

The Willows School
Willows
Dream • Believe • Achieve



School Prospectus

The Willows School, part of the



The image features a vibrant green background with a stylized tree. The tree's branches are composed of various shades of green, creating a sense of depth and movement. Instead of traditional leaves, the branches are adorned with numerous hand silhouettes of different sizes and orientations, some appearing to reach out or hold onto the branches. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a strong emphasis on human connection and growth.

Dream, Believe, Achieve



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New Beginnings



Edward Smethurst,
Proprietor

Ultimately, choosing the right school for a child will be a life changing decision. Ensuring it is a good decision is critical. We know that parents and carers want a high standard of education for their child to make good progress, in an environment where they can be happy and safe.

We are well known for supporting children and young people, with a range of needs and difficulties to be cared for and well supported in a range of different settings. We embrace our duty to support children to engage in education. Sourcing suitable schools or learning provision has been a huge challenge for us and for local authorities.

Our response was to set up new services to provide outreach and home tuition meaning that individuals can access relevant learning when they are not able to attend school. This has been successful and welcomed by local authorities, yet we know this never going to replace full-time education. It was an obvious decision and natural next step for us to open our first school.

The Willows School has been set up to provide full-time, personalised programmes of learning which will meet individual needs, difficulties, and interests of learners. Our aim is to ensure great educational outcomes for all pupils, including gaining the skills, qualifications, determination, and resilience to succeed in life beyond school.

Our staff team is highly experienced, suitably qualified and trained. Ultimately, they recognise and embrace the challenges associated with supporting pupils who have experienced disrupted education, have gaps in learning and whose needs were not met previously. We make it our business to support our staff team, to ensure their own well-being, so they can work effectively and remain passionate about making the difference.

We know that good quality, relevant education is key to improving pupil progress, personal development, well-being, and overall life chances. Our curriculum is based on the National Curriculum, with some great additions, including careers for all, independence, and enterprise skills. Pupils in each Key Stage can pursue personalised, appropriate programmes of learning, including academic and vocational pathways.

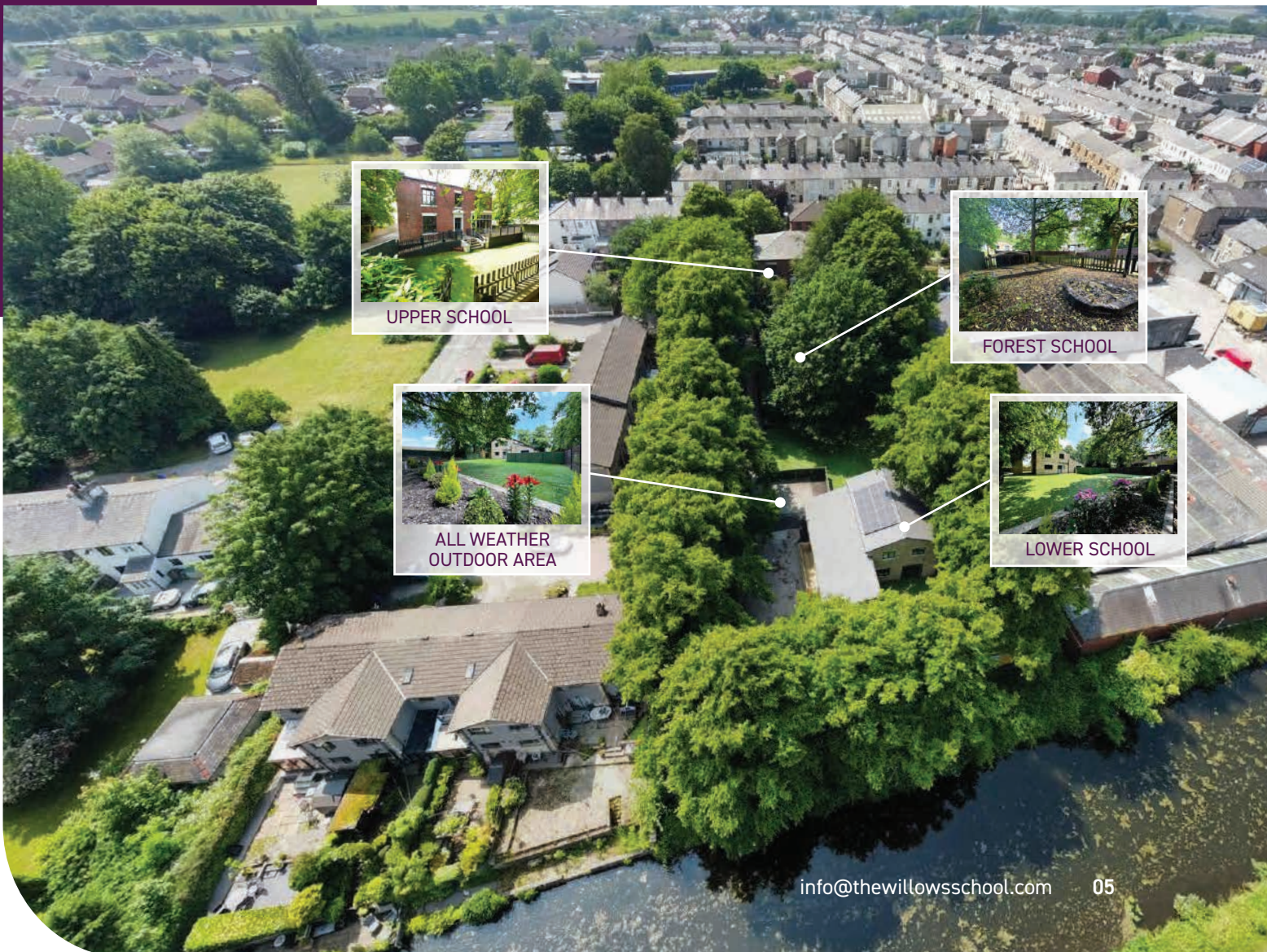
Your decision to choose our school for your child will be supported by us throughout your child's time at The Willows School. We will work closely with you as parents, carers, and local authorities to help ensure your decision was the right one.

We work collaboratively with our therapy team, being part of the therapeutic web around the child. This enhances our trauma informed and trauma responsive approach, building a safe and secure environment for our children to be able to access learning. We incorporate principles from the PACE model (Hughes 1997), further enhancing our trauma informed and attachment building environment; promoting 'connection before correction' to enable our children to engage in situations with more tolerance. Also maintaining our child-centered focus (Rogers 1957), weaving in acceptance, congruence and a belief in each of our children to achieve to their full ability.

Our psychotherapists attend each child's Child Looked After (CLA) reviews, and Personalised Education Plan (PEP) reviews in line with the needs of the child, having input into risk assessments and positive behaviour support plans. Relevant information is gathered by the therapist, and a personalised, targeted therapy plan is formulated.

Much of our work begins by developing safe, secure relationships with each child, our therapy team work alongside our education team to enhance these relationships and offer pre-therapy work (Prouty 2002), created for those who have challenges in psychological contact and connection. This is with an aim to offer 1:1 direct work when a child is ready in line with the therapy plan. Our therapy team also deliver in-house training to up-skill us as a whole team in response to our pupils needs.

Please do contact us at any time, we look forward to meeting you.



Branches Education Group

Strength in every branch. Growth in every child.

Branches Education Group is a growing cohort of specialist SEN schools across **Lancashire and Yorkshire**, united by a shared belief: that with the right support, every child can thrive.

Established in **2024**, Branches was formed to bring together high quality, child centred specialist provision under one carefully nurtured group—combining local identity with shared expertise, values and ambition.

Our Purpose

At Branches, we exist to create **safe, supportive and inspiring learning environments** where children are understood, valued and empowered.

Many of our pupils have experienced barriers to education. Our role is to remove those barriers—academically, emotionally and socially—so each child can rediscover confidence, curiosity and joy in learning.

We believe progress looks different for every child, and we celebrate **small steps, meaningful outcomes and long term growth.**

Our Values

Compassion

We meet every child where they are.

Consistency

We build trust through structure, routine, and strong relationships.

Creativity

We think beyond traditional teaching, finding what works for each learner.

Collaboration

We grow stronger when we work together — as colleagues, families, and communities.



Our School

A Warm Welcome from our Head Teacher

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to The Willows School. The Willows School is a DfE registered, independent, specialist day school in Rishton, near Blackburn, Lancashire. Our school provides high quality education for pupils aged 5 to 16 years. Pupils have a range of needs, including social, emotional, and mental health, autism, cognition and learning and communication difficulties. The Willows School is committed to developing pupils as individuals, enabling them to achieve their full potential.

School Vision

Our aim is for pupils to develop a love of learning, and our school motto reflects this.

Our motto, “Dream, Believe, Achieve” promotes thinking about what might be possible; realising that it can be possible and then making it happen.

At all Key Stages, our curriculum is structured to help pupils to secure success: academically, personally, and developmentally, and in life beyond school.



Rebecca Warhurst
Head Teacher

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to visit our truly exceptional school.

T: 01254 360807

E: Rebecca.Warhurst@thewillowsschool.com



School Vision, Ethos and Values

The Willows School is committed to developing pupils as individuals, enabling them to achieve their full potential.

4.1 School Vision

Our aim is for pupils to develop a love of learning, and our school motto reflects this, having been inspired by other inspirational professionals who share mutual aims in respect of education. **Our motto, “Dream, Believe, Achieve” promotes thinking about what might be possible; realising that it can be possible and then making it happen.**

At all Key Stages, our curriculum is structured to help pupils to secure success:

- academically
- personally, and developmentally, and
- in life beyond school.

4.2 School Ethos and Values

Our leaders are determined to provide a positive and welcoming atmosphere and culture. Our staff team are proud and committed to supporting pupils to secure successful futures. We support pupils to achieve well by overcoming their individual barriers to learning. **Our core principles mean that we:**

- value each pupil equally as individuals
- embrace difference
- have high aspirations and expectations of staff and pupils
- meet pupils' needs and build on their strengths
- harness creativity, skills and interests
- identify support to manage and overcome barriers and difficulties
- develop self-confidence, esteem, and resilience
- engender integrity, courtesy, trust, care and respect in all aspects of school life
- provide a safe and welcoming environment
- be valued members of our local community

All school policies will be made available on our website and / or on request from the school office.

Overview of Our School

5.1 Staff Team and Recruitment

We follow rigorous safer recruitment processes to ensure high quality staff are recruited and that pupils are kept safe. Senior leaders involved in the recruitment process are trained in Safer Recruitment. All staff have to undergo comprehensive checks, including references and an Enhanced DBS check. As a new, developing school, the staff team is growing. We choose staff carefully, so the team is effective, and dynamics work well.

5.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection

Our school is committed to safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety at all times. To support this, we follow national guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE). We have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) who are trained to the highest levels, and lead on safeguarding across the school, liaising with the local area designated officer (LADO) as required. All staff complete training in safeguarding and child protection, which is refreshed annually.

We work closely with partner agencies to help keep pupils safe and well. All staff are aware of how to respond to concerns. Where we suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, we have a statutory duty to make a referral to relevant agencies. Where local procedures allow, we will inform the parents/carers of the referral, depending on the nature of the concern. We will share any information relevant to the referral with those agencies and will contribute to any assessments needed.

If a pupil, parent, carer, or staff member have any concerns, however small, about a child's welfare or safety, they should share this with us, and we will follow the correct procedures in a sensitive manner. Information shared could help protect a child from harm or save a life. Please refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for more information. This is available on our website and also from the school office, upon request.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

Mrs Rebecca Warhurst

T: 01254 360807

E: Rebecca.Warhurst@thewillowsschool.com



5.3 First Aid, Health and Medical Needs

Our school has a medical room and provides safe storage of medication. As part of staff induction, most staff complete a Basic First Aid Training course suitable for schools, and a three yearly refresher course. Individualised Risk Assessments will be produced, agreed with parents and carers, and implemented for pupils with specific health needs. Nominated staff are trained to administer prescribed medication. All medication is recorded and kept in a locked medical cabinet. For further information, please see our Safe Administration of Medication Policy.

5.4 Health and Safety

Health and Safety is coordinated by the Head Teacher, under the supervision of Prosperity Children's Services Health and Safety Lead, Sarah Greenwood. All staff complete Health and Safety awareness training, including safe systems of working, fire, infection control and food hygiene. The Caretaker and maintenance staff complete comprehensive internal and external health and safety checks across the whole school site and the Groups Health and Safety Lead conducts regular audits of all aspects of Health and Safety throughout the school year.

5.5 Risk Management

We have rigorous procedures to ensure everyone's safety, including using a range of risk assessments to help staff identify and minimise risks in all curriculum activities and the environment. Risk Assessments are completed when required and reviewed, authorised and signed off by the Head Teacher before activities take place. The school premises have a range of plans in place, including a full Fire Risk Assessment which is reviewed annually with fire services and the Group Health and Safety Lead.

5.6 Anti-Bullying

Everyone in our school community is entitled to feel valued, safe and protected from harm, including bullying. Our staff team work hard with pupils to ensure they are proud of contributing to the warm, caring atmosphere in school.

The pupil and staff community come from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures. Pupils have a range of needs, difficulties, and diagnoses. All of these attributes bring opportunities for us to raise awareness about difference, promote tolerance and understanding, address misconceptions and prejudices, and challenge discrimination. Our curriculum teaches and promotes British Values of tolerance, respect, equality and diversity and bullying is responded to immediately by staff.

Our school is a 'telling school', where pupils, parents, carers, and staff are encouraged to raise any concerns. Bullying will not be tolerated in our school. We are sensitive and proactive with tackling bullying when it occurs.

Please see our Anti-Bullying Policy, which we promote through our ethos, conduct, culture, and curriculum.

Curriculum



We believe that everyone has a personal best and that we play a vital role in making this a reality. All pupils will be given opportunities and support to reach their potential, achieve well and succeed in life beyond school.

Our curriculum is pupil-centred, ambitious, relevant and engaging. We have high aspirations and expectations of all pupils. They should leave our school with a range of experiences, skills and qualifications which will act as currency, providing them with a solid foundation for success in life.

We aim to:

- deliver a broad, balanced, and ambitious curriculum, based on the National Curriculum, differentiated as is appropriate to individual pupil's needs and interests.
- provide a framework for teaching and learning, within which there is flexibility and scope for this adaptation and creativity to take place.
- ensure high quality teaching and learning experiences for all pupils.
- support pupils' needs and requirements so they can access, enjoy and succeed in school.
- provide the experiences and skills pupils need to be well prepared for their next stage of life; for further education, employment and to play active and fulfilling roles in society.
- ensure staff are well supported to deliver our curriculum by providing continuing professional development, guidance, and support to deliver excellent education and support for pupils.

For further information, please refer to our comprehensive Curriculum Policy, available upon request.

6.1 Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Life Choices

We support pupils to understand the benefits of a living a healthy lifestyle and making good life choices. Opportunities for promoting this starts from arrival at school, where we provide a great opportunity to have a healthy breakfast and socialise in a safe environment with peers and staff, before Tutorial and lessons start.

Throughout the school day our staff support pupils and our taught curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities to explore positive and negative lifestyle choices. Staff help pupils to make connections to these areas, including the impact of the decisions we make. This helps pupils to make healthier choices every day and in their future lives.

School lunch is provided, with a range of choices and opportunities to try something different, including foods from around the world. Staff will always build in opportunities to make connections to cultural and religious festivals and celebrations, whilst encouraging pupils to take part in activities and opportunities.



6.2 Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

All pupils will receive age and ability appropriate relationships and sex education. This learning is vital in preparing children and young people to recognise and sustain healthy and meaningful relationships, whilst keeping safe. At The Willows School, we aim to ensure that children grow up able to enjoy the positive benefits of loving, rewarding and responsible relationships through our up-to-date and clear Relationship Education (Years 1 to 5) or Relationship and Sex Education (Years 6 to 11) Programmes. The arrangements for teaching RSE, including parental right to withdraw their child from sex education elements can be discussed further upon request. For an overview of what we teach in each year group, please refer to our Relationships and Sex Education Policy, which is available on our website or on request from the school office.

6.3 Religious Studies

At The Willows School, we pride ourselves on helping pupils to develop a broad understanding of the core values at the heart of all the main religions. We believe that by knowing accurate, factual knowledge, pupils will develop a broad understanding of different religions and cultures. Ultimately, we promote tolerance and encourage pupils to embrace and respect diversity, where it can be shown that beliefs are not extremist or contrary to British Values.

To support us in our offer, we refer to elements of the local offer as produced by the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). We hope that parents and carers share with us our beliefs about the importance of educating pupils about religions, cultures, and differences, to support us all in challenging misconceptions, prejudices and discrimination. If you wish to withdraw your child from any or all of the religious education lessons, please contact the Head Teacher.

6.4 Accreditation

Our expectations are high, and we will encourage and support all pupils to leave school having sat a range of qualifications from Functional Skills Levels 1 and 2, Gateway qualifications, GCSEs and equivalents.

6.5 Access to Examination Results

Pupils who are academically and emotionally able to complete tests and examinations, will do so at the appropriate time. Due to the small number of pupils entering public examinations each year, the results will not be published on our web page, to avoid identifying any individuals concerned. Results will be reported to parents and carers via a personal letter on appropriate results days for those taken GCSEs/equivalent external qualifications. All parents and carers will receive an annual report of progress and attainment for their child.



6.6 Personal Development, Attitudes and Behaviour

We focus on developing the whole child. **Our school:**

- helps pupils to develop into responsible, respectful, and active citizens,
- promotes equality of opportunity in an inclusive environment,
- develops pupils' self-esteem, confidence, and resilience so they can keep themselves mentally healthy,
- develops pupils' character, nurturing the qualities they need to be successful in society and life beyond school.

Please refer to our Behaviour and Rewards Policy, which is used to promote good behaviour, effort and hard work.

7. Uniform and Equipment

Pupils are expected to wear a basic uniform, as follows:

- The Willows white polo shirt
- The Willows black sweatshirt jumper
- black trousers
- smart, plain black footwear

7.1 P.E. Kit

- plain black shorts or jogging
- plain white t-shirt
- plimsolls or training shoes

7.2 Equipment

We provide all equipment, including stationery.

If pupils bring a bag into school, it should contain only:

- pencil case
- home/ school diary
- P.E. kit

Please do not bring other items into school, including:

- money, personal items or jewellery
- mobile phones, unless agreed with the Head Teacher and handed in on entry to school staff
- food or drink, unless by prior agreement due to dietary needs and handed to Tutor for safekeeping

8. Term Dates and the School Day

Pupils attend school for 190 days over 39 weeks.

Please see our website for details of Term and Holiday Dates.

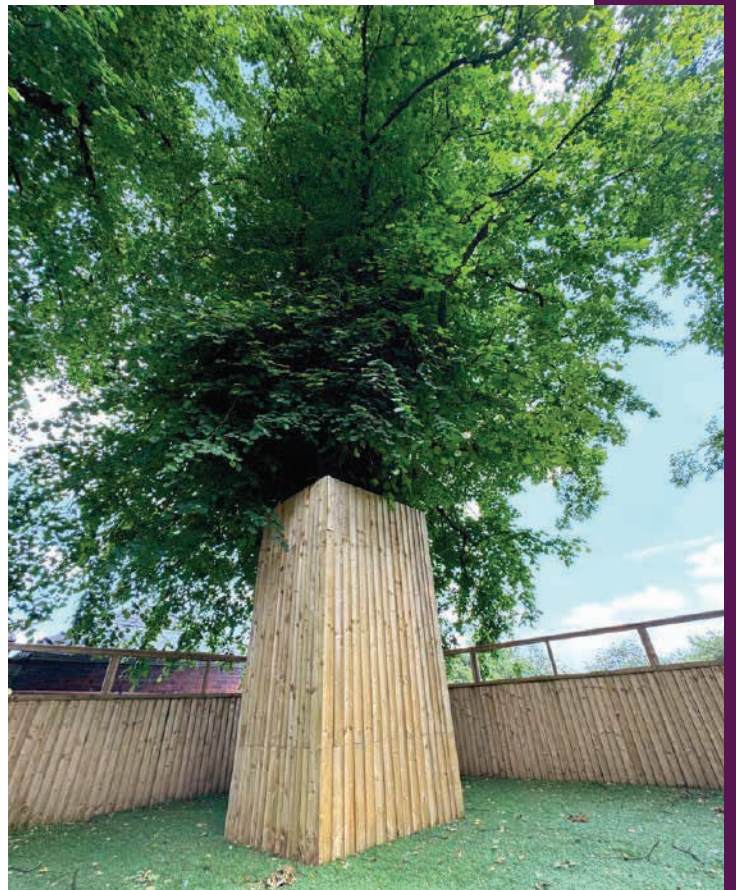




Countryside views and walks



Gardens



Surrounded by trees and outside spaces



Forest school



Well appointed teaching kitchen



Provision for Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs)

9.1 Annual Review Meetings

An Annual Review meeting will provide an opportunity for the pupil, parents/ carers, staff and local authority to discuss:

- success of integration and the admission programme
- assessments
- specific support and intervention programmes
- EHCP objectives and refine these as appropriate
- the next date and time for a full Annual Review

9.2 Transition Review Meetings

These are held at key times ahead of a pupil making a transition between Key Stages or leaving school. For example, these will take place where relevant for pupils in Years 6, 9 and 11. During a Transition Review Meeting the views of the pupil, parents/ carers, staff, clinicians (e.g. Speech and Language Therapist) and Local Authorities are heard to ensure all interested parties are able to contribute to decision making. These meetings have minutes taken, which outline progress and assessment outcomes. They also focus on the EHCP objectives and whether they have been met and/ or need updating.

Admissions



10. Admissions Process

We specialise in supporting children between the ages of 5 and 16 years who have social, emotional, and mental health, autism, cognition and learning and communication difficulties. Initial enquiries are welcome, but referrals must come to us directly from the pupil's local authority, at any point throughout the year.

If we believe we might be able to meet a child's needs, then we will arrange a visit to The Willows School with the child and their parent/carer to learn more information about their specific needs and for the child, parent/carer to learn more about The Willows School and our education offer.

Ultimately, we must be certain that we can meet a child's needs effectively and that the placement with us is likely to be successful for all concerned. A contract, fees and transport arrangements, if appropriate, will be agreed with the local authority. A start date will be identified, which will always be the earliest date we can facilitate a smooth admission to our school. This will be the date the child is placed on the roll of our school.

All pupils have a personalised Admission Programme, supporting a smooth transition to the school.

Please refer to the school's Admissions Policy, which is available on our website and from the school office, upon request.

If you wish to discuss a referral, please contact:

Michelle Britch

Educationreferrals@branches-education.org.uk



11. If English is not the First Language of Pupils, Parents/Carers

During the referrals process a child's need for additional support will be identified and appropriate provision put in place before the admission date. This might include one to one support from a bi-lingual Teaching Assistant, or an interpreter for meetings/ communication with parents or carers where this is needed.

School and Proprietor Details

12.1 Head Teacher Contact Details

Rebecca Warhurst

The Willows School, Henry Street,
Rishton, Lancashire, BB1 4JJ

T: 01254 360807

E: Rebecca.Warhurst@thewillowsschool.com

Administrator Details

School Administrator

T: 01254 360 807

E: info@thewillowsschool.com

12.2 Proprietor Details

Branches Education Group Limited

Vantage Point, 4 Hardman Street,
Manchester, England, M3 3HF

Proprietor: Mr Edward Smethurst

Governance Chair: Louise De-Hayes

E: enquiries@branches-education.org.uk







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