

Birmingham Independent College

Address: Albert Hall, Witton Road, Aston, Birmingham, West Midlands, B6 5NU

Unique reference number (URN): 143418

Inspection report: 23 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.
- **Insufficient evidence:** Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

The school provides pupils with an opportunity to re-engage with education. All pupils have had prolonged periods of absence from school or have been out of school for years before joining here. The school has robust systems in place to record, support and improve pupils' attendance. As a result of this work, attendance is very positive and individual pupils' attendance improves significantly. Leaders have high expectations for attendance and build very positive relationships with parents and carers. They use these to great effect when encouraging high attendance. Daily calls and end-of-day messages help parents to see the importance of regular attendance. Pupils want to come to this school.

Pupils' behaviour is very well understood and managed. All pupils have complex needs and profound learning difficulties which in most cases manifest through their behaviours. Staff work closely with pupils, their families and one another to understand pupils, their emotions and triggers. They use this information to carefully plan how best to support them when they are in distress or upset. This proactive work helps prevent many incidents from occurring. When incidents do happen, staff deal with them calmly and effectively. Staff often share support strategies with parents so that they can be used to support pupils at home. As a result, pupils are able to learn in a calm, purposeful environment.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils learn the intended specialised curriculum well. This includes older pupils. Pupils learn to communicate their basic needs and express themselves with increasing confidence. This ensures that they develop basic human needs and expressions at a stage-appropriate way. The curriculum effectively focuses on personal needs and safety, equipping pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to help keep themselves safe, for example.

Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in the functional and academic pathways. Pupils gain foundational knowledge, for example in literacy and numeracy. Where pupils have completed public examinations, they have been successful.

Pupils are well prepared for later life because of the school's focus on independent living and life skills. Here pupils learn how to navigate challenges of daily life such as recognising strangers, eating independently or buying things in a shop. This helps pupils to understand and overcome everyday challenges and prepares them well for later life.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching because they have secure systems in place to monitor how well the curriculum is taught. This means that they effectively evaluate what works well for each pupil and what needs to be better. The school

has established a clear and detailed approach to ensuring all pupils learn an appropriate curriculum. This includes older pupils. Leaders have designed a pathway curriculum, each with pupils' specific needs in mind. As a result, every pupil joins a pathway with a clear intention of improving their communication, independence and individual progress.

On the school's 'experiential pathway', pupils' communication and language skills are the main focus. Staff work hard and effectively to ensure that, over time, all pupils can articulate their needs and wants. In the 'functional and academic pathways', pupils complete a range of different courses and complete public examinations, for example entry level courses, GCSEs, A Levels and vocational courses. Pupils gain the skills and knowledge they need to move on to positive destinations.

Staff support pupils' learning effectively. They help them to communicate using specific tools, and pupils increasingly respond independently. However, this is not yet consistent. At times, some staff do not support pupils as well as they should. For example, the communication aids are not used outside of lessons, making it harder for pupils to communicate at lunchtimes.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Pupils at the school have complex and profound special educational needs and/or disabilities. All have an education, health and care plan. The school works effectively to find out what these mean for each pupil on a daily basis. Staff use Individual pupil information that breaks pupils' needs down into manageable steps. This helps to ensure that all staff know what pupils' needs are and how to best support them throughout the day. All pupils learn a bespoke and individualised curriculum that is carefully designed to ensure pupils can succeed.

Pupils with complex needs and those at the earliest stages of communication are increasingly developing a secure sense of social awareness and engagement. Through typically attuned adult support and structured opportunities to interact, they are beginning to recognise familiar people, respond to shared attention and participate in reciprocal exchanges.

Effectively planned provision supports pupils to understand and manage aspects of personal safety, including recognising familiar routines, anticipating transitions and responding appropriately to guidance and instructions. As a result, pupils show growing confidence in their interactions, demonstrate emerging awareness of others and begin to navigate their environment with increasing assurance and independence over time.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and proprietors have a clear vision for their school. They drive this vision through high expectations of themselves, their staff and pupils. They are aspirational for all pupils, while always considering pupils' needs. Leaders have worked well to address any shortcomings from the past. For example, safeguarding practices are effective, all pupils have a bespoke curriculum and staff receive the information and training to help them meet pupils' needs.

There now exist robust systems for checking how effectively the school is operating. Leaders know what works and where further improvements are needed. They work well with external agencies and professionals to ensure their provision is of a high standard. The proprietor body fulfils its responsibilities well and provides the school with resources it needs to improve. As a result of this work, leaders and proprietors have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

Staff receive regular training to ensure they can meet pupils' varying needs well. This work ensures that the curriculum is now implemented effectively. Staff feel valued and cared for, and say that leaders are mindful of their workload and wellbeing.

Parents are complimentary about the school. They value the care and support for their children, many of whom have had negative and traumatic experiences in education in the past. Many stated that the school has been 'a life saver' not only for their children but also the whole family.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has carefully planned a personal development programme with pupils' varying needs in mind. Leaders recognise the individual needs and vulnerabilities of pupils. As a result, there is a heavy focus on personal safety. Staff share this work with parents and carers to ensure this learning is reinforced at home.

Pupils have many opportunities to engage with and contribute to the local community. For example, the use of a local small animal farm allows pupils to demonstrate their caring side. They learn to grow and care for vegetables, developing an understanding of how living things thrive. These opportunities broaden pupils' experiences and foster a sense of care and belonging.

Pupils learn about consent and relationships in a stage-appropriate way. For example, they learn about kindness and engaging politely with one another and adults. They learn about what touch is appropriate and when it is not. This helps pupils to understand appropriate social behaviour.

The school has carefully planned a careers programme that ensures pupils have meaningful encounters with places of work. For example, some pupils have completed assisted work experience and later secured a part-time position with that employer. The school works hard to ensure that pupils gain independence skills so that they are well prepared for later life.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Staff work hard at Birmingham Independent College to get to know every pupil. They take time and work closely with families to understand pupils' individual needs. Many pupils have complex and profound special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders know that pupils have had prolonged periods out of education and staff work as a team to re-engage pupils with their education. This works very well, and most pupils now attend school regularly.

Staff build positive relationships with pupils and their parents and carers. This helps them to understand pupils' behaviours. Some pupils have significant issues with managing their emotions and can display challenging behaviour. Staff identify what might trigger pupils' behaviours and work well to reduce these triggers. In most cases, staff intervene before an issue arises. Pupils learn how to express themselves in a calm manner, and as a result pupils learn to manage their behaviour more effectively over time.

The school has high expectations for all pupils. Staff carefully tailor learning to individual pupils and their varying needs. For example, those on the academic pathway successfully complete qualifications that prepare them well for the world of work. On the experiential pathways, pupils develop communication skills so that they can express their needs and wishes more effectively.

Pupils' learning regularly goes beyond the classroom. As part of a carefully designed enrichment programme, pupils help on a local farm every week. Other pupils visit shops to practise using money in the real world. A particular strength of the school is in ensuring pupils learn about personal safety, independence and basic needs. For example, all pupils learn about consent and positive relationships in an appropriate way. This effectively helps to prepare pupils for later life.

Next steps

- The school should ensure that all staff consistently apply the agreed approaches and strategies, including those that support pupils' communication, throughout the school day.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspection started on 23 June 2026. It was paused in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence. The inspector returned on 29 June 2026 to complete the inspection.

The inspector spoke with the headteacher and members of the proprietor body, including the chair of the proprietor body. The inspector spoke with staff, visited lessons and accompanied the school to the local farm. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and scrutinised school documentation and policies.

The inspector considered responses from Ofsted's staff survey and the Ofsted Parent View survey.

The school caters for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils and students have a range of needs, including autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health difficulties and speech, language and communication needs.

The school uses no alternative provision.

The school is registered to admit pupils between the ages of 14 to 25. At the time of the inspection, there were fewer than 5 students in the sixth form. Therefore, the sixth form is not separately reported on.

The name of the proprietor body is Birmingham Independent College and the name of the chair of the proprietor body is Chester Morrison.

The fees currently charged are £20,718 to £94,199.

The email address of the school is info@bicollege.org.

Headteacher: Hermin McIntosh

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

1. Quality of education provided	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	

4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietorsStandards met

All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schoolsStandards met

All standards have been met.

6. Provision of informationStandards met

All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handledStandards met

All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schoolsStandards met

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:
Bianka Zemke, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 23 June 2026

Total pupils

14

School capacity

50

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

14

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright