

Birtley House Independent School

Fawkham Road, West Kingsdown, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 6AY

Inspection date

20 January 2026

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 3 to 3(h)

- At the time of the last standard inspection, inspectors identified weaknesses in the quality of education that pupils received. This meant that pupils were not achieving as well as they should. The curriculum was not implemented consistently enough and checks on pupils' learning were not used sufficiently well to check what pupils had learned before moving on to new work. As a result, pupils were not as prepared as they should have been for new learning.
- Leaders have taken concerted action to address weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. For instance, they have completed a full review of the curriculum. This has enabled leaders to identify and address gaps in curriculum content. Work completed to improve the curriculum has ensured a cohesive and well-structured curriculum is in place, which provides a secure basis for teaching and learning.
- Written curriculum plans and schemes of work detail the content to be taught in each subject. Leaders have organised and sequenced the content carefully to ensure progression in learning. Curriculum plans include identification of some of the key subject vocabulary that pupils need to learn. Since the last inspection, leaders have prioritised professional learning for staff so that teachers have the subject knowledge and expertise needed to deliver the curriculum effectively.
- Leaders have used a range of initiatives, including the introduction of clearly structured lessons, to ensure that the planned curriculum is taught consistently across the school. Staff generally make suitable adaptations to the curriculum according to pupils' individual needs.
- There are early signs of improvements in pupils' learning. For instance, they are more engaged in their learning than previously and use key subject vocabulary with increasing confidence. However, the revised curriculum has been in place for a relatively short period of time, so the full impact on pupils' learning is not evident in pupils'

achievement. Leaders are focused on making sure that the revised curriculum is fully and securely embedded over time.

- Leaders have successfully developed a more positive and cohesive culture in the school in recent months. Professional discussions between staff about the curriculum have become a routine part of school life. These have contributed to improved consistency and a shared understanding of school development priorities.
- At the time of the previous standard inspection, there were weaknesses in the teaching of early reading. At that time, leaders had not ensured that staff were trained to deliver the school's chosen phonics programme effectively. This meant that there was variation in the quality of phonics teaching that pupils received.
- Leaders have introduced a phonics programme that is now well established and delivered consistently. Pupils' responses in lessons and the work in their books indicates the positive impact this is having on their early reading skills and on their confidence in reading.
- The last inspection identified weaknesses in systems for identifying and providing support for pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have addressed this aspect of the school's work fully. They have ensured effective procedures for identifying SEND are in place, that pupils are supported appropriately and that checks are in place to monitor the impact of this support. Leaders make sure that staff are clear about pupils' needs. They use professional learning opportunities well to inform teachers' practice and continue to strengthen staff subject knowledge.
- Leaders have identified appropriate assessment procedures to check pupils' learning and the impact of curriculum developments over time. However, these arrangements are at an early stage of development and are not yet fully established. Consequently, this requirement remains unmet.
- The school has made progress towards meeting the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards) in this part. Although some requirements are now met, others in this part of the standards remain unmet.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(b)

- Leaders have taken successful action to address weaknesses identified in the school at the last inspection. The pace of development has accelerated since November 2025. However, while much has been achieved, some of the standards continue to be unmet.
- Leaders have established a robust programme for checking how effectively the revised curriculum is implemented. Curriculum leaders have dedicated time to complete activities, such as visiting lessons, work scrutiny and discussions with pupils about their learning. These arrangements have just begun.
- The proprietor has ensured that all members of staff have clear job descriptions with clear lines of accountability.
- The proprietor has taken appropriate steps to strengthen oversight of the school's work, such as the introduction of a governing body and the commissioning of external reviews of the school's performance.

- This part of the standards remains unmet.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor demonstrates a firm commitment to equal opportunities. They use resources such as independent audits of the school's accessibility arrangements to support reviews of provision. The school has an up-to-date single equality policy.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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, as set out in the annex of this report. 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 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that teaching at the school-
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

School details

Unique reference number	136211
DfE registration number	886/6136
Inspection number	10437752

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	Other Independent Special School
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Paul Mortimer-Lee & Camille Maruccia-Lee
Chair	Stephen Turner
Headteacher	Mr Paul Mortimer-Lee (Director)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,000 to £56,862
Telephone number	01474 853 192
Website	www.birtleyhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	office@birtleyhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	23 to 25 September 2025

Information about this school

- Birtley House Independent School provides education for pupils with SEND. The school caters for pupils with specific or general learning difficulties, social and communication difficulties, language and communication needs, and emotional, attachment and anxiety disorders. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan and many are placed at the school by local authorities.
- The school is located at Fawkham Road, West Kingsdown, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 6AY. It operates from a detached house, which is set in extensive grounds.
- The headteacher took up the post in September 2025.

- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- The most recent standard independent school inspection took place in September 2025.

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 independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The school was judged to not comply with the independent school standards and other requirements at the last standard independent school inspection in September 2025.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since the last standard independent school inspection in September 2025.
- The Department for Education (DfE) required the school to prepare a statutory action plan. Ofsted evaluated the school's action plan on 11 December 2025 when it was found to be not acceptable.
- This inspection was conducted with no notice.
- During the inspection, the inspector toured the school and visited a range of lessons with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. She held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and pupils. The inspector also spoke with one of the directors.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation and records linked with safeguarding and the leadership and management of the school.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

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.

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