

# White Trees Independent School

c/o Sure Care Residential, Head Office, 13a Apton Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire  
CM23 3SP

## Inspection dates

20 November 2017

### Overall outcome

**The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7, 7(1), 7(b)*

- The headteacher has a good understanding of current safeguarding guidance and has ensured that this key area has a high profile in the school. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure that staff know what is expected of them and what they should do if they are concerned about a pupil. For example, safeguarding policies are reviewed regularly and every member of staff signs a record to say that they have read and understood the updated policy.
- The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Particular emphasis is placed on supporting pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders have created an atmosphere of trust where pupils feel confident to speak to staff if they have worries or concerns. Pupils know the headteacher very well and are confident to raise issues with her when they arise. These close relationships help to ensure that pupils are safe both at school and in their homes.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material changes are approved.

#### *Paragraph 11*

- The proprietor has ensured that a suitable health and safety policy is in place so that relevant laws are complied with.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material changes are approved.

#### *Paragraph 12*

- The proprietor has worked with the Essex Fire Service to carry out a thorough fire risk assessment of the proposed new premises in Bishops Stortford. The record of the fire risk assessment, prepared by the fire service, states that 'the building has been renovated and there is a good standard of fire safety within the premises'. The

document further states that 'no risks were found that are not normally associated with the type of occupancy'.

- The proprietor has ensured that suitable checks have been made to ensure that the proposed new site is safe. The fire alarm and fire extinguishers have been serviced recently and a gas safety check was carried out immediately prior to the inspection.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection in respect of the existing school site. It is likely to remain met if the material changes are approved and the school moves to the proposed site.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- The proprietor has taken appropriate steps to ensure that pupils are adequately supervised. A written policy is in place that describes the minimum ratios of staff to pupils. Discussions with staff and pupils indicate that staffing levels are usually higher than the minimum described.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material changes are approved.

#### *Paragraph 16*

- The proprietor has ensured that a written risk assessment policy is in place. The school's approach to risk assessment is a thorough one. Leaders focus on the process itself rather than simply completing a form. That is, leaders think through the possible risks associated with an event or situation and consider carefully whether those risks are acceptable and how they can be reduced effectively.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material changes are approved.

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

#### *Paragraph 17, 18, 20(6), 21*

- At the beginning of the inspection a small amount of required information was missing from the school's single central record of pre-employment checks. However, all the required checks had been completed. This has now been rectified and the single central record now meets statutory requirements.
- The standards in part 4 were met at the previous inspection and are likely to remain met if the material changes are approved.

### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

#### *Paragraph 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29*

- The proposed new site provides appropriate accommodation both for the current number of pupils and for the increasing roll intended by proprietors. The building has two large classrooms that provide adequate space to accommodate the number of pupils proposed. An additional 'break out' space, a medical room, kitchen and office space ensure that the building meets the school's needs.

- The proposed new site does not have outdoor space. However, a large public park is within a three-minute walk of the building. Given the age and needs of the pupils that attend the school, this is sufficient to meet the standard.
- The school uses local public amenities, such as a gym and swimming pool, for pupils' physical education. Shower facilities are available to pupils when these activities take place.
- The standards in part 5 were met at the previous inspection, in respect of the current site. The standards are likely to remain met if the material change is approved and the school moves to the proposed new premises.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraph 34*

- The headteacher and directors have good knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards. They check regularly that the standards remain met at the current site and with the existing number of pupils on roll. Leaders have been effective in ensuring that the standards would remain met if the proprietor's material change requests are granted.
- The headteacher and directors are ambitious for the school's pupils. They have high expectations of them and for them. The school's leaders are highly committed to enabling pupils to become successful despite the challenges they face.
- The headteacher has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. She knows the pupils extremely well and is highly committed to both their personal and academic development. As a result, the school is continuing to improve.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material changes are approved.

## **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 that are relevant to the material change.

## School details

Unique reference number	140655
DfE registration number	881/6053
Inspection number	10040164

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 likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Sure Care Residential
Headteacher	Becky Verallo-Graves
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000
Telephone number	01277 899 955
Email address	becky.verallo-graves@whitetrees-school.com
Date of previous standard inspection	24 February 2015

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16	no change	no change
Number of pupils on the school roll	6	20	16

## Reason for inspector's recommendations

The school is currently registered for up to 12 pupils and there are currently six pupils on the school roll. The school has not yet taken up the additional places available following an earlier material change. The new school site has sufficient space to accommodate the number of pupils requested but, given the nature of the needs of pupils who attend the school, great care will be needed to ensure that the school's growth does not adversely affect the quality of provision. A staged approach to increasing the maximum number of pupils provides the school with the opportunity to develop its expertise in the field.

### **Information about this school**

- The school opened in February 2014. It is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) as an independent day special school for pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- The school is registered for a maximum of 12 male and female pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years. There are currently six pupils on roll, five of whom are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to a request by the school for two material changes to be considered.
- The school is currently registered for up to 12 pupils and has requested a change to increase this limit to a maximum of 20 pupils.
- The school's current site in Ongar is being sold by the landowner. The proprietors have secured alternative premises in Bishops Stortford. The school has requested a material change to move the school to 13A London Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5NA.
- The inspector visited both the proposed new school site and the current school site.
- The inspector observed two pupils during their weekly meeting with staff. The inspector spoke with a pupil at length about their thoughts about the school and looked at examples of the pupil's work.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record and a range of other documents.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, one of Sure Care Residential's directors and other school staff.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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