

The Serendipity School

399 Hinkler Road, Thornhill, Southampton, Hampshire SO19 6DS

Inspection date

18 August 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

Paragraphs 7 [including paragraph 32(1) and 32(1)(c) from Part 6], 11, 12, 14 and 16

- The school's safeguarding policy takes account of the relevant guidance and is published on the school's website. Leaders have ensured that the policy reflects the school's context. For example, it sets out clear accountability and monitoring arrangements alongside detailed and precise contact details for all relevant people within and beyond the school.
- The previous standard inspection found that all the school's records relating to safeguarding were exemplary. Leaders' oversight and honest self-review of their work in this area was praised. To this end, leaders have continued to refine and improve practice since that inspection. For example, they have found ways to further improve communication and sharpen record keeping, seeking the highest possible quality.
- A new designated safeguarding lead has received the relevant training. The headteacher and the school's safeguarding monitoring group continue to keep a watchful eye that the policy and processes work as well as they should.
- Existing policies and procedures for health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment are likely to continue to be fit for purpose given the proposed roll increase. The proprietor's maintenance team is on hand to keep the premises in a good, safe condition. An external fire safety company has assessed the safe capacity of the premises to be in excess of the proposed roll and staffing. A wide range of written risk assessments shows a diligent and thorough approach. The risk assessment policy also emphasises the importance of 'dynamic' risk assessment in terms of staff taking responsibility for ongoing alertness and action to control or eradicate emerging risks.
- Careful timetabling and a proposed increase to staffing are likely to ensure adequate supervision of pupils, risk assessed according to individual needs. Daily operational planning procedures are in place to ensure that safety will not be compromised when pupils go off site for part of their curriculum.

- 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

- The proprietor's human-resources department is responsible for processing the checks of the suitability of adults to work with pupils. However, the headteacher maintains oversight of the single central record and is knowledgeable about the associated arrangements and requirements. This includes checks of supply teachers and agency staff, and volunteers.
- The single central record is complete and well organised. It goes beyond statutory requirements, recording other information relating to safer recruitment practices.
- 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 school has the space and facilities within its existing premises to accommodate an additional five pupils in a way that is unlikely to compromise the quality of education offered.
- Rooms are well finished and maintained. They are suitably furnished for the intended purpose. Teaching spaces provide adequate space for the small groups the school operates, and communal spaces provide opportunities for pupils to socialise in larger groups, where appropriate. It is likely that there will be sufficient room to allow the school to continue to operate flexibly to meet the needs of individual pupils if the roll expands as proposed.
- Outdoor spaces are attractively appointed, including the inviting sensory garden created by pupils. The grounds are large enough to accommodate additional pupils comfortably for recreation. Most physical education usually takes place off site.
- Other requirements of this part are also likely to continue to be met. For example, there are sufficient toilets for separate pupil and staff use. A dedicated room for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils meets requirements.
- 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

- The school has an exceptionally strong track record having been judged outstanding at three previous standard inspections. The most recent, in 2016, was under the leadership of the current headteacher.
- The previous inspection found that school leaders carried out meticulous checks to ensure that the school complies with all the independent school standards. The

proprietor and headteacher readily provided convincing evidence that all standards checked as part of this inspection were likely to be met.

- Leaders have carefully considered how they can gradually increase the numbers on roll within the existing operation. They are mindful of the complexities that arranging individualised provision for a growing number of pupils can bring, including when pupils are off site or when staff are absent.
- The headteacher is realistic about the challenges of recruiting suitable staff and has already laid sensible foundations for these appointments.
- The established structures and systems for the leadership and oversight of the school involve the proprietor and leaders at different levels. They are likely to support the school effectively through the transition period.
- The sole director of the proprietorial body speaks regularly with investors, who do not have proprietorial responsibilities. However, there is the potential for them to become involved in governance matters, for example, through their inclusion in the whistle-blowing policy. In view of this, the proprietor recognises that it would be prudent to carry out a section 128 check to ensure relevant investors have not been prohibited from such work.
- The standard contained within this part is likely to be met.

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	131556
DfE registration number	852/6009
Inspection number	10155390

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	The Serendipity Centre Ltd
Chair	Sean Maguinness
Headteacher	Dr Michele Aldridge
Annual fees (day pupils)	£69,000
Telephone number	023 8042 2255
Website	www.serendipity-education.com
Email address	info@serendipity-education.com
Date of previous standard inspection	22–24 November 2016

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	9 to 19	Not applicable	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	15	20	20

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Girls	Not applicable

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	15	20
Number of part-time pupils	0	Not applicable
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	15	20
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	13	20
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	13	20

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5.5	6.5
Number of part-time teaching staff	1	1

Information about this school

- The Serendipity School caters for girls with severe and complex emotional and mental health needs. Most girls admitted to the school have experienced extreme trauma and are considered likely to benefit from a girls-only environment.
- Pupils have typically been excluded from mainstream or other special schools and many have been out of education for some time. Nearly all pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, and the majority are looked after by their local authorities. All pupils' fees are paid for by a local authority, whether they have an EHC plan or not.
- The previous full standard inspection on 22 to 24 November 2016 judged the school to be outstanding for the third consecutive time.

- The sole director of The Serendipity Centre Ltd, the company named as proprietor, provides governance. He is in close contact with the school's investors, who are not part of the proprietorial body.
- The school makes use of the following 10 providers as alternative part-time provision for pupils on roll: St Vincent College, Gosport; Totton College, Southampton; Havant and South Downs College, Waterlooville; Eastleigh College, Eastleigh; FLE Fishery, Romsey; Woodmill Canoeing and Outdoor Activity Centre, Southampton; Staunton Farm, Havant; Oarsome Chance, Leigh Park; Second Chance Children's Charity, Titchfield; and Tender Loving Care (TLC), Sarisbury Green.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) because the proprietor wished to change the school's registration by increasing its capacity from 15 to 20 pupils. This was the first material change inspection.
- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic of 2020. Some of the inspection was conducted remotely to limit the time required on site and, consequently, avoid an overnight stay for the inspector.
- Off site, the inspector reviewed documents sent electronically by the headteacher, relevant to the material change. On site, he had a tour of the premises and held discussions with the headteacher and proprietor. The inspector checked the single central register and sampled other safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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