

The Shires

Shires Lane, Stretton, Rutland LE15 7GT

Inspection date

1 March 2017

Overall outcome

The school is unlikely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)a, 2(1)b, 2(1)(b)(i) and 2(1)(b)(ii)

- The curriculum policy has not been adapted to meet the needs of learners aged between 19 and 25 years old.
- Leaders have not got plans or schemes of work to meet the needs of learners between the ages of 19 and 25 years.
- The school's current curriculum enables pupils to understand British values. The pupils learn how to be respectful of other people. During book week, pupils had a positive discussion about friendship and how to get along with new people.

Paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b) and 3(i)

- The school's current curriculum is broad and balanced and ensures that pupils in key stages 3, 4 and 5 will be taught skills across a range of academic and vocational subjects. Pupils' mathematical development is promoted well. For example, pupils have the opportunity to purchase food from the local shops. The pupils then have the chance to cook the food to help them prepare for life. Due to the well-planned curriculum, pupils have the opportunity to develop their linguistic, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education effectively. However, the curriculum planning has not been developed for learners aged between 19 and 25 years.
- Pupils' speaking and literacy skills are promoted well. Pupils who are non-verbal learn how to sign to enable people to understand what they mean. Pupils who are reluctant to speak have specific plans in place to encourage speaking skills in all lessons.

Paragraph 2(2)(g)

- The school does not have a programme of activities for pupils who are above compulsory school age post-19.

Paragraph 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii) and 3(j)

- The school's personal, social, health and economic education policy outlines how the school teaches pupils about disability, nutrition and diet, puberty, sex and relationships, and drug education. The policy has not been adapted to meet the needs of learners aged between 19 and 25 years.
- The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy shows how assemblies and workshops are used to promote and celebrate diversity. The curriculum enables pupils to understand the importance of respecting people with the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. The school has not adapted the policy to meet the needs of learners post-19.

Paragraph 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii) and 2(2)(i)

- Class teachers and social workers are involved in giving careers guidance and support to pupils. Work experience is planned for those pupils who are able to access it. In addition, people are invited into school, for example the fire service, to inform pupils about their roles. However, pupils do not receive support or advice from careers advisers who are independent of the school.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take part in activities outside the school setting, such as exercise in the outdoor gym at Rutland Water. They learn how to act responsibly within wider society.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g) and 4

- The quality of teaching enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points. The outcomes of pupils' education, health and care plans are taken into account when planning learning. Teachers plan, deliver and evaluate lessons well to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the pupils. Teaching assistants and teachers successfully promote the pupils' verbal and non-verbal communication skills. However, teachers have had no training to meet the needs of learners post-19.
- Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the subject content and use signs and symbols well to promote pupils' understanding of the concepts taught. The broad curriculum enables pupils to develop their physical and creative skills and allows them to think for themselves.
- The school has developed its approach to assessment to meet the needs of the individual pupils. Pupils' written work is regularly assessed and small steps of progress are recorded and celebrated. The school has not planned an assessment framework for post-19 learners.
- Each term, teachers write a report to inform parents and carers of the progress made by pupils towards meeting their targets. These reports are used to inform discussions at the annual reviews of pupils' education, health and care plans.
- The school is unlikely to meet the independent school standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

- The school's safeguarding policy includes reference to the latest guidance issued by the government. The policy is very thorough and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the governing body, the senior leaders and the staff. The policy is available on the school's website.
- The staff are very knowledgeable about safeguarding. Training for staff is very comprehensive. Staff have had recent training on child sexual exploitation, ligature injury, financial abuse and forced marriage. The staff constantly review safeguarding matters and respond quickly to any concerns that are reported. Their response can include further training for staff on specific issues where relevant. The training record of staff is monitored closely to ensure that all staff have received up-to-date training on all safeguarding matters.

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

- The school's behaviour policy promotes good behaviour of pupils. The policy has a list of sanctions for pupils if they misbehave.
- The school has introduced prompt cards to promote good behaviour and this has led to a reduction in the number of incidents of serious misbehaviour. The school's records show that incidents of serious misbehaviour are few.
- The risk assessments for each pupil inform staff of how to manage a pupil if their behaviour is a cause for concern. The strategies are detailed and ensure that incidents of poor behaviour are managed effectively.
- The school uses physical restraint as a last resort. All staff have been trained in the use of physical restraint. The records of each restraint are comprehensive. Parents, carers and an independent advocate for the pupils are informed. Any subsequent actions required to keep pupils safe are implemented and the pupils' risk assessments are updated accordingly.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is effective. It highlights the effects of bullying and how the school aims to prevent incidents of bullying. There are very few incidents of bullying recorded.

Paragraph 11 and 13

- The school has a health and safety policy and a first-aid policy. Every accident is recorded in the accident book and senior leaders regularly review the accident book to identify any areas where the school could put measures in place to further improve the safety of pupils and staff. The school has a high number of staff who are trained in first aid.

Paragraph 12

- The school has a fire-risk assessment in place and regularly has fire drills to ensure the safe evacuation of the premises. The fire alarm is serviced by an external company and there are regular checks of the emergency lighting system and of the fire extinguishers.

Paragraph 14

- The level of staff supervision for pupils is high. Some pupils have more than one member of staff who supervises them for activities during the school day. Each class has a teacher and other adults who support the pupils. Pupils are supervised at all times.

Paragraph 15

- The school maintains admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Paragraph 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The school has a written risk assessment policy and has comprehensive risk assessments in place for each pupil and for all activities in which pupils participate. These include activities that the pupils take part in away from the school site, for example, using the outdoor gym at Rutland Water or going swimming at a local pool.
- School staff have not completed any risk assessments which detail how the school will manage vulnerable adults being on the same site as younger pupils at the school.
- The school is unlikely to meet the independent school standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 28(1), 28(1)(b) and 28(1)(d)

- There are suitable toilet and washing facilities provided for the sole use of pupils. The hot water does not pose a scalding risk. The school has not made provision for toilets for learners post-19 that are separate from those toilets used by the current pupils and those toilets used by the staff.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a) and 24(1)(b)

- The school has a medical room which includes a washing facility for those pupils who fall sick. A toilet is in close proximity.

Paragraph 25

- The front door is securely locked and entry is only gained by staff opening the door. Other doors which access the outdoor area require a security code. The exterior fence of the school is secure. The rooms within the school are clean and well maintained.
- The school has not planned how the facilities will be used or adapted to accommodate post-19 learners. The school has not planned how it will adapt the facilities to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of both vulnerable adults and pupils will be met when learning on the same site.

Paragraph 26

- The acoustics of the rooms are appropriate for the activities that take place.

Paragraph 27, 27(a) and 27(b)

- The lighting in each room is appropriate.
- There is exterior lighting which covers the school carpark and allows people to enter

and leave the school safely.

Paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b) and 28(1)(c)

- There are water-drinking machines for pupils to access around the school and these are clearly labelled.

Paragraph 23(1)(c), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The school uses a local gym to enable pupils to access physical education. Pupils use the changing rooms and showers at the gym. However, the school has no written plans to show how learners post-19 will access physical education. In addition, the school has not amended risk assessments to show how it will manage post-19 learners' access to physical education.
- The school has suitable outdoor space for pupils of different ages to play outside.
- The school is unlikely to meet the independent school standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor and senior leaders have not put in place the necessary arrangements to meet the needs of post-19 learners at the school site. Leaders have not planned a curriculum to meet the needs of the learners or carried out risk assessments to show how they will manage vulnerable adults and younger pupils being located on the same site. Consequently, neither the proprietor nor senior leaders have demonstrated the knowledge and skills to ensure that the independent school standards would be met if this material change were approved.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have not ensured that the careers guidance that pupils receive is impartial. Consequently, the school is not ensuring that pupils receive informed choices to encourage them to reach their potential. Therefore, the proprietor and senior leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are being met consistently.
- The school leaders have not demonstrated how they will promote the well-being of pupils if vulnerable adults are also learning on the same site.
- The school is not likely to meet the independent school standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

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 are relevant to the material change.

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, is drawn up and implemented effectively and that the written policy, plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an education, health and care plan (paragraph 2, 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b) and 2(1)(b)(i)).
- The proprietor must ensure that pupils receiving secondary education have access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that
 - is presented in an impartial manner;
 - enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options;
 - helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential (paragraph 2, 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i) 2(2)(e)(ii) and 2(2)(e)(iii)).
- The proprietor must ensure that where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, there is a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs (paragraph 2 and 2(2)(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school
 - 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 subject taught (paragraph 3 and 3(a));
 - 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 (paragraph 3 and 3(b));
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (paragraph 3 and 3(c));
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3 and 3(d));
 - demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught (paragraph 3 and 3(e));
 - utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range (paragraph 3 and 3(f));
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses the information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3 and 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place (paragraph 4).

- The proprietor must ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16 and 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonable practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school (paragraph 34(1))
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1)(a));
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1)(b));
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	131018
DfE registration number	857/6004
Inspection number	10033417

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Graham McEwan
Headteacher	Marina Gough
Annual fees (day pupils)	£73,000
Telephone number	01780 411944
Website	www.acorncare.co.uk
Email address	Info@theshires.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	23–25 February 2016

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 19	11 to 25	11 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	18	18	18

Reason for inspector's recommendations

- The school has not planned how the facilities will be adapted to meet the needs of learners post-19. In addition, the school has not prepared a curriculum for learners post-19. The school has not identified the potential risks of having post-19 vulnerable adults learning on the same site as younger pupils.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	18	18
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	18	18
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	18	18
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	18	18

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	8	8
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	6	6

Information about this school

- The Shires provides full-time education for up to 20 pupils and learners in the age range 11 to 19 years who have autistic spectrum disorder and severe learning difficulties, together with associated challenging behaviour.
- There are currently 18 boys and girls enrolled. The majority of pupils live in residential

accommodation provided by the proprietor, Acorn Care and Education.

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision as part of the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the school's application to make a material change to its provision. The school plans to change the age range of pupils taught, increasing the age from 11–19 to 11–25 years.
- The registration authority for independent schools commissioned the inspector to inspect the quality of the school's education relating to the adults that the school wishes to begin to teach. The inspector was also commissioned to inspect the school's premises and its provision for the welfare, health and safety of all pupils.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders and staff and visited classrooms. The inspectors scrutinised documentation relating to the curriculum and assessment. The inspectors also looked at policies relating to safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety and risk assessment.

Inspection team

Martin Finch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ben Walsh

Ofsted Inspector

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