

The Outdoors School

Straw Barn, The Barton, Shillingford Abbot, Devon EX2 9QQ

Inspection dates

7 October 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, 11, 12 and 16

- Leaders have suitable arrangements in place to safeguard pupils. The safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is published on the school's website.
- Leaders' expectations for safeguarding are clear. Staff receive suitable training that supports them to take appropriate action to help keep pupils safe. The school uses an electronic system to record concerns. Staff follow guidelines in place to maintain effective records.
- For the Outdoors School, woodland is the classroom. The proprietors are aware that the unique nature of their school environment creates challenges in keeping staff and pupils safe. The proprietors ensure that health and safety is a top priority for all staff. There is an emphasis on health and safety during the induction process for new staff and ongoing training for all staff.
- Leaders have a written health and safety policy in place. A health and safety specialist supports the implementation of this policy. Leaders act on the specialist's recommendations.
- Staff undertake health and safety checks every morning. Staff make safe any identified hazards before pupils arrive. Leaders monitor these checks. Leaders also undertake more thorough weekly inspections.
- Staff on site have first-aid training. Each area of the woodland site has a well-equipped first-aid box.
- Leaders check the strength of the wind regularly. There are procedures in place for times when the wind is strong enough to damage trees. At these times, the site is closed.
- Fire-safety equipment is in place across the site. A certified company checks the equipment regularly. All evacuation routes are clearly signed. A senior member of staff on the site is a trained fire warden. The fire alarm is a manual bell which is audible

across the woods.

- A feature of the forest school approach to education is the use of campfires. Each teaching area has a fire pit. Staff have risk assessed the use of fires. The placement of the fires and high levels of supervision by staff ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils.
- Leaders have detailed risk assessments in place to control risks during school activities. These identify potential hazards for pupils with specific actions to mitigate these, including, for example, the use of tools during forest skills activities.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22–29

- The new site for the Outdoors School is an established forest school. The site is a woodland area. A fence surrounds the area used by the school. It is a short walk from the school site to the school office. Staff and pupils spend the school day outdoors, with shelter provided by the timber buildings and canopies supported by the trees. The site is mostly level.
- Pupils have access to appropriate toilet facilities. These are individual units which are lockable from the inside. The toilets are composting toilets which the site manager maintains to ensure that they are hygienic. Washing facilities with cold water from a tap, hot water from a flask and soap are outside each toilet. Staff check the hot water to ensure that there is no risk of scalding.
- The site includes suitable changing areas for boys and girls and an individual shower. A gas boiler provides hot water.
- A room is available for the medical treatment and examination of pupils. This room includes a sink supplied by hot water from a gas boiler and running cold water. There is a toilet close by. The nearby school office also has space and facilities for the medical treatment of pupils.
- The site's location is down a quiet country lane. There is a car park used for the pupils' arrival and departure. Staff supervision ensures the safety of pupils during these times.
- From the car park, access to the woodland is via a timber walkway. This has an anti-slip surface. Walkways throughout the site are clearly defined. Staff and pupils maintain the surfaces of these walkways. This ensures that when it has rained the surfaces are not too muddy.
- Teaching is in small groups. Each group has a clearly defined area of the wood. These areas include teaching and social spaces. There are cooking and eating facilities as well as toilets for each group. Each group has a campfire.
- Teaching takes place in open-fronted timber buildings or under canopies. These spaces enjoy plentiful natural light and the sounds of the woodland.
- Throughout the site, there are taps fed by mains water. Signs identify drinking water taps.
- Pupils have constant access to outdoor space. Physical activity is a fundamental part

of the school's curriculum.

- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- School leaders have already implemented the material change that they have requested. COVID-19 restrictions in place on the farm at the previous site prompted the move to a new location.
- The proprietor and senior school leaders have a good knowledge of the independent school standards, and this helps them to ensure that they are met consistently.
- The well-being of pupils is actively promoted through the environment in which teaching takes place. The safety of pupils is well managed.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards in this part are met and are likely to continue to be met if the DfE approves the implementation of the material change requested by the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets 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	146200
DfE registration number	878/6075
Inspection number	10166027

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 compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	The Outdoors Group Ltd
Chair	Shevek Pring
Headteacher	Mrs Robyn Vincent
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000 to £64,000
Telephone number	01393 832632
Website	www.outdoorsschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@theoutdoorsschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	10–12 March 2020

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 14	7 to 14	7 to 14
Number of pupils on the school roll	31	90	90

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	27	90
Number of part-time pupils	4	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	31	90
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	31	90
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	31	90

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	15	15
Number of part-time teaching staff	3	3
Number of staff in the welfare provision	26	26

Information about this school

- The Outdoors School is an independent special school. It specialises in supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school's approach to education is based on forest school principles. Teaching takes place outdoors in woodland.

- The school caters for pupils between the ages of seven and 14. There are currently 31 pupils on the school's roll.
- Most pupils have had disrupted schooling prior to joining the school.
- Currently, all pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) funded by Devon County Council.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 to consider the school's request for a material change. All of the inspection was conducted on site.
- The purpose of the inspection was to consider whether the school's new site met independent school standards. This was the school's first material change inspection.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the proprietors, the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The inspector visited the new school site. The inspector also reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including policies and procedures, risk assessments and other records maintained by school staff.
- The inspector also reviewed material available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Mark Burgess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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