

The Holden School

Former St Peter's Infant School, Firs Lane, Leigh, Greater Manchester
WN7 4SB

Inspection dates

20 August 2019

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

Paragraph 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)(c), 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)

- Leaders have prepared an appropriate curriculum policy, which includes a sufficiently broad range of subjects. The details emphasise the contribution that each subject will make to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This approach demonstrates leaders' intention for the school to actively provide a flexible and personalised education. The details also show that the active promotion of values will lie at the core of the school's work. This includes values such as tolerance and respect and developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of being a British citizen.
- The curriculum policy is supported by long-term schemes of work for each subject. The schemes of work and examples of the supporting long-term planning are thorough. It is evident that leaders have thought carefully about what they want the pupils to learn during their time at the school. The planning takes into account the specific and very individual needs of pupils, all of whom are likely to be pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The curriculum is appropriately broad. There is a suitable emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils will also experience a variety of other subjects, such as science, religious studies, information and communication technology and physical education. They will also benefit from a creative curriculum that will include history, geography and art.
- Pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) will be regularly timetabled. This will include the development of life skills and sex and relationships education. Policies have already been drawn up. The topics to be covered are suitably wide ranging. Appropriate opportunities will be taken to ensure that PSHE will be woven into the curriculum.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)

- Leaders have already recruited some of the staff. Leaders have a very clear idea of

the calibre and expertise they are looking for in their new teachers and staff.

- No short-term teaching plans are yet in place, although templates have been created for these. Leaders will ask teachers to write these prior to the school opening. They will be prepared to match their subject, teaching methods and the needs of the pupils. This is an appropriate approach at this stage.
- The headteacher is a qualified and experienced teacher. She is knowledgeable and committed to providing a good-quality education for pupils. She is likely to be able to ensure that teaching is of a suitable quality when the school opens.

Paragraph 4

- Leaders have a suitable assessment policy.
- Pupils' attainment and personal needs will be assessed when they arrive at the school. Their progress and attainment will also be assessed each term. Records are appropriate. Teachers and leaders have a good understanding of the progress that they expect pupils to make across the curriculum. They are mindful of the range of pupils' abilities and needs. Pupils' progress will be shared termly with parents and carers, and those responsible for governance. Targets will be set from these assessments and then reviewed regularly.
- Leaders intend to use the national curriculum. Where it is appropriate, they intend to enter pupils for the national phonics screening test and the end of key stage 1 and 2 assessments.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

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

Paragraph 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), 5(d)(iii)

- Documentary evidence indicates that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a thread that runs throughout the proposed provision. The school's aims, schemes of work, policies and plans for enrichment activities all have pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at their core.
- There is evidence that pupils will learn about democracy and different faiths. Non-negotiable enrichment activities will be offered to all pupils to ensure that they experience a diverse range of social and cultural activities and traditions. For example, visiting the theatre, listening to a religious speaker and experiencing live music. Policies promote the importance of having a caring attitude and showing kindness and friendship.
- Schemes of work will support the development of pupils' skills, broaden their horizons and provide experiences that will give them a balance of opposing views. Pupils will be able to put into practice the values fundamental to living in Britain.
- The school's policies include positive reference to all the protected characteristics set out in legislation.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met when the school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- Leaders have paid appropriate attention to statutory guidance. They have put in place all the necessary arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of pupils and to promote their welfare at the school.
- Leaders have a suitable safeguarding policy in place. It is up to date and meets all current statutory requirements. It will be reviewed regularly.
- There will be at least one designated safeguarding lead within school. All new staff will receive appropriate induction, safeguarding training and regular updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism, sexual exploitation and e-safety.

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10

- Leaders have detailed behaviour and exclusion policies in place. There is also an appropriate anti-bullying policy. Any incidents of poor behaviour will be logged. It is intended that these will be cross-referenced with other concerns. Sanctions will be appropriate and proportionate. Staff will seek to de-escalate incidents and teach pupils an appropriate range of responses and skills to deal with a situation.

Paragraph 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- Leaders have a health and safety policy. This is appropriately tailored to the premises of the proposed school. It complies with all relevant laws. The premises have regular fire-safety checks, and the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Leaders have provided an array of policies to be implemented when the school opens. This includes policies related to the following: first aid, risk assessment, fire safety and the administration of medicines. All of these policies reflect recent developments and meet statutory requirements.
- A risk assessment policy is in place. The inspector was able to review examples of risk assessments that have already been carried out. The inspector also reviewed the actions that leaders have taken to minimise risks for pupils.
- The security and safety of pupils have been considered as part the refurbished building. For example, additional fencing and the creation of added road access so that pupils can arrive and leave the premises safely. Access through main doorways will be via a security key pad. The school has also installed closed-circuit television (CCTV). Cameras are located around the outside of the school building and at the main entrance. All cameras will have an appropriate, visible sign, stating that 'CCTV is in operation'. There is an appropriate policy in place that outlines the purpose and use of the system.
- Leaders have made arrangements to ensure that the school's computer network will be filtered to increase pupils' safety when they are online.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils will be supervised at all times, including at breaktimes, arriving at school and on leaving the premises.

Paragraph 15

- Leaders presented the inspector with the policy and systems used to register attendance manually and electronically. They were also able to share how they propose to monitor ongoing attendance. Leaders will evaluate pupils' absence on a termly basis through the governing body. There is a suitable admissions policy. Records of admission adhere to Education Regulations 2006.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

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

Paragraph 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(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)

- The single central record (SCR) is already in place. The required checks prescribed in this part of the independent school standards have been undertaken on staff already appointed. This includes the headteacher, a teacher, teaching assistant and the school administrator. Members of the proprietor body and governing body are included on the school's SCR.
- The headteacher has overall responsibility for safeguarding across the school. She is trained to a suitably high standard as the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders have completed appropriate training to support them to appoint staff who are suitable to work in a school. Additional teachers and support staff are yet to be appointed.
- The school does not intend to operate with supply teachers. However, leaders are aware of the procedures that they should follow in the event of employing agency staff.
- Leaders are clear about their responsibility for vetting volunteers who might work with pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)

- The site for the proposed school has been bought from the local authority. It was a former maintained infant school. The building has been newly renovated by the proprietor. The school occupies a ground floor and comprises a dedicated suite of rooms for teaching. It also includes offices, staff and pupils' toilets, a meeting room, a staff room and a medical room. It has a well-equipped kitchen and an area for indoor eating and recreation. All are furnished to a very high standard. All areas are warm and conducive to learning.

- There are appropriate toilet facilities, including a designated disabled toilet and wet room. All toilets can be secured from the inside. There is running hot and cold water. The hot water is at an appropriate temperature. There are signs above each hot water tap, indicating that the water is hot. Pupils will have access to drinking water throughout the day.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- A very well-appointed medical room has been set aside, with suitable washing facilities and access to a toilet. A bed, bedding, fridge and first-aid kit are also set up in the room.

Paragraph 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)

- Accommodation throughout is of a high standard and meets all requirements for health, safety and the welfare of pupils. This includes suitable acoustics and lighting. All teaching rooms have a good source of natural light. The exterior and interior lighting is of an appropriate standard. All rooms and facilities are secure. However, some are only accessible via a security key fob pad.

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- The pupils will have access to an appropriate outdoor space that is secure and well appointed. It will be a good space to play in when not in lessons. This space will also provide plenty of room for physical education, in accordance with the school's curriculum requirements.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 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)(i), 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)

- The proprietor and headteacher are in the process of developing an appropriate page on the company's website for the school. Leaders are fully aware of the requirements of what a school should publish on its website. This includes providing parents with information on the safeguarding of pupils, and on the school's complaints procedure. Leaders intend that the website page will be up and running before the school opens. However, if this is not possible, they are aware that this information should be made available to parents in another way.
- The headteacher has compiled a good-quality school prospectus for parents and pupils. It is user friendly and provides readers with appropriate information about the school and its expectations. A comprehensive range of policies for parents is in place. They fully reflect recent legislation and good practice.
- Leaders discussed with the inspector their intentions regarding providing annual reports to parents. These will be supplemented with termly updates. The reports will be extensive. They will give parents a holistic picture of how well their children are progressing. This will be both academically and in terms of their personal development and acquisition of life skills. Leaders are aware that any inspection reports and examination results need to be made available once released.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely

to be met when the school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 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), 33(k)

- The complaints policy is comprehensive. It contains all of the necessary stages, with appropriate timescales and details about written records. The policy is robust and ensures transparency.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- Leaders demonstrate the knowledge and experience to open a new school. The headteacher has had senior leadership responsibilities within the company's other schools. The proprietor body and governance for the school have extensive knowledge of successfully setting up and running the 22 other schools that make up the education section of the company. They are likely to fulfil their responsibilities to actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- All of the independent school standards are likely to be met when the school opens. This reflects the effective leadership of the school.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility plan fully reflects the school's statutory requirements.
- The policy for equalities is clear about how leaders will monitor and support all of the protected characteristics. These are also threaded through a range of policies.
- Equality of opportunity is a prominent feature of the values of this school.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

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	146988
DfE registration number	359/6004
Inspection number	10118129

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	James Joyce
Headteacher	Debbra Procter
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,313 to £71,057
Telephone number	01942 932540
Website	None
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	5–11	5–11
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	48	48

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	48
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	48
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Not known
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	Not known

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	7
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	6

Information about this proposed school

- This proposed small independent special school will be located in the former St. Peter's Infant School building. A small adjacent building on the same site is currently undergoing renovation. This will provide further school facilities. The proprietor is aware that this new building will require a separate material change application.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 48 mixed-gender pupils, aged between five to 11 years. All are likely to have a high level of need related to their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- There are likely to be pupils with SEND, who will have either a statement of educational needs, or an education, health and care plan.
- The referral route for placing pupils at the school will be through local authorities from across the North West region.
- The school aims to 'provide a structured, nurturing learning environment where pupils can access a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum to meet their significant needs'. The company website states: 'Step-by-step, day-by-day our teams are helping to transform children's lives and prepare them for adulthood'.
- The proprietor is Acorn Care and Education Limited. Acorn Care and Education Limited has recently merged with the National Fostering Agency. One of the four assistant directors within the company fulfils the role of chair of the governing body for this school. The governing body is accountable to the company's managing director of education. A recently appointed headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school.
- The proposed school is part of a group of 23 schools owned by Acorn Care and Education Limited.
- There are no plans for the proposed school to use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The first scheduled pre-registration inspection was deferred due to building work being incomplete. This is the first pre-inspection that has been completed.
- During the inspection, the proposed documents and policies were scrutinised, including documents relating to safeguarding. A visit was made to the proposed site of the school. A tour was also made of the proposed accommodation. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the company's facilities and property managers, the school administrator and representatives of the proprietor body and governance of the school.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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