

Mountfield Heath School

John's Cross, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JN

Inspection date

12 July 2018

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4

- Leaders have a very clear and reasonable vision of the education they hope the school will provide for pupils. The plans, policies and schemes of work created so far are likely to support the realisation of this ambition.
- As it is established, the new school will have very strong links with the successful Heath Farm School near Ashford. This includes seconding the first teacher from Heath Farm as a 'culture carrier'. However, leaders are clear that they do not aim to simply and unquestioningly duplicate everything. There is an explicit determination that the school should develop its own individual character.
- A suitable written curriculum policy is in place. It takes explicit account of the potentially low starting points some pupils may have, linked with their special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities or prior experiences of education. However, schemes of work also pay suitable attention to the standards at each key stage attained by other pupils nationally.
- There are strong indications that expectations of pupils are likely to be high. One of the school's stated aims is for pupils, wherever possible, to transfer to mainstream schools for their secondary education. Staff are mindful of the need, where relevant and possible, to help pupils catch up with other pupils nationally for this aim to be successful. The proposed policies and ambitious schemes of work are likely to support this effort.
- The proposed range of study amply covers the requirements to give pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. However, there is much still to do to provide the necessary resources to support this rich curriculum.
- Arrangements for assessing pupils' capabilities and progress are likely to be effective. The curriculum policy emphasises the importance of using accurate assessment to secure strong outcomes for pupils, linking assessment processes tightly with curriculum planning. Tools to support staff and leaders to check carefully that pupils make sufficient progress are likely to be fit for purpose.

- The curriculum policy specifies that teaching and the curriculum for pupils will relate closely to their individual education, health and care plans. It is likely that sufficient expertise exists among the proprietors, leaders and staff to meet and cater for the SEN and/or disabilities of the groups of pupils that the school proposes to admit.
- The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme has many positive features and reflects the school's positive aims and likely ethos. However, although it is likely to encourage a general theme of respect for others, it does not pay particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act. For this reason, the standards in this part are unlikely to all be met.

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

Paragraph 5

- The policy and plans for the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development set out constructive and laudable aims that are likely to support pupils to become positive members of society.
- If implemented consistently and effectively, proposed policies and approaches are likely to contribute well to pupils' personal development. The positive ethos evident throughout the school's documentation indicates a high priority to developing pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- The school's planned teaching and coverage of religious education includes study of a wide range of world religions and beliefs.
- Reviewing all available evidence, there is nothing to indicate that anything proposed would undermine fundamental British values. However, plans and policies do not make clear how all British values will be actively promoted, or the relating knowledge and understanding taught.
- The lack of clear focus on the protected characteristics in the PSHE programme also means that some of the requirements of this paragraph are unlikely to be met.
- The standard contained in this part is unlikely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6 and 7

- A comprehensive safeguarding policy is in place that takes full account of current guidance. It pays close attention to the context in which the school intends to operate, particularly around the additional vulnerabilities of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The designated leader for safeguarding is very well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding and child protection. He is well informed about the changes to policy and practice that will be required when updated guidance issued by the Secretary of State takes effect from September. He is already making sensible preparations in anticipation.
- Planned induction of new staff places sufficient emphasis on safeguarding, child protection and associated matters.

Paragraphs 9 and 10

- The proposed behaviour policy sets out detailed objectives and strategies centred on encouraging and enabling pupils to regulate their own behaviour. It is likely to provide a well-conceived framework for staff and equip them with the necessary tools to support them to implement the policy in practice. The policy's well-researched rationale aligns well with the proposed school's ethos and approaches set out in other documents.
- The anti-bullying strategy is underpinned by a reasonable definition of bullying and conveys a culture where bullying will not be tolerated. The scope of the policy reaches beyond the school premises, indicative of the priority, seriousness and status leaders intend to attach to issues relating to bullying. There is a specific emphasis on ensuring that pupils and parents have a voice in identifying and tackling bullying. The policy outlines a wide range of different types of bullying and highlights the protected characteristics as a potential source for discrimination.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16

- A suitable overarching health and safety policy is in place. This acts as the starting point from which numerous other policies, statements and processes interlink to promote the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff.
- Using procedures and approaches tried and tested elsewhere, leaders have established systematic processes, and governance of these processes, that are likely to secure the effective oversight of health and safety arrangements once the school is operating.
- Leaders have a secure understanding of the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. However, the proprietor cannot yet demonstrate likely compliance with this because work to convert and renovate the premises is ongoing and important fire safety arrangements are not in place. Consequently, the building is not ready for occupation for the purposes of running a school.
- Suitable arrangements are in place for first aid, staff deployment and to register pupils' admissions and attendance.
- Processes and templates for drawing up and acting on specific risk assessments relating to the premises and proposed educational activities are in place. However, the actual risk assessments themselves are not complete, partly because the rooms are not yet in a habitable state to assess.
- The standards contained in this part are unlikely to all be met.

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

Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21

- Leaders are knowledgeable about best practice in safer recruitment to ensure that adults are suitable to work with pupils. All checks on staff and governors appointed so far have been methodically carried out and accurately recorded on the single central record.
- The school does not intend to use supply teachers.

- Leaders are well informed about new guidance that comes into effect from September 2018 regarding background checks of volunteers.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31

- The construction and renovation of the school premises is not complete. The site remains in the control of the contractors.
- The plans and infrastructure suggest that standards may well be met when work is complete. For example, plans include provision for suitable toilet facilities and a suitable room for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the standards in this part have not been considered in the design and specification.
- There is plentiful space outside for pupils to play. The extra fencing proposed is likely to make the area secure, but this has not yet been installed. The grass areas are suitable for recreational use during breaktimes, but leaders have correctly identified that they are unlikely to be suitable for physical education in their current state. The school plans to make use of a combination of the indoor hall, hard playing surface and external facilities for physical education.
- The unfinished state of the premises and accommodation at the time of the inspection meant it was not possible to verify that standards were likely to be met if the school was operational. For example, wash basins and toilets had not been fitted. Water was not running and there were still unfinished cables, ceilings and floors throughout the building.
- At the current time, the standards in this part are unlikely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32

- The school does not currently have a website. However, all the information, statements and policies that must be available to parents on request are in place and fit for purpose. Leaders plan to create a website in the future. They understand the minimum requirements for what must be published on the website once it exists, including the school's safeguarding policy.
- It is likely that all requirements of the standard in this part will be met both before and after a website is created.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- The school's written complaints policy meets all requirements of the independent school standards. It outlines clear arrangements and procedures that are likely to be workable in practice once the school is in operation. Consequently, it is likely that this standard will be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The proprietor demonstrates a sound understanding of most parts of the independent school standards. Most of the standards currently judged as unlikely to be met relate to the stage of the ongoing building works at the school. However, there have also been some oversights in Parts 1 and 2 of the standards relating to the regard paid to the protected characteristics and the active promotion of British values. That said, throughout the school's proposals there is a clear commitment to actively promoting the well-being of pupils.
- The planned induction of the new head of school has due regard to ensuring that she gains the knowledge and understanding necessary to see that independent school standards are continuously met.
- Because of the deficiencies in other parts of the standards, the standard in this part would be unlikely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Through the current renovations, the proprietor and leaders have paid close attention to the accessibility of the premises. There is also a clear statement of intent and plan of intended actions covering the next few years.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements, as set out in the annex of this report.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	145980
DfE registration number	845/6065
Inspection number	10055149

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.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Craig Ribbons
Headteacher	Lindsay Jeffries (Head of School)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,250–£65,050
Telephone number	01204 558038
Website	No website
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	N/A	5–11	5–11
Number of pupils on the school roll	N/A	32	32

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	N/A	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	N/A	32
Number of part-time pupils	N/A	0
Number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities	N/A	32
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	N/A	32
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	N/A	32

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	N/A	6.5
Number of part-time teaching staff	N/A	1
Number of staff in the welfare provision	N/A	N/A

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school will be an independent special day school for primary-aged pupils. It is not intended to offer provision for early years children.
- The proprietor plans that the proposed school will occupy the site of a former primary school in John's Cross near Robertsbridge.
- The intention is to offer education for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. It is anticipated that pupils will usually have an education, health and care plan and may often be placed at the school by a local authority.
- The range of SEN that the school intends to cater for is as follows:
 - cognitive learning needs
 - specific learning difficulties
 - moderate learning difficulties
 - behavioural, emotional and social development needs and difficulty
 - communication and interaction needs
 - speech, language and communication needs
 - autistic spectrum disorder
 - sensory and/or physical needs
 - visual impairment
 - hearing impairment
 - multi-sensory impairment.
- The proprietor, Acorn Care and Education Limited, runs a number of other independent special schools. The proposed school is intended to have particularly strong links with Heath Farm School near Ashford.
- The head of school is due to take up post on 1 September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector held discussions with two representatives of the proprietor. This included the assistant director who will be directly responsible for overseeing the work of the school and who will chair the school's governing body. The inspector also met with other leaders and staff.
- Before the visit, the inspector scrutinised the documentation that the school had already submitted to the Department for Education. He reviewed further documentation and procedures on site against the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The inspector toured the proposed school site with the assistant director and group property manager. He also reviewed and discussed plans for the completion of current renovation and construction works.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9].

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

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 23(1)(a) suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils;
 - 23(1)(b) separate toilet facilities for boys and girls aged 8 years or over are provided except where the toilet facility is provided in a room that can be secured from the inside and that is intended for use by one pupil at a time.
- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including-
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility; and
 - 24(1)(c) where a school caters for pupils with complex needs, additional medical accommodation which caters for those needs.
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 26 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the acoustic conditions and sound insulation of each room or other space are suitable, having regard to the nature of the activities which normally take place therein.
- 27 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 27(a) the lighting in each room or other internal space is suitable, having regard to the nature of the activities which normally take place therein; and
 - 27(b) external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 28(1)(a) suitable drinking water facilities are provided;
 - 28(1)(b) toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water;

- 28(1)(c) cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such; and
- 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.
- 28(2) The facilities provided under sub-paragraph (1)(a) will be suitable only if-
 - 28(2)(a) they are readily accessible at all times when the premises are in use; and
 - 28(2)(b) they are in a separate area from the toilet facilities.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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