

Ripplevale School

Chapel Lane, Ripple, Deal, Kent CT14 8JG

Inspection dates

9 January 2020

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, 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy pays due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It is available on request as the school's website is not currently live, due for imminent relaunch.
- The safeguarding policy covers required areas and clearly reflects the school's practices. First and foremost, it provides a detailed account of additional complexities when safeguarding pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. Information about who to go to with a concern and who is responsible for safeguarding is easy to find.
- This high profile and clarity around safeguarding in the policy translates to the school itself, where important safeguarding notices are made available to all pupils too, using words, pictures and symbols. This prioritisation of pupils is further enhanced, for example through their easy access to the designated safeguarding lead and deputies, whose offices open directly onto the playground. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong.
- Staff are well trained and vigilant about the safety and welfare of pupils. They follow the school's policy and protocols for raising any concerns promptly. Those responsible for leading on safeguarding have a tight oversight of all related matters. They navigate the well-organised records with ease and confidence. A combination of their expertise and use of a supportive record-keeping system ensures that all information about individual pupils contributes to a complete picture of pupils' safety and welfare over time.
- Leaders are prompt to consult or share concerns with other relevant professionals and agencies where necessary. In this school, pupils' views and needs are obviously paramount when considering their safety and well-being.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14 and 16

- Existing arrangements for managing the health and safety of pupils have been well maintained since the previous inspection. They are unlikely to be compromised by the

proposed additional capacity. Relevant health and safety, risk assessment and associated policies are regularly reviewed and implemented effectively. The leadership and delegated responsibility for this aspect of the school's work is systematic and clearly suitably prioritised.

- The overarching risk assessment policy outlines the various types of risk assessment that the school undertakes. The fire risk assessment is carried out and reviewed in association with an external specialist. Leaders take prompt action to tackle any issues that arise from these assessments. There is a thorough, systematic approach to creating and reviewing detailed risk assessments about individual pupils. Risk assessments for educational activities are fit for purpose.
- Supervision of pupils at different times and for different activities is carefully planned according to the needs of the pupils. Leaders have considered potential implications of a roll increase. They have wisely planned sufficient capacity to adjust staffing levels in response to the school's assessment of what is required for specific future admissions.
- The school is likely to meet all the paragraphs that were checked in this part if the material change is implemented.

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

Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21

- Arrangements for checking the suitability of adults to work with vulnerable pupils are secure.
- The head of school and senior administrator are knowledgeable and confident explaining the differences between the various checks and how they undertake them. This includes details of further checks they have carried out on staff who have lived or worked overseas.
- The single central record is compliant. It is well organised and records clearly all mandatory information.
- All requirements of these paragraphs are likely to continue to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The premises and accommodation are clean, well maintained and spacious. The organisation and clear designation of rooms and spaces have been thoughtfully designed with the needs of the pupils in mind. There is plenty of surplus space to accommodate the additional pupils proposed.
- As well as a range of suitable classrooms there are well-appointed rooms for more bespoke purposes including design and technology, information and communication technology, home technology and art.
- There is extensive outdoor space, both grass and playground, suitable for recreation and physical education. A large indoor hall is used for other physical activity. There are ample shower facilities available for pupils.
- Other requirements of this part are also likely to continue to be met. For example, there is a generous supply of toilets for separate pupil and staff use, appropriately

regulated hot water and plentiful, clearly labelled drinking water outlets. Facilities for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils meet requirements, including a 'sick bay' as well as a 'medical room' used for minor injury treatment and administering medicines.

- The existing premises have capacity to accommodate the maximum additional pupils proposed, so it is likely that the standards contained in this part will continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- This school has a long track record of continually meeting the independent school standards.
- Directors and leaders understandably believe they are running a 'good ship'. Because of a very high demand on places over the last year, particularly in primary, they have decided to apply for an increased capacity. This is to allow greater flexibility in the context that pupils often join at points other than the conventional times of transition.
- Directors are determined to retain and not compromise on the school's core vision. They are passionate and committed defenders of its purpose and intentions. This centres on providing the best possible education to boys with typically high levels of anxiety. There is a strong desire to redress what are often previously negative experiences of education for pupils and to enable the academically most able to excel. At the heart of the school's ethos is keeping all pupils safe and preparing them to lead independent and fulfilling adult lives.
- Leaders and directors share confidence that the proposed expansion will not have a detrimental impact on existing provision. The priority is relentlessly pupil-focused, and the plan is for any increase in numbers to be gradual. Existing practice around admissions and transition mean that pupils usually settle well. This is because assessments consider the needs of both new and existing pupils when making decisions about suitable provision.
- Leaders have thought carefully about the possible implications for staffing to accommodate additional pupils. The school has maintained a successful inspection history as it has grown in the past.
- Since the previous inspection, the leadership structure of the school has altered, with a new 'head of school' role and three deputy headteachers. This shift was made in the context of several changes of personnel at headship level in recent years. Directors and senior leaders have made this change with careful consideration. Leaders at different levels felt well consulted about the change and convey clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. It was beyond the scope of this inspection to test out the full impact of this change. However, no concerns were identified about any detrimental impact in terms of the school's capacity to meet the independent school standards.
- There are clear line management structures in place. To support the work of the deputies, the proprietors have elected to commission additional educational expertise externally. The chief executive officer, who is also the head of school, has overall responsibility for ensuring that all standards are continually met on behalf of the

proprietors. Directors provide the governance for the work of the school, supported by formal meeting structures and processes for signing off policies, for example.

- The standard contained within this part is likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

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	118995
DfE registration number	886/6047
Inspection number	10131943

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	Independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Christopher Danican and Clifford Davies
Headteacher	Jane Norris (Head of School)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,763
Telephone number	01304 373866
Website	www.ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Email address	info@ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	31 January – 2 February 2017

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	6 to 18	6 to 18	6 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	99	125	125

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Boys	Boys
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	99	125
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	99	125
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	99	125
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	99	125

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	18	21
Number of part-time teaching staff	2	3

Information about this school

- Ripplevale School opened as a residential special school in 1970. Since the previous standard inspection on 31 January – 2 February 2017 the school has ceased offering residential provision. All pupils attend now as day pupils.
- The school provides for pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder. Some pupils also have other special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The two proprietors are also directors of Ripplevale School Ltd, which exists to run Ripplevale School.
- Similar to the period leading up to the previous inspection, there have been further notable changes to the leadership and management of the school and another

restructuring has taken place. The former chief executive officer and business manager of Ripplevale School Ltd has taken up post as head of school. Two existing members of staff have been promoted to positions of deputy headteacher alongside the previous deputy. These changes took effect from September 2019.

- All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and are funded by their local authorities.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietors had applied to make changes to the school's registration. The proprietors wished to increase maximum potential number of pupils on roll.
- This was the first material change inspection.
- Prior to the visit, the inspector reviewed the context and inspection history of the school.
- On site, the inspector held discussions with the head of school, the three deputy headteachers and other leaders and staff. He met with the two directors who have responsibility as the school's proprietors. The inspector also met and spoke with other staff and pupils informally as he toured the premises with the head of school.
- The inspector checked policies, records and documentation related to the specific independent school standards that were within the scope of this inspection. This included checking the single central record and safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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