

Thornhill Park School

24 Thornhill Park, Ashbrooke, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR2 7LA

Inspection dates

7 February 2019

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school website. The policy is up to date and is in line with the most recent government guidance. The policy is one of a comprehensive suite of policies covering pupils' safety and protection, including policies on safer recruitment, online safety and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training from the designated safeguarding leader. When leaders identify a concern about a pupil's safety they work effectively with other agencies and with parents and carers. Leaders keep meticulous chronological records of the steps they take.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to continue to be met, should the Department for Education (DfE) approve the material change.

Paragraph 11

- The school's health and safety policy is up to date and is also available on the school website. The proprietor and the headteacher ensure that a wide range of checks are made in a systematic manner and on a regular basis. The policy is implemented fully. The proprietor ensures that specialists regularly service external lighting, alarms, electrical appliances and heating systems.
- The staff are clear about the storage of hazardous chemicals, such as cleaning materials. They are kept in well-labelled and locked cupboards.
- Leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to continue to be met, should the DfE approve the material change.

Paragraph 12

- The proprietor and headteacher ensure that all necessary checks are routinely undertaken to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Fire Reform Order 2005.

External specialists complete an annual fire risk assessment. In addition, external specialists service alarm systems and fire extinguishers regularly. Leaders ensure that fire exits and fire doors are checked on a monthly basis. The school maintains good records showing the time taken to evacuate the building in fire drills.

- There is clear signage throughout both the main building and the Coach House showing how the building should be evacuated.
- Six members of staff are trained as fire marshals.
- Leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to continue to be met, should the DfE approve the material change.

Paragraph 14, 16

- The school provides a high level of supervision. Visits to classrooms during this inspection found almost all pupils attending the school are taught one-to-one by a teacher and with the help of teaching assistants. Typically, each classroom has only two or three pupils with as many adults supervising.
- Pupils are actively supervised at social times and when they go outside.
- The school has an up-to-date risk assessment policy in place. In addition, there is a raft of specific risk assessments governing the use of different teaching areas, such as the workshop and art room. There are also risk assessments in place for the use of the garden and grounds and for when pupils go off site, for example, swimming or horse riding. All risk assessments follow a common format and are completed to a consistently good standard.
- The proprietor, headteacher and the staff ensure that the welfare, health and safety of pupils has a high priority. Every effort is made to identify and prevent potential risks to pupils' safety. As a result, leaders have ensured that standards are likely to continue to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28

- The school is located on a single site in a large Victorian building comprising the main building and the Coach House. Both buildings are very well maintained and in good order. Both buildings have secure entry and exit systems in place. The facilities have been maintained to a standard such that the health and welfare of pupils is ensured. Classrooms and social areas are bright and well-lit, have good acoustics and are well ventilated.
- There is ample space within classrooms and social areas to accommodate an additional 10 pupils. As the school is proposing to admit additional pupils with the same special educational needs and/or disabilities as those already catered for, the school is already well prepared to meet their needs.
- There are suitable washing, toileting and changing facilities available for the sole use of boys and girls. Toilets have hot and cold water available and there are suitable showering facilities. The proprietor ensures that annual checks are made by an

external specialist on water temperatures, to ensure no risk of scalding. Toilet and shower facilities are also comfortably able to accommodate additional pupils.

- Clearly marked drinking water facilities are provided on each floor of both buildings.
- There is good external lighting in place to ensure that people can enter and leave the building safely.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to continue to be met, should the DfE approve the material change.

Paragraph 24

- The medical room is located on the ground floor of the main building. It has a day bed, a sink and secure storage facilities for medicines. The school also has other therapy rooms and nurture spaces. The medical room is adjacent to the toilet facilities.
- Leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to continue to be met, should the DfE approve the material change.

Paragraph 29

- The Coach House building has a secure play area with outdoor play equipment for younger pupils.
- In addition, the school has extensive grounds, which have been developed as a woodland garden with suitable access for disabled pupils. There is a wide range of suitable play equipment together with facilities for horticulture, including a polytunnel and raised vegetable beds.
- Leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to continue to be met, should the DfE approve the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The headteacher and the proprietor demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. In a recent standard inspection of the school all the independent school standards were met, and the school was judged to be good. The proprietor and headteacher continue to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- The proprietor and the headteacher ensure that the health and welfare of pupils are actively promoted.
- Leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to continue to be met, should the DfE approve the material change.

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	108877
DfE registration number	394/6015
Inspection number	10093023

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	John Phillipson
Chair	Gavin Bestford
Headteacher	Christine Cave
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,640–£100,620
Telephone number	0191 565 3965
Website	www.ne-as.org.uk
Email address	thps@ne-as.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	13–15 November 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	4 to 19	4 to 19	4 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	35	45	45

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	26	Up to 45
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	35	45
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	35	45
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	35	45

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	41	51
Number of part-time teaching staff	5	5

Information about this school

- Thornhill Park School opened in 1981.
- This is a special school for pupils aged 4 to 19 years with autism spectrum conditions. Some pupils have additional neurodevelopmental needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and this is a requirement to be admitted to the school.
- The school currently has 35 pupils on roll and is at full capacity. There were no early years pupils in the school at the time of this inspection.
- The school's last standard inspection was on 13 to 15 November 2018. There has been no change of headteacher or chair of the governing body since the last inspection.
- The proprietor has formed a board of trustees that provides the function of

governance in the form of the governing board, which meets every six weeks.

- The school has no specific specialism or religious affiliation.
- The school is based in two buildings on the same site. The school has an off-site delivery programme designed to support pupils who require an extended transition to the main school building.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education commissioned this inspection to determine whether the school was able to accommodate an increase in the number of pupils from the current maximum of 35 to a maximum of 45 pupils.
- This was the school's first material change inspection.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and talked to the proprietor on the telephone.
- The school currently has the maximum number of pupils on roll.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils. This included evaluating the quality of vetting checks on members of staff and visitors to the school. In addition, the inspector reviewed a range of documents available on the school website, including the safeguarding and child protection policy.
- The inspector toured the school site to evaluate whether the school had the facilities to accommodate an increase of 10 pupils and to determine whether the independent school standards for the premises were completely met.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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