curriculum will be adapted to meet the needs of boys and girls.
- The curriculum policy is supported by appropriate SoW.
- Examples of teachers' lesson plans, which will be used if the material change is granted, show that this policy will be implemented across the school so that boys and girls will be able to learn and make progress equally well.

*Paragraphs 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 5(b)(vi)*

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a comprehensive SoW in place to promote pupils' personal, social, health and economic development. This SoW will enable boys and girls to develop their understanding of British values and other cultures and religions. Leaders have paid particular attention to ensuring that boys and girls will learn respect for each other.

*Paragraphs 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii)*

- The proprietor body has a suitable careers programme in place to ensure that pupils receive access to impartial, accurate and up-to-date careers guidance.

*Paragraphs 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)-2A(2)*

- The proprietor body has a comprehensive relationships and sex education policy in place. This policy is available from the school office. It takes account of current statutory guidance.
- Leaders have plans to consult with parents and carers about the policy if the material change is approved.
- The independent school standards are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

### **Information about the material change inspection**

This was the first material change application of the school's proposal to become a co-educational school.

### **Inspection team**

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Eileen Mulgrew, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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