

Mountfield Heath School

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

Inspection date

29 November 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 1, 2, 3 and 4

- As found at the school's first pre-registration inspection, 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 remain likely to support the realisation of this ambition.
- At the first pre-registration inspection, despite many strengths in the proposed curriculum, there were elements that were unlikely to meet all the independent school standards. Specifically, it was not clear in leaders' planning and intent that they had paid particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Since then, relevant policies, schemes of work and plans have been further strengthened to make explicit how and when all required elements will be addressed. This has suitably enhanced the existing positive features of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme. Plans for proposed 'beliefs and values' sessions have been similarly augmented to make direct reference to the protected characteristics.
- The other standards in this part remain likely to be met. 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 and/or disabilities (SEND), 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. Leaders have made significant progress since the first pre-registration inspection in resourcing the 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 in checking 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 proprietor, leaders and staff to meet the needs of, and cater for, the SEND of the groups of pupils that the school proposes to admit.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5

- Previously, although there was nothing to indicate that fundamental British values would be undermined, plans and policies did not make clear how these values would be actively promoted. This deficiency has been successfully rectified. Curriculum plans have been updated to show specifically where the knowledge and understanding underpinning each British value will be addressed.
- The strengthened focus on the protected characteristics in the PSHE and 'beliefs and values' programmes also means that related requirements in this part are now likely to be met.
- As found at the first pre-registration inspection, if implemented consistently and effectively, proposed policies and approaches are likely to contribute well to pupils' personal development.
- 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. The positive ethos evident throughout the school's documentation indicates a high priority to developing pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- As before, the school's planned teaching and coverage of religious education includes study of a wide range of world religions and beliefs.
- The standard contained in this part is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6 and 7

- The school's proposed safeguarding policy has been rewritten to take account of updated guidance issued by the Secretary of State, including the 2018 updated 'Keeping children safe in education'. The policy is suitable and meets requirements. Leaders intend to publish this policy on their new website once it is launched.

- The policy quotes and follows a range of relevant legislation. Frequent definitions of the terminology throughout help bring clarity and draw on relevant statutory and expert discretionary guidance. The policy has a clear statement of intent, prioritising safeguarding above all else and emphasising that this is everybody's responsibility. It shows leaders' reassuring awareness of the importance of safeguarding each individual pupil in the context of their individual lives at home, at school and in the community. The school's suitable approach to peer-on-peer abuse is covered in detail.
- Critically for this proposed school, the policy takes adequate account of the additional challenges when safeguarding pupils with SEND. Consequently, it meets the relevant requirements. However, there is scope to strengthen this aspect of the policy further to reflect fully the school's specific special-school context in which the policy will be applied.
- Induction training for new staff, already underway, places sufficient emphasis on safeguarding, child protection and associated matters.

Paragraphs 9 and 10

- The proposed behaviour and anti-bullying policies remain unchanged since the previous pre-registration inspection. Both, if implemented effectively, are likely to mean that the relevant standards are met.
- The 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. 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 target for discrimination.

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

- Due to the early stage of renovation works at the time of the first pre-registration inspection, leaders were unable to demonstrate that all associated standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils were likely to be met. All necessary arrangements are now in place to begin operating if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the school.
- Leaders can demonstrate likely compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. A fire risk assessment is in place and has already been regularly reviewed as building works have progressed and been completed. Staff and leaders have taken a systematic approach to making and recording all necessary fire-safety checks, such as those relating to alarms, exit routes, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers. Leaders have wisely taken advice from fire-safety experts in making the necessary arrangements.

- Following the previously created policy and procedures for risk assessments, an extensive range of thorough risk assessments is now in place. Different spaces throughout the school are risk assessed according to the different activities that the space will be designated to accommodate. Where appropriate, risk assessments include associated action plans that specify the responsibility of staff in taking actions to minimise risk, such as checking the surface or flooring before starting a physical education (PE) lesson.
- Other arrangements judged likely to meet the standards at the previous pre-registration inspection remain in place. There is a suitable overarching health and safety policy. Using procedures and approaches tried and tested elsewhere, leaders have established systematic processes that are likely to secure the effective oversight of health and safety arrangements, once the school is operating. Suitable arrangements are in place for first aid, staff deployment, and the registering of pupils' admissions and attendance.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21

- As at the time of the first pre-registration inspection, leaders are knowledgeable about best practice in safer recruitment to ensure that adults are suitable to work with pupils. As staff are recruited, relevant checks are being methodically carried out and accurately recorded on the single central record. The required checks of governors are similarly made and recorded.
- The school does not intend to use supply teachers. Leaders are well informed about recent guidance regarding background checks of volunteers, and suitable procedures for implementing this guidance are in place.
- The standards contained in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The premises and accommodation are ready and fit for purpose.
- Building and renovation work has been completed except for a few remaining minor snagging issues. The finish is of a high standard. The school is bright, airy and welcoming. The environment creates a professional but suitably friendly feel.
- All specific facilities required by the independent school standards are clearly designated and fit for purpose. For example, accommodation for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils is exceptionally well appointed, complete with washing facilities and a directly adjoining accessible toilet. Areas that pupils should not access are secured.
- There is ample provision of separate toilets for boys and girls, in addition to designated staff toilets. Plentiful supplies of temperature-regulated hot and cold water

are available in all relevant areas. Numerous sources of drinking water throughout the school are clearly labelled.

- All areas are well lit and acoustically conducive to effective learning. The fact that all classroom areas are air-conditioned is indicative of the priority given to the care and comfort of pupils through the extensive renovations.
- The outdoor area is spacious, attractive and secure. The generously proportioned hall is a considerable asset, with potential to house a range of activities, including PE. Understandably, leaders also plan to take pupils off site to make use of local facilities to enhance the PE curriculum.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32

- A website for the proposed new school is nearly complete. All the information, statements and policies that must be on the website or available to parents on request are in place and fit for purpose. At the time of this inspection, the final documents were being uploaded to the website ready for its launch.
- It is likely that all requirements of the standard in this part will be met both before and after the website is launched.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- The school's proposed written complaints policy has not changed. It meets all requirements of the independent school standards. The policy 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 and headteacher display sufficient understanding of the independent school standards. They have demonstrated that all requirements are likely to be met should the DfE register the school.
- Leaders have wasted no time in the interim period between the two pre-registration inspections. Going beyond ensuring that all standards are now likely to be met, plans and thinking for the school's effectiveness have been enhanced and developed. New staff are also embarked upon an extensive range of relevant training, including through gaining experience at Heath Farm School, with which the proposed school enjoys strong links.
- There are reasonable systems and plans in place for the ongoing running of the school once it is operating. Although there is a specified schedule for reviewing all policies and procedures, the headteacher is astutely aware that this will need to be

flexible. She is mindful that, as this new school opens, previously theoretical intentions may need to evolve, with policies and practices updated sooner as a result.

- Lines of accountability to ensure that all independent school standards are continuously met have been specified. The assistant director, on behalf of the proprietor, has a sequence of standards checks programmed into his monitoring visits. In addition, a small governing body has been formed, including external representation from a headteacher of an outstanding special school.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Throughout the recent 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 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	145980
DfE registration number	845/6065
Inspection number	10081831

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	Lindsey Jeffries
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,250–£65,050
Telephone number	01204 558038
Website	Not yet live
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 with 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 with SEND. 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 SEND 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.

Information about this inspection

- This was the second pre-registration inspection. It checked that all relevant standards were likely to be met, but the inspector focused particularly on those that he previously judged were unlikely to be met.
- The documentation that the school had already submitted with its application to the DfE remained unchanged from the first pre-registration inspection. Consequently, the inspector referred to the previous pre-registration evidence and findings. He checked with leaders on site for any changes to the proposed policies, procedures or practices to confirm that these remained likely to be met.
- During his visit, the inspector held discussions with the headteacher and the assistant director who was representing the proprietor. The inspector also referred back to notes of discussions he had had with other staff and leaders during the first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised new and additional documentation and procedures on site against the requirements of the independent school standards. He also toured the proposed school site to check the suitability of the premises and accommodation.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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