

Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning

Westland Farm, Lordshill Common, Shamley Green, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0TL

Inspection date

22 July 2020

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

All paragraphs

- Pupils who come to Elysian are likely to have missed a lot of time at school. They will have complex and varied learning, social and emotional needs. Leaders are acutely aware of this context and are building the school's ethos and curriculum around it. Their expertise, developed through running the existing therapy provision, supports them in this work.
- The head of education has given careful thought to how the curriculum can meet pupils' needs in an accessible and engaging way. Plans give pupils the chance to experience a suitably broad range of subjects, making good use of the farm-based context. Literacy and numeracy are central to these plans, as is the therapeutic support that pupils will need.
- Leaders recognise the importance of equipping pupils for life after school. Opportunities to achieve relevant qualifications, including in English and mathematics, are built into curriculum plans. Accreditation routes used in the existing therapy centre will become part of the school's offer. They will also support staff in assessing pupils' progress towards agreed learning goals.
- Plans for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) promote the school's intended ethos. Leaders have taken steps to ensure that statutory requirements are met, including around promoting fundamental British values. They are convincing in their explanations of how this aspect of learning will be enriched further through the school's ethos and ways of working. Careers information and guidance reflects leaders' understanding of pupils' likely needs but is not yet captured clearly in written plans.
- Pupils are likely to have education, health and care (EHC) plans when they join the school. Leaders have considered how they will work with pupils, their families and other relevant professionals to shape learning, so that it meets pupils' needs appropriately.

- Most school staff have already been appointed and are working in the existing therapy provision. Leaders are currently recruiting the additional staff that will be needed if the provision is granted registration as a school. Leaders have well-thought-out plans for staff induction and training to take place before the school opens. This training incorporates relevant aspects linked to safeguarding, education and animal care. Expertise from within the existing staff group will be used to support ongoing training for all staff.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for checking what and how well pupils are learning. The head of education intends to keep an overview of what pupils learn, to ensure that knowledge is relevant and that nothing is missed. Presently, it is less clear how leaders will ensure that learning builds logically and deliberately on prior knowledge.
- Leaders have given due consideration to how pupils' progress will be monitored. Systems already in place in the therapy provision are to be adapted to incorporate pupils' academic progress. These appear to support effective and ongoing communication with parents and relevant professionals, such as social workers.
- This part of the independent school standards is likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

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

Paragraph 5

- Pupils' social development is at the heart of leaders' thinking. This is captured in the planned approach to the taught curriculum. Leaders identify that being able to form and manage relationships with other pupils and adults is likely to be a major hurdle for pupils to overcome. Their work with the pupils who attend the existing therapy centre has proved successful in this respect.
- Leaders have thoughtful plans for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. They have identified how this will be an integral part of pupils' interactions with the different animals on the farm. For example, through learning about how different animals are cared for, adults can promote empathy and responsibility. Pupils will gain an understanding of different cultures through learning about their different approaches to caring for, slaughtering and eating certain animals, such as pigs.
- Leaders intend to access an accredited course to deliver the school's PSHE curriculum. The route they have chosen offers the flexibility they will need to manage pupils' emerging needs successfully and in a timely way.
- Pupils attending the proposed school are likely to be very anxious about leaving their own home. As such, helping them to engage with people beyond the Elysian community is a challenge that leaders know they must manage carefully. Pupils will have the opportunity to help in the livery yard, ride horses and walk some of the farm animals around the wider estate. This is intended to provide safe opportunities for pupils to practise how to conduct themselves around others and to understand how the farm contributes to the local community.
- Leaders have considered how learning about farm life helps pupils to understand about public institutions and services in England. For instance, plans are in place for the local police to visit and help promote positive attitudes towards using social media.

Leaders are mindful of wanting to ensure that pupils can express their views about issues that are relevant to them and the wider world, while learning about others' perspectives.

- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6 and 7

- Leaders have an astute understanding of the vulnerabilities that pupils attending the proposed school are likely to have. Staff have useful experience of identifying and dealing with safeguarding risks to children, including through their work in the existing therapeutic provision. As such, practices for identifying, recording and acting on any concerns are already in place.
- The proposed school's written safeguarding policy is fit for purpose. At the time of this inspection, two minor administrative errors were in the process of being addressed. Leaders are aware of the relevant legislation that the school is required to meet. They have appropriate plans in place for training all staff in line with expectations.
- The proprietor will fulfil the role of designated safeguarding lead, supported by the head of education. Although both have completed detailed safeguarding training in the past, this was not specific to their new roles as school leaders. Currently, access to such training is impeded by COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders have signed up to complete training for school designated safeguarding leads as soon as it becomes available.

Paragraphs 9 and 10

- Written behaviour and anti-bullying policies are in place and fit for purpose. They promote positive behaviour through the lens of equality and diversity. Leaders anticipate using physical interventions and exclusion as an absolute last resort. Nevertheless, they have suitable procedures in place should they become necessary.
- Leaders are mindful of how pupils' additional needs will require thoughtful strategies to be in place for helping pupils to manage their behaviour successfully. They anticipate that risk assessments and other planning will include strategies for reducing the likelihood of a negative behaviour incident occurring.
- Ongoing and timely staff briefing and debrief sessions are planned. These will serve to ensure that all relevant information about a pupil, including about their behaviour, is shared and recorded appropriately. Processes for doing this are already working in the therapy sessions and will be adopted by the school. Leaders will keep an oversight of the emerging picture for each pupil, so that they can act promptly if a pattern of concern arises.

Paragraphs 11 to 13

- Leaders understand their duties to ensure that the site is safe for adults and pupils. They recognise the specific challenges that arise from the school being on the site of a farm. They have taken these into account when considering health and safety arrangements for the school.

- The written health and safety policy is fit for purpose and reflects the school's context. Routines for checking the site and relevant equipment are already established, with appropriate records kept. Health and safety training that is specific to working on a farm is included in staff induction procedures.
- Fire risk assessments have been carried out using external expertise to check that arrangements are suitable for the school's context. Fire equipment is checked routinely, with appropriate records kept. Fire evacuation procedures take account of which parts of the site pose the greatest potential risk and the challenges of people being spread across a large space.
- The written first-aid policy is fit for purpose. Leaders have given particular thought to managing incidents that occur while pupils are at the furthest points of the school site. Some staff have already completed some first-aid training.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils at the proposed school are likely to exhibit significant anxiety. With this in mind, they are likely to need close adult supervision and support throughout the day. Leaders have planned provision and staffing with this in mind, so that each pupil will always be in sight of an adult.
- Leaders have considered how pupils will be supervised when working beyond the boundary of the main part of the school, while still on the farm site. Sensitive plans are in place for managing pupils who may feel compelled to flee during an episode of heightened anxiety. These plans minimise the likelihood of pupils straying beyond the farm site, while giving them the space they may feel they need in order to manage their own emotions.

Paragraph 15

- Leaders know what information they are required to include on the school's admissions register. They have an established and appropriate system for gathering this information in the therapy provision and intend using the same approach for school admissions. Similarly, attendance records will follow the same procedure used in the therapy setting. Practical arrangements for completing the attendance register and following up any instances of absence appear fit for purpose.

Paragraph 16

- The school's risk assessment policy is fit for purpose. It is supported by a range of risk assessments that show leaders are alert to a wide range of potential hazards. Risk assessments for animals are written in a pupil-accessible way, so that they can also be used as a learning tool. Risk assessments linked to caring for and riding the horses are particularly detailed.
- This part of the independent school standards is likely to be met.

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

All paragraphs

- Leaders know what recruitment and vetting checks are required for staff, proprietors and any other adults associated with the proposed school. They are aware of the

statutory documents that lay out requirements and have sensibly sought advice to ensure they interpret this information correctly.

- A single central record has been set up and populated with almost all of the required information for staff who are already in place. Prohibition checks for teachers and some of those responsible for managing the school are pending.
- It is not leaders' intention to use supply staff in the school. This is because pupils are likely not to cope well with having unfamiliar adults on site. The planned staff-to-pupil ratio suggests that provision could continue to run if one or more member of staff was unexpectedly absent. Leaders are aware of the checks they would need to make if they did choose to bring supply staff into school.
- There are already strict rules in place for anyone wishing to access the site, such as contractors and people whose horses are stabled at Elysian's livery. They will only be permitted to enter the school site once pupils have left at the end of the day. This minimises the likelihood of an unvetted adult coming into contact with pupils.
- The proprietary body is made up of two directors. There are also plans to put a management committee in place, which will comprise a number of adults who are not employed by the school. All required checks are in place for the chair of the proprietary body. For the other director and the management committee representatives, the single central record is being populated as checks are carried out.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

All paragraphs

- The school will be based within a designated part of the extensive site that Elysian owns. The entrance yard to the school has a secure gate that is locked during the day. The school's part of the site comprises two indoor teaching spaces, an outdoor multi-use grass arena, a self-contained stable yard and numerous paddocks and indoor spaces that house the various animals. Pupils will also have the potential to access other parts of the estate, such as while exercising the animals under close adult supervision.
- Outside spaces are carefully maintained, with some uneven ground as would be expected on a farm. Fencing and gates ensure appropriate separation between pupils and animals. The open layout of the site supports adults in keeping pupils in view.
- Indoor learning spaces are light, bright and spacious. While leaders intend that most learning will take place outside, there is sufficient provision for all pupils to work indoors if necessary. One building, which is relatively new, has a window that has not yet been fitted and is awaiting some additional furniture but is, nevertheless, fit for purpose. There is a purpose-built kitchen available for pupils to use to learn how to cook. External lighting is in place, although it is not anticipated that pupils will be on site during the hours of darkness, even in the winter.
- There are three toilets on site, providing adequate facilities for pupils and adults. Handwashing facilities include access to hot and cold running water, both as part of toilet facilities and outside in the yard. There are also two showers and a wet room for pupils to use as needed.

- There is a designated food room where pupils can eat their lunch. Drinking water is accessible, labelled appropriately and available throughout the day.
- Leaders have put aside an appropriate space to care for pupils who may be unwell or require medical attention. There is a toilet facility adjacent to this space.
- This part of the independent standards is likely to be met if the school is granted permission to register.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32

- Leaders intend to use the school's website as the main route for sharing required information with parents and other stakeholders. They are currently building the webpages that will make this information available to relevant parties once the school has been given permission to operate. Leaders are using the independent school standards and other information published online to check that nothing is missed.
- Some pupils and their families may find it difficult to access information via the website. Leaders have considered how they will make information available in this circumstance. They intend to use the detailed induction process to ensure that pupils and their parents or carers have access to the information that they need and are entitled to.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- A written complaints policy has been written and appears fit for purpose. It includes the process for informal and formal complaints and the associated timescales. Leaders intend to make it available to pupils and their parents via the school website once it is up and running.
- Leaders note the importance of pupils also having a voice within the school, so that they are able to express any concerns that they may have. There are opportunities for them to do this, via a suggestions box and participation in 'young people meetings'. Leaders anticipate using staff briefing and debrief sessions to consider any dissatisfaction raised by a pupil, so that a resolution can be sought.
- This part of the independent school standards is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The head of education and directors of the proprietary body are directly involved in the day-to-day running of the existing therapy centre. This gives them a clear understanding of the setting they are responsible for. As such, they have useful and transferrable experience and skills to support their leadership of the proposed school.
- Leaders' motivation for opening this independent school undoubtedly comes from their understanding of the pupils they intend to serve. This flows directly from their ongoing work with the therapy provision and working with those who currently attend. They

are convincing in their explanations of how they intend to improve pupils' life chances and life experiences through the school's work.

- The chair of the proprietary body has given thought to how the effectiveness of the school's work will be monitored. A management committee, made of relevant experts and parent representatives, is being put in place to support this and has the potential to provide useful support and challenge to the school. The management committee is in its absolute infancy, with terms of reference and training for personnel not currently in place.
- Leaders have established links with a number of organisations beyond the school in order to access external support and validation. These include colleagues who work at other maintained and independent schools and for the local authority. The recent period of school closure and lockdown due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) has constrained leaders' current engagement with these links. Leaders hope that circumstances will permit greater involvement in the weeks and months ahead, to help develop the depth of their understanding of school leadership and the independent school standards.
- Leaders are likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's equality and diversity policy is fit for purpose. It identifies leaders' awareness of their duties under the Equality Act and how they intend to fulfil them. Leaders are mindful that the uneven ground across some parts of the farm present accessibility challenges for some prospective pupils with physical disabilities. Nevertheless, they are alert to how they would seek to overcome any access difficulties that might present themselves. This reflects the inclusive culture promoted by school leaders.

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	147789
DfE registration number	936/6043
Inspection number	10155427

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 school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning
Chair	Charlotte Williams
Headteacher	Jeremy Crouch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,850
Telephone number	01483 898517
Website	www.elysianuk.org
Email address	admin@elysianuk.org

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11 to 16	11 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	15	15

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	Up to 15
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	Up to 15
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	Up to 15
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 15
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	15

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	4
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	13

Information about this proposed school

- Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning currently provides part-time therapeutic placements for a small number of children and young people. All are referred to the centre by a local authority as they are struggling or unable to sustain an educational placement in a school. Elysian is seeking registration as an independent school so that it can provide educational placements for up to 15 pupils aged 11 to 16 years.
- The proposed school will be based on a farm, which is owned exclusively by the proprietary body. It is the base for the existing therapy provision. Over time, leaders anticipate that everyone currently attending the therapy provision will become registered pupils at the school. The site occupied by the proposed school sits within 100 acres of woodland. It hosts 22 different species of animals, including horses, goats, guinea pigs and donkeys.
- Pupils attending the school will have a variety of social, emotional and mental health needs. They are likely to have been away from formal education for a sustained period of time and have significant anxiety. Most will have EHC plans. Some may be in the care of the local authority or supported via children in need or child protection plans.
- The proposed school will not have any particular religious character.
- The proposed school is led by a proprietary body, consisting of two directors. There is no governing body in place. A management committee is in the very early stages of being set up. It intends to provide school leaders with support and challenge about the quality of their work. A head of education is in post and takes responsibility for educational provision in the proposed school.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Some of the inspection was conducted remotely. This was to reduce time spent on site, in line with government guidance for people to minimise non-essential contact with others. Most of the on-site inspection activity was carried out outside, observing appropriate social distancing measures.
- This was a pre-registration inspection for a proposed school. As requested by the DfE, all parts of the independent school standards were considered.
- On the day prior to visiting the site, I spoke on the telephone with the head of education. During the site visit, I had a tour of the premises with the chair of the proprietary body and the head of education. We met together to discuss relevant aspects of the independent school standards. I also spoke briefly to a representative of the management committee on the telephone.
- Prior to the site visit, I reviewed a number of documents provided to the DfE as part of the school's application for registration. While on site, I looked at a number of other relevant documents and records, which were provided by school leaders.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020