

Edstart Schools Wirral

237 Liscard Road, Wallasey, Merseyside CH44 5TH

Inspection dates

23 January 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)(b)(ii), 2(2)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor has prepared an appropriate curriculum policy which sets out a sufficiently broad range of subjects for pupils to study. This policy explains the school's aims for the curriculum. For example, the policy shows how the curriculum will contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education. The policy explains how pupils will learn about the fundamental British values, such as democracy and individual liberty. This policy also describes how pupils will be supported to develop an understanding of life as a British citizen.
- The curriculum policy is supported by schemes of work for each subject. These schemes of work reflect the school's ambitious intent for what pupils should learn over time. The school has considered the order in which pupils should learn important knowledge, so that their learning builds up securely. The curriculum design considers the needs of the pupils who will attend, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Pupils will have access to a range of academic and vocational qualifications according to their abilities, interests and needs.
- Leaders have placed appropriate importance on the teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening and mathematics. Pupils will also study subjects including biology, religious studies, design technology, art, citizenship and physical education (PE).
- There is a scheme of work for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. There is an emphasis on the development of pupils' skills for future life, for example, managing personal finances and understanding people's rights and responsibilities. The topics covered in PSHE are extensive. These include topics which encourage pupils' respect for other people, including those with the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

- The school has put in place a policy and a suitable scheme of work for careers education. Pupils will receive impartial careers information, advice and guidance tailored to their needs and interests.

Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)–2A(1)(g), 2A(2)

- The PSHE curriculum will provide pupils with relationships, sex and health education. The proposed school's policy complies with the relevant statutory guidance. Leaders have considered how they will consult with parents and carers about the policy, including parents of pupils new to the proposed school. Leaders are aware of their duty to ensure that the policy statement is placed on the proposed school's website.

Paragraph 3, 3(a)–3(g), 3(h)–3(j)

- Staff appointed to the proposed school will receive advice and guidance to help them to deliver the curriculum effectively. The school will carry out a range of quality assurance activities to ensure that in each subject, pupils increase their understanding and develop the knowledge intended.
- It is intended that assessments will be carried out to establish pupils' starting points when pupils join the proposed school. Teachers will check pupils' progress and attainment regularly. Teachers will use the findings from these assessments to inform their teaching.
- Leaders have provided an appropriate quantity and range of resources for pupils, such as stationery and textbooks. These resources are of good quality.
- An appropriate policy sets out the school's expectations for pupils' behaviour. There is a focus on supporting pupils to manage their own behaviour in readiness for future life. For example, the policy provides information about how leaders and staff will promote responsible behaviour in the proposed school. The policy sets out the strategies to be used for dealing with inappropriate behaviour, including bullying.

Paragraph 4

- A suitable assessment policy has been put in place.
- Pupils' progress will be shared regularly with parents, and with those responsible for governance.
- 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)–5(d)(iii)

- The proprietor has ensured that appropriate consideration has been given to pupils' SMSC development. Through the curriculums for religious studies and for PSHE, pupils will learn about a range of faiths and cultures. The curriculum will provide pupils with opportunities to learn about British values such as the rule of law, individual liberty and democracy. It is intended that pupils will learn how they can contribute to the life of their community, and to consider the impact of their choices and behaviour on the environment. These experiences will help pupils to prepare for life beyond school.

- The school's policies include positive references to all of the protected characteristics set out in legislation. The proprietor understands the need to ensure that pupils benefit from a balance of opposing views when they learn about politics.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- The proprietor has followed current statutory guidance in the development of the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe and to promote their welfare at the proposed school. This includes the provision of a suitable safeguarding policy.
- The head of school will be the designated safeguarding lead. The proprietor has ensured that those staff deputising for the designated lead have been trained to the same level.
- All staff will receive an appropriate induction programme, regular safeguarding training and frequent updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism. Appropriate measures have been put in place to ensure that pupils are safe when they work online.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a)–9(c), 10

- Suitable behaviour and anti-bullying policies are in place, ready for when the proposed school opens. Any incidents of poor behaviour will be recorded. Leaders intend to cross-reference these records with any other concerns so that they can gain a full picture of an individual pupil. This will help them to respond quickly to any needs that arise. The behaviour policy includes appropriate and proportionate sanctions. The anti-bullying policy contains details of the actions that leaders will take to address any bullying incidents.

Paragraphs 11, 12

- The written health and safety policy is tailored to the school's premises and complies with all relevant laws.
- Staff new to the proposed school will receive health and safety training as part of their induction. A programme of regular checks has been established to identify and rectify any faults at the premises. For example, electrical equipment and water temperature will be tested regularly.
- The proprietor has ensured that in the building where the proposed school will operate, there is a range of measures to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. For example, there are fire extinguishers which are checked regularly. The building has smoke alarms. Leaders have made arrangements for regular fire drills for staff and pupils. There is signage around the building identifying fire exits and muster points to facilitate escape in the event of fire.

Paragraph 13

- The proprietor has drawn up a first-aid policy. Adequate arrangements have been made for the provision of suitably qualified staff to ensure that the policy can be implemented as intended.

Paragraph 14

- The proposed number of staff will ensure that pupils should be supervised effectively throughout the school day. Leaders intend that pupils will always be supervised indoors and outdoors, including at breaktimes and when undertaking visits to the local sports centre.

Paragraph 15

- The proposed school will have appropriate systems in place to register pupils' attendance. These systems will allow leaders and staff to monitor any absences effectively. The proprietor and the governing body will receive regular reports on pupils' attendance at the school. Reports to parents will include information about pupils' attendance.
- The school has a suitable admissions policy. Leaders have established systems to ensure that the school's admission and attendance registers will comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

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

- A suitable risk assessment policy has been developed, supported by a wide range of risk assessments. These risk assessments show the actions that the school proposes to take to minimise risks, including for trips and visits beyond school.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a)–18(2)(e), 18(3)

- The proprietor understands the checks that need to take place prior to staff working in the school. These include an enhanced criminal record check, as well as checks on staff's identification and their right to work in the United Kingdom. Leaders have completed safer recruitment training.

Paragraph 19(2), 19(2)(a)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)

- The proprietor understands the checks that they need to carry out in order to ensure any agency staff that they employ are suitable to work with pupils.

Paragraph 20(6), 20(6)(a)–20(6)(c)

- All of the required checks for the members of the proprietor body have been completed.

Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3)–21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a)–21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c), 21(6)

- A single central record has been established. This record meets the requirements for the information that it must contain, including that which relates to the leadership and management of the school.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- The proposed school is located in a former public advice centre. There are a number of classrooms, kitchens, offices, a dining room and a large room for recreation. The accommodation occupies three floors. It is of a good standard and is well maintained.

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a)–23(1)(c), 28(1), 28(1)(a)–28(1)(d)

- There are separate toilet facilities for male and female pupils. The toilet cubicles can be locked from the inside to provide privacy. There is hot and cold running water. The hot water does not pose a scalding risk. There are toilets for the use of disabled pupils and adults. These are lockable from the inside.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils will have access to drinking water throughout the day. Sources of drinking water are in a separate area from the toilet facilities. Leaders have also arranged for the installation of a water dispenser in one of the corridors.
- Pupils will receive their PE lessons at the local sports centre. Pupils will have sole use of the shower and changing facilities at this sports centre when they attend.

Paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- There is a room set aside for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils. This room contains a sink, toilet and first-aid box. A suitable bed, cover and pillow have been provided.

Paragraphs 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 29(1)–29(1)(b)

- Pupils will have access to a safe outdoor space. This will provide an appropriate place for pupils to play and relax when not in lessons. Formal PE sessions will be regularly timetabled in accordance with the school's curriculum.
- The acoustic conditions and lighting in each room are of a suitable standard, having regard to the nature of the activities that will take place.
- There is suitable external lighting. This ensures that pupils, staff and visitors can enter or exit the building safely in the hours of darkness.
- It is likely that all of the standards in this part will be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

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

- The proprietor has set up a website ready for when the proposed school opens. The proprietor is fully aware of the information that must be published on the proposed school's website.
- There is an appropriate range of information available for parents and pupils when they join the school. All required policies are in place, such as those for admissions, curriculum, behaviour and safeguarding. All documents will be made available for parents on request from the school, as well as being available on the school's website.
- For pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, leaders intend to provide the necessary information to the responsible local authority for the review of the plan.

- The proposed school intends to provide termly and annual reports on pupils' progress and attainment to parents. These reports will also provide information on pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Leaders are aware that following any inspection, copies of the inspection report must be provided to parents and published on the school's website.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(a)–33(k)

- A suitable complaints policy has been put in place. This policy sets out the timescales for responding to complaints and includes information about the storage and sharing of written records. The policy ensures that the procedure for making a complaint is transparent.
- This policy will be published on the school's website.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a)–34(1)(c)

- The proprietor has experience of setting up and running two other independent schools and a number of alternative provisions. It has the appropriate knowledge and skills to ensure that the school meets the standards consistently.
- The proprietor has ensured that those with responsibilities for leadership and management have appropriate knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable accessibility plan that meets the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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	150427
DfE registration number	344/6020
Inspection number	10319943

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	Edstart Specialist Education Ltd
Chair	James Lowe
Headteacher	Kevin Buchanan and Dympna Woods
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,000
Telephone number	07502 095422
Website	www.edstartschools.com
Email address	james@edstartschools.com
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	None	11–16	11–16
Number of pupils on the school roll	None	50	50

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	None	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	None	50
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	None	50
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	None	Not known
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	None	Not known

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	None	6
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	None	6

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located in a former public advice centre at 237 Liscard Road, Wallasey, Merseyside CH44 5TH.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 50 pupils, aged between 11 and 16 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater mainly for pupils who have been excluded from or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools.
- The proprietor body intends that pupils will be placed at the school by local authorities and mainstream schools.
- The proprietor body does not intend to use any alternative provision.
- Some pupils who attend this school may have SEND. It is expected that most of these pupils will have social, emotional and mental health needs, and that some may have an EHC plan. However, pupils may also have other SEND, for example, speech, language and communication needs.
- Two executive headteachers will share oversight of this school and another of the proprietor's schools. A head of school has been appointed to lead the school on a day-to-day basis.

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 chair of the proprietor body, the executive headteachers and other senior leaders.
- The inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector completed a tour of the school to check the suitability of the proposed premises against the relevant standards. The inspector also looked at a wide range of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour, and health and safety. The inspector checked documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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