

# Graduately-Developing-Futures

Valley View Farm, Castle Farm Road, Lytchett Matravers, Dorset BH16 6DA

**Inspection dates**

16 July 2020

**Overall outcome**

**The school is unlikely to meet all the independent school standards. It is currently operating without registration.**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

#### *Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a)*

- The proprietor has purchased a commercial scheme and developed a written curriculum policy. This sets out what pupils are expected to learn in different subjects.
- However, staff, including the headteacher, do not have sufficient knowledge of some subjects to provide assurance that pupils will be taught well enough, including in religious education, languages and reading.
- Leaders, including the headteacher, do not have a strong understanding of how the curriculum is organised or sequenced to build pupils' knowledge reliably in some subjects. For example, weaknesses in the early reading and phonics strategies mean pupils are unlikely to catch up if they have fallen behind.
- The standards in this paragraph are unlikely to be met.

#### *Paragraph 2(2)(a) and (b)*

- Leaders' poor understanding of the curriculum content means that they are unlikely to implement a well-organised and coherent curriculum successfully. For example, planned opportunities for literacy are likely to be of poor quality. As a result, pupils' progress and their readiness for the next stage in their education will be impeded.
- The standards in this paragraph are unlikely to be met.

#### *Paragraphs 3(a), (c), (d) and (e)*

- Leaders have recently purchased a commercial curriculum scheme but have not yet taken time to understand its content or decide how subjects are to be taught. As a result, there are too many uncertainties about the quality of education that pupils are likely to receive if the school opens.
- Given the lack of clarity about what pupils are expected to learn, and by when, there is a significant risk that pupils will not make consistently good progress in too many

subjects. Teachers do not have detailed or credible plans to ensure pupils will gain sufficient knowledge and skills, in readiness for the next stage of their education.

- Staff lack the expertise to deliver an ambitious curriculum. For example, the lack of a literacy expert means that the phonics programme is far from secure. Limited subject knowledge in some key areas is likely to seriously undermine the potential for pupils to achieve well.
- The standards in this paragraph are unlikely to be met.

*Paragraph 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i) and (ii), 3(i)*

- Leaders are aware of the need to adapt plans to reflect pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs, including for pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They take account of the pupils' individual needs when planning units of work, particularly for personal, social and health (PHSE) education.
- Plans and schemes of work are developed to promote fundamental British values. British values run seamlessly through all units of the school's PSHE education programme. Leaders demonstrate a keen awareness of British values and regard these as integral to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. This aspect is likely to be a strength of the school's curriculum.
- The standards in this paragraph are likely to be met.

*Paragraphs 2(2)(d)–2(2)(i), 3(j)*

- Leaders' PSHE education policy and programme are at the heart of the school's work. These have been designed to implement the school's aims and ethos. Namely, to ensure that pupils who attend the school with a diagnosis for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) disorders will receive high-quality social, emotional and personal care.
- Leaders' plans and actions promote equality of opportunity. They are likely to build on their existing strengths as an alternative provision where pupils benefit from a caring and inclusive environment.
- The headteacher actively promotes a culture of respect, including those relating to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. As a result, staff and pupils feel respected and are understanding of others.
- The standards in this paragraph are likely to be met.

*Paragraphs 3(b), (f)–(h)*

- Notwithstanding the issues outlined above, leaders have a strong vision and are guided by a clear moral purpose. They fully understand the complex nature of the pupils who will attend the school. Consequently, they are likely to provide a stable learning environment where pupils will feel safe and nurtured.
- Pupils, including those already using the farm as an alternative provision, show respect and tolerance to others. They show positive attitudes to their learning and enjoy the range of practical outdoor activities which foster curiosity.
- Staff utilise resources effectively, including the outdoor spaces, to meet the particular needs of the pupils. The yurts are equipped with books and equipment, such as computers, to aid pupils' learning in different subject areas.

- Leaders have implemented effective strategies to support pupils and encourage them to behave well. The school rules help pupils to distinguish right from wrong, and promote independence. Pupils understand what is expected of them. They are keen to make positive contributions in lessons, including when working with adults or alongside other pupils.
- Pupils have positive relationships with adults. This helps to establish effective working relationships and helps pupils to be creative and independent thinkers. Pupils already using the provision are motivated. They enjoy working on the farm. Adults foster good relationships through engaging in practical-based learning which meets the pupils' social and emotional needs.
- The standards in this paragraph are likely to be met

*Paragraph 3(g), 4*

- Leaders will ensure that there is a framework to assess pupils. They intend to use assessment guides that accompany the school's preferred curriculum model. Leaders expect to use ongoing assessments, together with assessments at entry and educational targets on EHC plans, to inform teachers' planning.
- Leaders understand the importance of checking pupils' performance. They are keen to involve pupils, parents and other health and/or education experts to ensure meaningful targets are set for each pupil.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.
- However, the standards in this part are unlikely to be met, overall.

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

*Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)*

- The proprietor and other leaders have a clear vision for running the school. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is given high priority. This is likely to ensure pupils are well supported to make good choices and develop their self-confidence and personal skills.
- The PSHE education curriculum is designed well to ensure British values are a central part of pupils' learning and their development. For example, as part of the existing alternative provision, staff promote cultural tolerance and teach different world religions, as well as non-faith views. This benefits pupils and helps them to acquire healthy views for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders ensure pupils engage in life-skills lessons that include, for example, visits to shops or learning to use public transport. These carefully planned events are part of the school's approach to promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional development.
- Leaders ensure that the PSHE education programme includes mandatory relationships and health education for the primary age range. Consideration has been given to the teaching of sex education, including, where appropriate, parental right to withdraw their children.
- Staff are keen to engage pupils in healthy debate about political issues. Adults explore themes to help pupils learn right from wrong. Pupils who already attend the farm enjoy taking responsibilities and looking after the animals. They name the animals,

such as the two guinea pigs, and learn how to care for them. Pupils learn valuable lessons to respect life and care for the world around them.

- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7–7(b)*

- The proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. This includes the implementation of the safeguarding and child protection policies. Leaders are trained appropriately and act to keep pupils safe. For example, recent changes ensure all visitors have an identification check before being allowed entry to the site, whereupon they must sign in and wear a lanyard to allow them to interact with pupils.
- The proprietor is well qualified in different aspects of health and safety, including fire risk management and first-aid training. As a result, staff are taught well and have an increased awareness of their own and pupils' safety when working on site.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

#### *Paragraphs 9–10*

- The proprietor ensures that behaviour policies are fit for purpose. For example, these include how to respond to non-compliant pupils. Staff seek positive outcomes and are trained in de-escalation techniques. Effective training means staff understand that physical intervention is a last resort. They know how and when to implement this safely.
- Leaders have effective anti-bullying strategies. High levels of interaction and involvement with staff mean pupils are often well supported and nurtured to prevent bullying from occurring.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

#### *Paragraphs 11–12*

- The proprietor has written policies for implementing robust health and safety measures. These include food preparation and safety, site maintenance and promoting the well-being of pupils, staff and visitors on site. As a result, the school is likely to be a safe environment for all.
- Leaders promote all aspects of pupils' personal safety, including their mental health. During the on-site visit, the inspector observed a meeting between school staff and a child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) adviser. This is part of a package of support to help pupils settle and make progress towards social and emotional milestones.
- Leaders take all reasonable and practicable steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 (coronavirus) transmission. They comply fully with published government guidance, which includes testing and reporting if potential symptoms are found amongst pupils, staff or visitors.
- The proprietor is trained to teach parts of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, including authorisation to conduct on-site equipment testing. Fire safety is keenly promoted, particularly given the nature of the site, which has polytunnels and

yurts. There is a strong awareness of fire hazards, which are managed effectively. The site has appropriate signage and procedures to reduce the risk of harm.

- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

#### *Paragraphs 13–16(b)*

- The proprietor is qualified to teach first aid. As part of their induction and ongoing training, staff receive regular updates. Consequently, there is a culture of awareness and first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner.
- Pupils are properly supervised throughout the day, including during drop-off and pick-up arrangements. The proprietor expects pupils to have one-to-one, or minimum two-to-one adult supervision throughout the day.
- Records of attendance are maintained, and staff are quick to follow up any lateness or absence. Processes for admissions and attendance are compliant. This contributes towards a culture of vigilance.
- Leaders ensure that there are a range of relevant risk assessments in place for pupils and activities. For example, pupils who go on excursions have the activity fully risk assessed, including supervision, transportation and transition arrangements, and physical/environmental factors, as well as any known risks associated with an EHC plan.
- Risk assessments take full account of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with an EHC plan and SEMH needs.
- The proprietor has plans to ensure that admission and attendance registers are maintained properly. Attendance will be checked daily and absence will be followed up routinely as part of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.
- However, the standards in this part are unlikely to be met, overall.

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

##### *Paragraphs 18(2)–21(7)(b)*

- Since the previous pre-registration inspection, the proprietor has introduced a compliant single central register (SCR). This ensures that appropriate checks and vetting of staff (including supply staff), leaders, governors, volunteers and visitors are contained in a legible and electronic form.
- Leaders now understand the purpose of having a robust SCR. This is completed diligently as part of the school's safeguarding procedures. Individual checks, including for example, the person's identity, medical fitness, qualifications and right to work in the United Kingdom, are scrutinised.
- The SCR includes all relevant checks on leaders, including section 128 checks for governors and those with leadership responsibilities in the school.
- The new SCR is well presented and orderly. Checks on personnel files and records confirm that the information contained in the SCR is current and accurate. The proprietor and other leaders have taken the right steps to address omissions and weaknesses found at the last pre-registration inspection.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

## Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

### *Paragraphs 27, 27(b)*

- The proprietor does not ensure that external lighting is fit for purpose. The limited lighting on site does not adequately cover the main areas, including pathways connecting yurts, teaching spaces and other parts of the site, such as the car park.
- The standard in this paragraph is unlikely to be met.

### *Paragraphs 23(1)(a)–27(a), 28(1)–29(1)(b)*

- The proprietor ensures that there are separate toilets for the sole use of pupils. Movable chemical toilets are complete with hand sanitiser to maintain hygiene.
- Since the previous pre-registration inspection, leaders have introduced a separate medical cabin for the use of short-term sick and injured pupils. This provides privacy and is accessible from all parts of site, including access for emergency vehicles, should these be required. Arrangements for hygiene and sanitisation are provided in the room with access to toilets and running water.
- The premises and accommodation are appropriately maintained so that pupils can play, enjoy the outdoor spaces and undertake a range of different activities in the yurts and cabins. The facilities, including covered learning spaces and polytunnels for winter, allow ample room and are likely to facilitate the teaching of the curriculum.
- Staff ensure that any large animals, including pigs and llamas, are kept in secure pens. The perimeter is secure so that pupils are unable to ramble or get lost. Pupils have access to the animals, which often provide a useful distraction and therapy in a range of situations.
- The proprietor makes sure that basic amenities, including running hot water, drinking water, light and heating, are readily available. All reasonable and practicable steps have been taken to protect pupils and provide an education in keeping with the school's aims and ethos.
- Safe drinking water is imported into the school each day and is available from the catering cabin. Pupils are also encouraged to bring their own water bottles for consumption throughout the day.
- Staff make good use of the abundant outdoor space. This enables pupils to relax for recreational reasons, as well as access the outside for games, sport and physical education.
- The acoustic conditions are suitable.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.
- However, the standards in this part are unlikely to be met, overall.

## Part 6. Provision of information

### *Paragraphs 32(1)–32(4)(c)*

- The proprietor is intending to use a website upon successful registration, to make all relevant information readily available and accessible for parents.

- The proprietor and leaders have drafted the full range of documents and policies for parents and prospective parents. These meet the requirements of the independent school standards. For example, the school's ethos statement and details of the educational and welfare provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language, are available upon request.
- Leaders have models for reporting on the progress and attainment of pupils. Leaders are considering introducing school software to make tracking and reporting on this even more accessible for staff and parents.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

## Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

### *Paragraph 33–33(k)*

- Since the first pre-registration inspection, the proprietor has taken the appropriate action to amend the complaints procedure, in accordance with the independent school standards.
- The complaints procedure allows for any concerns to be resolved informally before escalation to formal procedures. The policy makes suitable arrangements for formal complaints to be heard by a panel. This includes a minimum of three persons, one of whom must be independent of the management or running of the school.
- At each stage, the proprietor will make arrangements for the outcome of any complaint to be communicated to the complainant and recorded appropriately. The correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints are retained for inspection.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraphs 34(1)(a)–(b)*

- Leaders, including the proprietor and governors, are unlikely to have effective systems and routines in place to ensure rigour and accountability in their work. For example, leaders cannot explain their priorities for school improvement. Governors have not met, visited the school or agreed terms of reference for how they intend to operate and hold leaders to account. This raises questions about the quality and effectiveness of all leaders, should the school open.
- There are no firm plans in place for external scrutiny or validation. Intended actions for self-evaluation are vague and lack ambition. As a result, leaders are unlikely to receive high-quality monitoring to ensure that the school is delivering a good quality of education.
- The capacity of the school is a significant weakness. The proprietor and governors do not have a clear staffing structure. They do not have a clear understanding of the different teaching roles or numbers needed to run the school, including subject leaders. This does not provide enough assurance for the development or sustainability of the school for the future.
- There are continuing weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching which fail to provide assurance that the independent school standards, particularly in part 1, are likely to

be met. As a result, pupils who are likely already to have significant challenges will find it difficult to make strong academic progress, or catch up well enough.

- The standards in these paragraphs are unlikely to be met.

*Paragraph 34(1)(c)*

- The proprietor and other leaders prioritise pupils' well-being. The actions of staff, including their interactions with pupils, demonstrate the effective implementation of key policies, particularly the behaviour and PSHE policies, in working with pupils.
- The standards in this paragraph are likely to be met.
- However, the standards in this part are unlikely to be met, overall.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor and leaders are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. There is an appropriate accessibility plan in place.



## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school is unlikely to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements, as set out in the annex of this report.

## Proposed school details

Unique reference number	148046
DfE registration number	838/6013
Inspection number	10154456

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 special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	GDF Consultancy.com Ltd
Chair	Trystan Williams
Headteacher	James Gregory
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,000–£80,000
Telephone number	07854 434575
Website	Not applicable
Email address	jag@gdfconsultancy.com
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

## Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	12
Number of pupils of compulsory school age for whom a statement is maintained under section 324, or who is looked after by a local authority	12
Total hours operating as a school per week	12
Total hours of teaching provided per week	12

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	6–11	6–11	6–11
Number of pupils on the school roll	12	36	36

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	12	36
Number of part-time pupils	12	36
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	12	36
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	12	36
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority an education, health and care plan	12	36

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	4	4
Number of part-time teaching staff	4	5
Number of staff in the welfare provision	4	5

## Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located on a 32-acre rural site in Lytchett Matravers, Dorset.
- Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole local authorities are using the school as an alternative provision for pupils with EHC plans. These pupils are on short-term and limited tables, so the provision does not currently meet the requirements to register as an independent school.
- The school intends to admit pupils with complex SEMH needs, as well as some with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils who attend the school are likely to have an EHC plan.
- The proposed school is expected to be run by a small governing board. The sole proprietor will operate as the headteacher and chief executive officer.
- The proprietor also intends to be headteacher when the school opens.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Some of the inspection was conducted remotely. This was due to restrictions placed on non-essential travel during the COVID-19 outbreak. Most parts of the independent school standards were checked remotely. However, information relating to Part 5, as well as paragraphs 11, 12 and 16, was required to be completed on site. The amount of remote work undertaken significantly reduced the amount of time required on site.
- The inspector evaluated a range of evidence at home. This included policies and documentation relating to parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7. The inspector completed a joint interview, via video conference, for one hour on 15 July 2020. This enabled further discussion about aspects of Part 8, and those present included the chair of governors, the proprietor and the Head of Organisational Development and Projects (HODP).
- The inspector conducted further interviews on site with the proprietor and HODP. On-site checks involved substantiating details in the school's SCR and completing checks for Part 5 (premises and accommodation).
- The inspector observed the interaction of pupils with staff and was invited to observe part of a meeting with the CAMHS adviser and school team. The inspector discussed the implementation of key policies and considered the impact of these when on site.
- This was the second pre-registration inspection. The first pre-registration took place on 18 December 2019.
- Gradually-Developing-Futures is currently operating for up to 12 pupils as an alternative provision, all of whom have an EHC plan. The age range is for pupils from 6 to 11 years, most of whom have an SEMH diagnosis. No pupil exceeds a maximum of between 12 and 15 hours of teaching on site.

## Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school is unlikely to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
  - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
  - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;

#### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 27 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 27(b) external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

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