

Inspection of Willow View School

Fisher Field Farm, Hargate Avenue, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 6BT

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 May 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Willow View School is a welcoming and nurturing place for pupils to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are happy here. They show respect for differences between people. Pupils reported that they feel safe in school.

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils, including for their achievement and for their behaviour. Most pupils arrive having missed a lot of education and they have gaps in their learning. Staff foster positive relationships with pupils. They support pupils who have previously experienced trauma with a range of effective therapeutic approaches. This helps pupils to re-engage with their education. Pupils achieve well overall.

Pupils feel that staff support them, and their friends, to be calm when they are anxious. They learn a range of strategies to help them to regulate their own behaviour. Generally, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are respectful towards each other and towards staff. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.

Staff provide timely guidance to make learning and social times a positive experience for pupils. Pupils have access to a spacious outdoor area where they can play football. They benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, such as swimming, cooking and outdoor learning. These activities help them to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.

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

Leaders, together with staff, are ambitious for all pupils. Leaders have worked closely with the executive leadership team to establish a personalised and flexible curriculum to meet the individual needs of pupils.

In most subjects, leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. They have also thought carefully about when this should be taught. Leaders' secure curriculum thinking in these subjects helps pupils to build on what they already know and can do. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders are still defining what they want pupils to know and the order in which this new learning should be taught. In these remaining subjects, a small number of pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders and staff understand the needs of pupils well. Staff use appropriate resources and adapt the delivery of the curriculum to support pupils' learning and emotional needs. Leaders provide pupils with timely specialist support when necessary, such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. Staff receive frequent training in how to support pupils' social and emotional needs.

Teachers are knowledgeable and present information clearly to pupils. They provide timely support to help pupils to connect new learning to other topics and concepts.

Teachers use assessment strategies well to check that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving them on to new content.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on teaching pupils to read. They make sure that pupils experience the enjoyment that comes from reading a book. Most pupils use effective strategies to help them to read new words. Staff successfully support pupils to improve their understanding and confidence in reading. Most pupils build up their reading knowledge securely. They read books which match their reading knowledge. However, a very small number of pupils who find reading more difficult have gaps in their early reading knowledge, including how to apply their phonics knowledge. This stops them from being able to read with accuracy and with fluency. In addition, these pupils find the books they are provided to read too difficult.

Leaders have clear routines for pupils to follow. Staff are skilled at identifying and supporting pupils who may be in crisis. They are calm and reassuring. They help pupils to re-engage with their learning. Staff are skilled at helping pupils to improve their behaviour over time.

Leaders have ensured that the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is carefully sequenced and delivered well. It provides pupils with the opportunity to listen to the news and discuss issues and themes which affect their everyday life. Pupils have a strong voice in the school community. They learn about the protected characteristics. Pupils enjoy also finding out about different religions. They receive age-appropriate relationships and sex education. Leaders provide helpful careers education and guidance for pupils. Older pupils appreciate the support that they receive with applications to college.

Staff morale is high. Staff said that leaders are considerate of their well-being and workload. They value being part of the school team.

Members of the proprietor board and the chief executive officer (CEO) are committed to the ethos of the school. They challenge and support leaders well. The proprietor body ensures that the school meets all the independent school standards ('the standards') and the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Parents and carers are very positive about the care and support that staff provide to their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have an up-to-date safeguarding policy in place which takes account of statutory guidance. They have published this on the school's website.

There is a strong culture of vigilance in the school. All staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. They know how to spot the potential signs of abuse. Staff know how to respond if they have any concerns or worries about a pupil. Leaders

work effectively with external agencies to support and protect pupils who may be at risk of harm.

Leaders keep a close eye on pupils' attendance. They check on pupils' welfare if they are absent from school. Pupils have an awareness of online safety and they learn how to stay safe in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders are in the process of defining exactly what knowledge pupils should learn and in what order this new knowledge should be taught. This is hindering some pupils from learning as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that they refine the curriculum further to identify the important subject content that pupils should be taught.
- A very small number of pupils who find reading more difficult have gaps in their early reading knowledge, including how to apply their phonics knowledge. This prevents these pupils from reading with accuracy and fluency. Leaders should ensure that these pupils are supported to catch up with their reading knowledge. They should also make sure that these pupils read regularly from books which are well matched to the sounds they are taught.

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	149020
DfE registration number	354/6041
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10267727
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Five Rivers Child Care Ltd
Chair	David Howard
Headteacher	Danielle Hulme
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,200 to £101,400
Telephone number	01706 390419
Website	www.five-rivers.org/education/schools/willow-view-school
Email address	danielle.hulme@five-rivers.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school's pre-registration inspection took place on 14 June 2022.
- This is the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered by the Department of Education on 4 August 2022.
- The school is located in a former nursery school and residential building. These premises are situated on the same site, located in a residential area of Rochdale.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have autistic spectrum condition and behaviour difficulties. All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan. Some pupils are currently looked after by the local authority.
- The school caters for pupils who have disengaged from mainstream school. The school's aims are to re-engage pupils who are not suited to, or who are struggling with, traditional education pathways. Leaders aim to engage these pupils in personalised, high-quality education.
- The school currently caters for pupils in Year 4 to Year 11.
- Pupils are placed at the school by the local authority. The school sometimes accepts pupils from different local authorities when they are being placed out of their area.
- A deputy headteacher has been appointed since the pre-registration inspection.
- Leaders make use of one unregistered alternative provider for a very small number of pupils.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and staff. Inspectors also spoke with the Five Rivers Child Care Ltd senior education team, including the executive headteacher, the head of education and the education adviser to the proprietor board. An inspector also spoke with the chair of the proprietor board and the CEO of Five Rivers Child Care Ltd.

- Inspectors spoke to many pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the standards. As part of this, an inspector made a tour of the school's premises accompanied by the headteacher and other leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation document, risk assessments, and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, and the single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding was in the school. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of an alternative provider.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, PSHE education, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector observed pupils reading to familiar staff.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff survey and the pupil survey. An inspector spoke with parents on the telephone.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

Rebecca Jewitt

His Majesty's Inspector

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