

Wenlock School

Fossil View, Wrens Hill Road, Mons Hill, Dudley DY1 3SB

Inspection date

1 May 2018

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i), 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j) and 4

- Leaders have produced a detailed, written curriculum policy. It sets out the core purposes of the proposed curriculum, which is both broad and balanced and covers all of the seven required areas of learning. The policy sets out how the curriculum is to be adapted to make it suitable for the pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs.
- The proposed school intends to admit pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. All pupils entering the school will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan in place. When pupils are first referred to the school, leaders intend to draw together relevant information about each pupil's academic performance, behaviour and particular needs. This information is likely to enable the school, and the relevant local authority, to make an informed decision about whether Wenlock School is the right school for an individual pupil. Leaders propose to use this initial information, along with baseline assessments, to create a programme that is tailor-made to meet the needs of each pupil.
- The proposed school is to have access to a range of support from across partner schools within the Acorn Care and Education Group. Consequently, leaders should be able to draw upon a range of external therapists to support pupils as required. This is likely to include therapeutic interventions, such as speech and language, occupational therapy, psychotherapy, access to an educational psychologist and counselling.
- Leaders intend to use a range of commercial schemes and schemes of work that are followed in other schools within the Acorn Care and Education Group. It is proposed that these will be used as a base from which individualised curriculum plans will be developed. Leaders acknowledge that the majority of schemes of work submitted will require adaptation and personalising to meet individual learning needs. However, if implemented as set out in the policy, pupils should have the opportunity to learn and make progress.

- School leaders are all qualified teachers and have experience of working with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Between them, they have expertise in the core subjects at both primary and secondary levels. Additional subject-level knowledge may be accessed through other schools within the Acorn Care and Education Group as required.
- There is a detailed and carefully planned scheme of work for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. This includes strong links to fundamental British values and relationships and sex education.
- While it is envisaged that teachers will continually assess pupils' progress, leaders plan to use an electronic system to record and track pupils' assessment information on a termly basis. They have already considered how they will build in opportunities to ensure the accuracy of teachers' judgements, including working with local schools.
- The proposed school has clear plans in place to provide suitable, independent careers, advice and guidance. This is intended to support pupils in identifying possible next steps in their education and/or developing their independence.
- The proposed school intends to make use of the nearby nature reserve to develop forest school education.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent school standards in relation to this part.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii) and 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders have successfully incorporated opportunities to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils throughout the curriculum. This includes actively promoting fundamental British values.
- Leaders propose that supporting pupils' social development will be a key aspect of the school's work. There are plans to include opportunities for pupils to meet informally with staff and other pupils at the start of the school day to share breakfast. It is proposed that pupils will also have regular opportunities to hear and discuss differing viewpoints through assemblies and 'thought for the week'. Staff intend to ensure that any partisan views expressed will be balanced by the presentation of opposing views.
- It is proposed that pupils will be encouraged to develop an understanding of democracy through a range of activities, including a student council.
- The proposed school has placed a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about the importance of mutual respect and tolerance through its religious education and PSHE curriculums.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent school standards in relation to this part.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy that is suitably informed by the most recent guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). The policy includes contact details for key teams within the local authority. Policies to ensure health and safety, including administering first aid and supporting pupils with medical conditions, are in place.
- It is proposed that the headteacher will be the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The school intends for there to be at least one deputy DSL to ensure that there is suitable expertise in school at all times. This proposal is likely to help to support the early identification of any risks to the safeguarding of children.
- The school building is currently undergoing refurbishment and is scheduled to meet all required building regulations on completion. Inspectors completed a site tour with contractors and scrutinised site drawings, project plans and records of meetings to judge the progress being made towards build completion. Evidence showed that the building is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards in part 5. This includes the installation of appropriate fire, safety and security equipment.
- Planned procedures for recording and monitoring attendance are rigorous. Inspectors were shown an appropriate admissions record which is in place for prospective pupils.
- Detailed risk assessments are being developed, including individualised behaviour plans and risk assessments for visits, the curriculum and use of equipment.
- It is intended that all staff will undertake safeguarding and basic first aid training as part of an induction programme.
- Leaders have developed an appropriate behaviour policy which, if implemented effectively, is likely to ensure good behaviour and discipline. The intended sanctions and rewards are clearly documented. Leaders have already arranged to track carefully any incidents of misbehaviour, analyse the results and use this information to better support pupils with improving their behaviour.
- The proposed school has a detailed anti-bullying policy, with its main aim of creating a school free from bullying behaviour. The policy indicates leaders' commitment to taking all necessary actions to reduce the likelihood of bullying in, and beyond, the school.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent standards in relation to this part.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5) and 21(6)

- The proposed school has an appropriate single central record, which includes all the required checks for staff, volunteers and directors. It is planned that all checks will be recorded in an electronic format and dated. Leaders follow the DfE's advice regarding

safer recruitment practice. Leaders intend to ensure that required checks are completed before any member of staff takes up appointment. The single central record will be reviewed at least annually as part of the proprietor's quality assurance processes.

- The proposed school does not plan to employ supply staff. However, should supply staff be required, a system is in place to ensure that appropriate checks are made before employment begins.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent school standards in relation to this part.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(1)(c), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The proposed school's buildings are currently undergoing a major refurbishment. Phase one is almost complete. Although building work is still under way, inspectors were shown plans to indicate that the completed building will meet the required standards in relation to health and safety and will be subject to building control regulations. The site manager and contractor provided information to assure inspectors that the building work is on schedule and the school will be ready to open at the start of September.
- The site and buildings are planned with the needs of the proposed pupils in mind. There will be separate base areas for primary pupils, those with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and those with complex social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). In addition, there will be some shared specialist facilities, such as an art room, science laboratory, cooking room and a gymnasium. Outdoors, there will be a multi-use games area, 'trim trail' and playground.
- The proposed school will be provided with new resources for learning and appropriate equipment and furniture. Specifications for each room are being finalised and inspectors saw evidence of the budget that has been set aside for this purpose.
- Suitable furniture, adjustable lighting and additional soundproofing measures are to be installed to support the specific needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Appropriate toilet and shower facilities are planned.
- A medical room is planned. It will be resourced with appropriate furnishings. The room will include washing facilities and will be located near to a toilet. Additionally, separate therapy rooms are to be available to enable privacy for pupils requiring specialised treatment.
- Pupils will have access to drinking water. It is intended that this will be clearly marked as such.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent school standards in relation to this part.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 32(1)(e), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(1)(j), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f), 32(3)(g), 32(4), 32(4)(a), 32(4)(b) and 32(4)(c)

- At the time of the pre-registration inspection, the proposed school did not have its own website. However, plans are in place to set one up. The website is to mirror those of other schools within the Acorn Care and Education Group and is likely to contain the required information. An example was shown to inspectors to support this.
- A school prospectus has been produced. It contains details about the school's contact information, the headteacher and a brief outline of the school's aim and approach to education.
- Due to the nature of the school, all pupils will be placed following a referral from a local authority. Leaders are working closely with Dudley local authority to secure admissions in 2018. The systems for gathering and sharing information before and during a placement have been carefully thought through. As a result, it is likely that all relevant information will be made available as required.
- Inspectors were shown an example of a pupil's report. This demonstrated the breadth of information that parents and carers are to receive about their child's personal development and academic progress.
- The school has all required policies in place.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent school standards in relation to this part.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The school's complaints policy is fit for purpose. It sets out clear timescales and explains the informal and formal stages for considering a complaint. It also provides information about how complaints will be recorded and stored.
- It is intended that the policy document will be made available to parents and others on request. The proprietor intends to include the policy on the school's website, when it is functional.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent school standards in relation to this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The assistant director of education, executive principal and headteacher show a clear understanding of the independent school standards. They acknowledge that these are the minimum standards that must be met in order for an independent school to operate correctly. This awareness, together with the quality of the documentation

available during the inspection, indicates that the proposed school is likely to ensure compliance with these standards.

- Leaders have considerable experience of working with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They have thought carefully about the likely needs of the pupils and how best to meet these.
- The proposed school has a clear structure in place for managing staff performance. The assistant director of education, who will be chair of governors, is to meet at least half-termly with the headteacher to check on the school's progress. The intention is for the Acorn Care and Education Group to provide mentoring to the new headteacher.
- Leaders have thought carefully about the particular skills and knowledge the new staff team will need. They have sought to appoint staff with a broad range of suitable skills. They plan to address any further specific requirements through person specifications when advertising future posts.
- Suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements of the independent school standards in relation to this part.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has drawn up an accessibility plan that identifies how the site can accommodate pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The plan makes appropriate references to the school's curriculum and how this will be adjusted to meet pupils' specific needs.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school is likely to fulfil its responsibilities under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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.

Proposed school details

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 145563 |
| DfE registration number | 332/6009 |
| Inspection number | 10053626 |

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

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| Type of school | Independent day school |
| School status | Independent special school |
| Proprietor | Iain Anderson |
| Chair | Julie Taylor |
| Headteacher | Gemma Mann |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £44,000 to £49,000 |
| Telephone number | 01204 558038 |
| Website | tbc |
| Email address | info@acorncare.co.uk |
| Date of previous standard inspection | Not previously inspected |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal | Inspector's recommendation |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Age range of pupils | Not applicable | 7–18 | 7–18 |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | Not applicable | 90 | 90 |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gender of pupils | Not applicable | Mixed |
| Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age | Not applicable | 90 |
| Number of part-time pupils | Not applicable | 0 |
| Number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities | Not applicable | 90 |
| Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan | Not applicable | 90 |
| 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 | Not applicable | 90 |

Staff

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | 1 | 6 |
| Number of part-time teaching staff | 0 | 0 |
| Number of staff in the welfare provision | 0 | 7 |

Information about this proposed school

- Wenlock School is proposed as a new independent special school for up to 90 pupils aged from seven to 18 years old. If registered, the school would form part of the Acorn Care and Education Group of schools.
- The school aims to provide individualised education programmes for pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health needs and/or autistic spectrum conditions. The school will offer places to pupils with an education, health and care plan from Dudley and other West Midlands local authorities.
- The proposed school is located adjacent to a nature reserve in Dudley and will be housed in buildings that were previously part of a vocational college. The building is undergoing extensive adaptations to ensure that it is suitable for the proposed provision of education. Building works are on schedule to be completed by 31 July 2018, ahead of a proposed opening on 4 September 2018.
- Since applying for registration, the school's address has changed from 111 Wrens Hill Road, Mons Hill, Dudley DY1 3SB to Fossil View, Wrens Hill Road, Mons Hill, Dudley DY1 3SB.
- An assistant director of education for Acorn Care and Education Group will be chair of the proposed governing body and she will directly oversee the quality of education provided by the school.
- Initially, the school intends to open with a maximum of 12 pupils, rising to a maximum of 24 pupils within the first year of operation. In addition to the headteacher, the school has already recruited two assistant headteachers. It is expected that the school will recruit three qualified teachers and a number of support staff before it opens. The Acorn Care and Education Group are following safer recruitment practices in relation to the appointment of staff. Leaders do not intend to use any alternative provision.
- The proposed school does not have a religious ethos.

Information about this inspection

- This was the proposed school's first pre-registration inspection.
- Inspectors met with the proposed school's headteacher, executive principal and admissions officer.
- Inspectors conducted a tour of the premises and spoke with the site manager, facilities manager and contractor.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to a representative of the proprietor, an assistant director of education for Acorn Care and Education Group. The assistant director of education is also the chair of governors for the proposed school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including several policies, schemes of work, risk assessments, safeguarding information and the single central record.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Catherine Crooks, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| John Lambern | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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