

Inspection of Bow Street School

Bow Street, Bilston, West Midlands WV14 7NB

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils start at the school with poor self-esteem and low aspirations. Leaders and staff inspire them to dream big. Everybody at the school wants the best for pupils. Relationships are highly positive. Small class sizes mean that teachers get to know pupils very well. Pupils grow in confidence and learn to believe in themselves. This is significant as many have not attended school for a considerable time.

Learning is carefully personalised to meet pupils' individual needs as well as their own interests. The sharp focus on achieving qualifications in English and mathematics means that pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education and/or employment. This helps pupils settle well into college once they leave school.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They arrive on time and settle quickly because of staff's high expectations. Attitudes to learning are positive. Bullying is extremely rare. Incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils say that they are happy at school and feel safe. Spending time with Winston, the therapy dog, contributes to pupils' well-being.

While the wider curriculum does not stretch and challenge all pupils academically, it contributes wholly towards their social and emotional development. Opportunities available outside the classroom support pupils' physical and mental health.

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

Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils. Often, pupils start at the school lacking aspiration and confidence. Staff build positive relationships with pupils. They engage pupils well through precise and well-planned personalised learning opportunities. This helps pupils to settle into school and inspires them to achieve well.

The curriculum deliberately focuses on teaching English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) as core subjects. This is because leaders want pupils to progress to their next place of learning with secure basic skills. These subjects are planned and taught well by teachers who are highly skilled. They identify what pupils need to know and they make sure this builds on pupils' existing knowledge. These means that over time, pupils develop important skills that they can apply with confidence.

The sharp focus on developing writing skills helps pupils to learn grammatical features securely. They use increasingly rich vocabulary so that their writing becomes more established over time. Pupils arrive as reluctant readers. However, teachers ensure that they are immersed into well-chosen texts and poetry. This ensures that pupil's reading skills develop well.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers adapt learning well to meet pupils' individual needs. In both English and mathematics, work is carefully planned to meet pupils' academic capability as well as their key interests. This means that pupils are building their skills while writing about their favourite band or game. This engages pupils well and supports their learning because teachers make sure that key subject content is covered and repeated.

In a few areas of the curriculum, such as history and science, learning is not as well planned and sequenced. In these sessions, some learning does not build on what pupils already know. While pupils enjoy learning about the chosen themes, the content is not always taught in sufficient depth to be challenging enough for all pupils. This means that some pupils do not learn new skills and knowledge well enough.

Leaders have high expectations and ensure that routines are well understood and embedded. Consequently, pupils arrive on time and settle quickly. The behaviour policy is effective and implemented consistently by all staff. As a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils therefore engage well in their learning. They try hard and persevere when tasks are difficult. Pupils who have not accessed education for some time say that they enjoy coming to school because teachers understand and value them. Bullying is rare and when disagreements do occur, they are quickly resolved and do not have an impact on learning. Pupils say that school helps them to make friends.

Opportunities for pupils to develop socially and emotionally are exceptional. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is matched well to the needs of the cohort. This is because teachers know their pupils well and understand the difficulties they face. Taught sessions are enriched with gardening, therapeutic art and educational visits.

Diversity is celebrated. Pupils learn about different cultures through stories, poems and cookery. This helps to develop their understanding and appreciation of the wider world. Pupils are aspirational and have clear plans for their futures.

The school offers careers education that is further supported through external, impartial guidance. Pupils say that school helps them to prepare for what comes next in their education or training and employment.

Relationships and sex education is planned and taught well. Leaders have considered the content carefully and engaged with appropriate professionals, including nurses and relationship counsellors, to enhance the learning. This means that subject content is delivered with appropriate expertise so that pupils learn and remember more.

The school chooses not to have a governing body. The two proprietors, one of whom is the headteacher, oversee the work of the school. All independent school standards are met. The accessibility policy is detailed; the school therefore complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietors' approach to self-

evaluation lacks rigour. Leaders have not securely based their strategic vision on the school's current strengths and weaknesses. This means that the work of the proprietor does not focus sharply enough on the areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The policy is written with due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It is available publicly on the school's website and available from the school office.

The work of the designated safeguarding leads supports a culture of safeguarding within the school. They are appropriately trained and adopt robust processes. Staff know how to identify signs of abuse. They know what action to take if they are concerned about a child.

Teachers know about localised risks to children, and they ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- A few areas of the curriculum are not taught in sufficient depth. Pupils learn basic facts. They do not have enough opportunity to make connections in their learning and link this to what they already know. This means that, in these subject areas, learning lacks challenge and does not build over time into secure deep knowledge. Leaders need to review these areas of the curriculum to ensure that the content is appropriate. They need to make sure that learning in all subjects is carefully sequenced so that pupils can learn more and remember more.
- The school's strategic direction and oversight is not clear. School development is not informed by robust evaluation. This means that it does not focus on what the school needs to do to improve. The work of the proprietors needs to be sharpened to ensure that they reflect on their current strengths and evaluate their weaknesses with more rigour. This will enable them to strengthen their oversight and secure accountability for improvement.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	142603
DfE registration number	336/6001
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10212815
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Cherri Felton Clare Harper
Headteacher	Clare Harper
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,866
Telephone number	01902 494639
Website	www.bowstreetschool.com
Email address	bowstreetschool@mail.com
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 December 2017

Information about this school

- Bow Street School is a small independent school located in Bilston, near Wolverhampton. The school offers places to pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school was last inspected in December 2017, when it was judged to be outstanding.
- Places are commissioned by local authorities, including Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.

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 the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with both proprietors, one of whom is also the headteacher.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including reading, mathematics, ICT and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about other subjects, and looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding, to review the school's processes for keeping pupils safe. Documents were reviewed, including the safeguarding policy and other policies, including health and safety, attendance, admissions, behaviour and complaints. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences at school. Checks that the school had made on staff were also reviewed.
- The lead inspector toured the school to consider the suitability of the premises. Several key policies and documents were also explored to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Ashley Ofsted Inspector

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