

The Valiant School

May Street, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 1JA

Inspection date

27 September 2023

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)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(h) and 2(2)(i)

- The proposed school intends to support pupils who have been excluded from mainstream schools or are at risk of exclusion. The intention is to help pupils to manage and regulate their emotions and behaviour so that they can re-engage in purposeful learning. Leaders explain and demonstrate clearly how they will meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. The proposed curriculum is based on the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage and the national curriculum. This is likely to support pupils to access purposeful learning while they are in the proposed school, as well as preparing them for the next stage of their education.
- After receiving a referral for a place, the proposed school asserts that it will examine a range of information relating to the pupil to ensure that the provision can meet the pupil's needs. Wherever possible, staff will meet with the pupil and their parent(s) or carer(s) in the family home to support the transition process. It is intended that pupils will undertake an initial assessment when they join the school linked to their SEMH needs. These will then be recorded and tracked on a 'school profile matrix'. The proposed school asserts that this matrix will inform the emotional coaching sessions that pupils will experience as part of the weekly timetable. In addition, pupils will complete baseline assessments in reading, including for phonics, writing and mathematics. The proposed school asserts that the assessment information will be used by staff to inform teaching and learning opportunities.
- Curriculum plans map out the order of learning that pupils will follow. The plans indicate that pupils are likely to access a broad range of experiences in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic, and creative education. Curriculum plans are multi-layered. In the broadest sense, they provide an overview of what pupils will learn in each topic. In addition, the plans map out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn week by week. Teachers

will be expected to use the curriculum plans as a starting point to plan lessons, which the proposed school asserts will be tailored to the needs of individual pupils.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these independent school standards (the standards) are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(j) and 4

- In line with the school's nurturing ethos, the proposed school intends to develop pupils' confidence, self-esteem and levels of independence. This is identified as a core purpose. The proposed school states that the emotional coaching sessions will feed into the academic curriculum to support pupils to become confident learners.
- The proposed school articulates how staff will remove barriers to learning by making reasonable adjustments so that pupils can access the curriculum fully. This will include organising experiential learning, making use of the outdoor environment, acquiring resources to support writing, and making adaptations to support physical and/or sensory needs, when required.
- The headteacher has experience of working with pupils with SEMH needs in other provisions. The two teachers appointed so far have relevant experience in the early years and primary phases.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 2A(1), 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g) and 2A(2)

- The relationships and sex education (RSE) policy outlines provision for primary-aged pupils. Clear themes, such as healthy relationships, are identified and revisited in the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Regarding the RSE policy, the proposed school has consulted with partner schools and intends to consult with parents and carers individually during the induction process. The RSE policy references the right of parents and carers to withdraw their child fully or partly from sex education lessons.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii) and 5(d)(iii)

- The development of pupils' social skills in a range of situations is evident in the curriculum. The proposed school is aware that many of the prospective pupils will need varying levels of support in social situations due to their past experiences and individual needs. The proposed school intends to support pupils so that they can work independently as well as collaboratively with their peers when accessing the curriculum.
- There is no evidence in curriculum plans and wider documentation to suggest that fundamental British values will be undermined. Rather, the curriculum identifies clearly how these values will be promoted through learning and other activities. For example, pupils will be encouraged to recognise and celebrate similarities and differences between themselves and others. The proposed school also intends to raise pupils' awareness of different faiths and cultures through the PSHE education curriculum,

which will be supplemented by visits to places of worship and/or visiting speakers from faith groups.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b) and 32(1)(c)

- The proposed school's safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent government guidance and is available on the proposed school's website.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has completed suitable training in relation to this role. It is intended that a member of the teaching staff will be the deputy DSL. The safeguarding director will also be able to provide extra support to the safeguarding team if required.
- Proposed safeguarding training for staff will focus on government guidance updates dealing with pupil disclosures, recording concerns and the 'Prevent' duty. The proposed school intends to organise regular refresher sessions to keep staff abreast of safeguarding updates. The proposed school plans to check staff's understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities through short quizzes and by exploring specific themes in safeguarding link meetings. Staff are knowledgeable about the increased vulnerability of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c) and 10

- The proposed school has created a comprehensive behaviour policy, which is underpinned by a positive approach. The proposed school aims to help pupils understand and recognise how their emotions influence their behaviour. Rewards will be linked to the school's core values of: 'Be me, Be healthy, Be curious, Be kind, Be brave'. The proposed school asserts that staff will be aware of pupils' behaviour triggers and know which de-escalation strategies to adopt. The proposed curriculum, the pupil-centred approach and the daily routines provide opportunities to reinforce and reward pupils' positive behaviour.
- The proposed school has a suitable anti-bullying policy in place. Pupils will be taught about the different types of bullying through the PSHE education curriculum. The proposed school has strategies in place if bullying does occur that focus on supporting both the victim and the perpetrator.
- The proposed school intends to keep detailed records of any behaviour and bullying incidents in an online system. This is the same system that will be used to record safeguarding incidents and concerns. This should enable the proposed school to identify any behaviour patterns and possible trends.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- A detailed health and safety policy and other, related policies are in place. It is intended that all staff will complete first-aid training.

- Fire safety checks, including on emergency lighting and call-point checks, will be carried out on a regular basis. It is intended that fire safety will be included in the staff induction process.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

- There are currently no pupils attending the school. The information that the proposed school plans to include on the admissions register is in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance.
- The high staff-to-pupil ratio suggests that pupils are likely to be suitably supervised throughout the school day. It is intended that pupils will work closely with particular staff members to build trusting relationships.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5) and 21(6)

- The proposed school has appropriate recruitment procedures in place. This includes obtaining references prior to interview. It is likely that all the necessary pre-employment checks will be made before an offer of employment is given.
- The safeguarding director and headteacher are both safer recruitment trained. It is intended that at least one of them will sit on every recruitment panel.
- The format of the single central record contains the full range of pre-employment checks. It will be stored centrally in an electronic format. It is intended that the chief finance officer will update the single central record when new members of staff are recruited. It will be checked termly by the headteacher and/or the safeguarding director, who will report their findings to the governing board.
- The proposed school does not intend to use supply staff due to the needs of the pupils that it intends to admit and the importance of building stable relationships.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)(a), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25, 26, 27(a), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The proposed school building was previously used by youth services to offer a range of services to the local community. It is on the same site as Moorpark Junior School, to which it is joined by a short walkway. The premises have been refurbished to a high standard. All rooms are well lit and have good acoustics. There are two spacious classrooms that contain a range of suitable and adaptable furniture. In addition, there

are several smaller rooms, including a phonics intervention room, a quiet reading room and break-out areas. There is suitable space for the proposed number of pupils to learn in.

- There is a single, unisex toilet for pupils and there is a separate staff toilet that also doubles as an accessible toilet. Both have hot and cold running water and handwashing facilities. The medical room is spacious and contains a washing facility. The medical room is next door to a toilet.
- There is a small outdoor area that children in early years will use to support their learning. All pupils will have access to the extensive outdoor space in the adjoining junior school. Pupils will have timetabled sessions in the playground for their sole use. In addition, the proposed school also intends to organise joint sessions with pupils from the junior school to encourage social interaction and purposeful play. The outdoor area is suitably secure and well lit.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(b), 27 and 27(b)

- At the previous pre-registration inspection, these standards were judged as not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor body has installed suitable external lighting and ensured that both individual toilets can be locked from the inside.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are now likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

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

- All policies, documents and information required for the pre-registration inspection were provided in a timely manner. Where relevant, policies reflect the fact that the proposed school will cater for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The proposed school has overseen the construction of a school website. The website includes the school's vision, values and aims, relevant contact details, and other useful information. All required policies and documentation for the proposed school are available through this website.
- The proposed school has a comprehensive understanding of how relevant staff will contribute to the annual review process for pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. It is anticipated that information from ongoing pupil review meetings will feed into the annual review process. If required, the proposed school is prepared to take the lead and organise the annual review process.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The complaints procedure sets out the steps that parents and carers need to take if they have a concern about the proposed school. The aim is to resolve complaints informally where possible, but more formal steps are outlined, including the proposed arrangements for a panel hearing. The policy sets out suitable timeframes for dealing with complaints.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has a clear rationale for why it wants to open the school. This is linked to the increased demand for specialist school places for pupils with SEMH needs due to the lack of provision in the local area. The proprietor body's vision is that the proposed school will equip pupils with the required levels of self-regulation, knowledge and skills so that they are ready to return to a mainstream setting or a specialist provision, if required.
- The proprietor body is made up of three directors, all of whom have extensive experience of working in education. Their expertise includes school leadership, and expertise in curriculum, finance, safeguarding, business management and human resources. The headteacher has experience of working alongside pupils with SEMH needs in other settings.
- The headteacher has worked closely with the proprietor body to prepare the proposed school for registration. The proprietor body has established multi-layered monitoring systems to support and challenge the headteacher and staff to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The proprietor body is in the process of setting up a management committee, which will be responsible for different aspects of the school, including safeguarding, the curriculum and staffing. Potential committee members who have already been approached have expertise in business, law and the local community.
- At the previous pre-registration inspection, standards 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b) were judged as not likely to be met. Since then, leaders at all levels have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the independent school standards so that these can be met consistently and effectively.
- The proprietor body has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proposed school has ensured that it has a suitable accessibility plan in place. This plan focuses on the physical environment, the curriculum and the sharing of information. The plan meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proposed school considers and plans for the needs of pupils with SEND.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- At the previous pre-registration inspection, this requirement was judged as not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor body has drawn on the expertise of early years

professionals and DfE guidance when planning early years provision, especially in relation to the curriculum. Leaders understand the requirements for safeguarding and the welfare of children in early years. In addition, they have designed a curriculum that supports and takes into account the prime and specific areas of learning. These form the foundations and building blocks for future learning.

- The proprietor body has ensured that these requirements are likely to be met.

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	150182
DfE registration number	861/6041
Inspection number	10306951

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 school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	The Valiant School CIC
Chair	Jon Lovatt
Headteacher	Peter Hogg
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,500
Telephone number	01782 234445
Website	www.thevaliantschool.org.uk
Email address	office@thevaliantschool.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	4 to 11	4 to 11
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	20	20

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	20
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	20
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	10
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	10

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	8
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located on a housing estate in Burslem. The building is on the same site as Moorpark Junior School. The building has been renovated and refurbished to a high standard.
- It is intended that the proposed school will cater for boys and girls aged from four to 11 years.
- The proposed school will cater for pupils with SEMH needs. Some pupils may be at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools, and some pupils may have already been excluded. It is expected that some pupils will be dual registered.
- It is anticipated that some pupils will have an EHC plan. Pupils will be placed in the proposed setting by other schools or local authorities, mainly those for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.
- The proposed school will not have a religious denomination.
- The proposed school does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the DfE to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards if it is given permission to open. This is the proposed school's second pre-registration inspection.
- Many documents were reviewed by the lead inspector prior to the inspection. Additional documents, including the school's single central record, were scrutinised on site.
- As the inspection included a full-day, on-site visit, a tour of the premises was completed.
- The lead inspector met with all three members of the proprietor body and the headteacher.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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