

Vranch House School

Pinhoe Road, Exeter, Devon EX4 8AD

Inspection dates

11–12 November 2020

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the independent school standards relevant to the material change.

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), [including paragraph 32(1) and 32(1)(c) from Part 6]

- The school's safeguarding policy is reviewed regularly and follows the latest government guidance including 'Keeping children safe in education'. Leaders consider pupils' multiple and complex difficulties when outlining what is expected of staff. The safeguarding policy is accessible to parents and carers and is published on the school's website.
- When using the internet, pupils are supervised and supported. Appropriate monitoring and filtering systems are in place. Sensibly, leaders intend to add more detail about how pupils are kept safe online to their safeguarding policy.
- The head of education acts as the school's designated safeguarding lead and has a thorough understanding of pupils' additional vulnerabilities. Staff are required to record and report any concerns. All employees, including those who are new to the school, receive regular and appropriate training, such as that related to the 'Prevent' duty.
- School leaders have made sure that a full suite of policies and training are accessible to staff. Both aspects are aligned to supporting pupils' specific needs, including meeting their complex medical requirements. For instance, consideration is afforded to feeding protocols and positioning pupils in supportive equipment.
- Leaders promote pupils' well-being. For instance, some older pupils have benefited from the re-design of an outdoor area, explicitly intended to let pupils exercise and learn to regulate their anxieties. This space is directly linked to a newly adapted classroom, enabling a straightforward transition from one area to another when required.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are fit for purpose and are likely to continue to be met if pupil numbers increase further.

Paragraph 11

- Leaders have carefully considered all aspects of keeping pupils safe on site, including for children in the early years. There is a wide range of policies linked to health and

safety procedures that are appropriately adapted to the school's circumstances. This includes those relating to moving and handling, hydrotherapy, hygiene and intimate care. Current procedures are likely to continue to be fit for purpose given the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

Paragraph 12

- The school's fire risk assessment is regularly reviewed and updated. Risks are identified and mitigated against, such as adaptations to external doors that allow ease of exit during emergencies. Fire extinguishers are regularly maintained.
- Classrooms have direct access to the grounds ensuring that in case of emergency the building can be evacuated promptly. Fire evacuation instructions are displayed clearly in every room and reiterated clearly in the staff handbook. Unannounced practice fire drills are carried out regularly. All pupils have personal evacuation plans in place.
- The inspection was conducted without visiting the school site due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions. Owing to this, I am not able to provide the full level of assurance to judge that that this paragraph would be likely to be met.

Paragraph 14

- Classes generally contain no more than six pupils. There is a suitable adult-to-pupil ratio in every group, including in the early years. Each class has a teacher, higher-level teaching assistant, one or two other teaching assistants and meal support staff. Ratios are fluid and adjust appropriately to pupils' needs at any given time during the school day.
- The planned increase to pupil numbers will mean an expansion to the number of classes and staff. Leaders plan to maintain existing supervision levels as the school grows and this standard is likely to continue to be met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The school's risk assessments are detailed and carefully considered. Risks are appropriately mitigated against, including for trips and visits. For instance, on each excursion, a member of staff is allocated responsibility for carrying pupils' medication safely.
- This inspection was conducted without visiting the school site due to COVID-19 restrictions. Owing to this, I am not able to provide the full level of assurance to judge that this standard would be likely to be met should the school open.
- All the requirements in this part that were possible to check are likely to continue to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraph 17, 18(1)–18(4)(c)

- Leaders ensure that all required pre-employment checks are undertaken to determine whether adults are suitable to work with children. This process is completed in advance of new employees taking up their roles. If there are delays, successful

applicants' start dates are adjusted, to allow the background checking process to conclude.

Paragraph 19(1)–19(4)(c)

- The school does not make use of supply staff.

Paragraph 20(1)–20(9)

- The chair of the board has made sure that all trustees who belong to the proprietor body carry the relevant level of check.

Paragraph 21(1)–21(8)

- The single central register meets requirements and contains all required information.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22, 23(1)–23(2), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(d), 28(2)

- Suitable toilet spaces, refreshments and washing facilities are available for pupils. All classroom toilets are fitted with hoists, sliding doors for easy access, low sinks and emergency cords. Adaptations are well considered and suitable for pupils' requirements.

Paragraphs 24, 25, 26, 27, 29(1)–31(c)

- The school buildings are clean, modern and well maintained. Some existing spaces have been repurposed to become new classrooms. These rooms are presented appropriately. There is ample space for the school to be able to accommodate 55 pupils.
- Most pupils have complex medical needs. The school's medical room is fully equipped, including aids to support wheelchair users. A qualified nurse is always on hand to deal with medical matters as they arise. Pupils' medication is stored securely.
- Staff are well equipped to undertake tailored responsibilities when supporting individual pupils. For instance, 'special watch' teaching assistants are trained to look after pupils whose acute and/or complex medical needs require additional adult support.

Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)

- Classrooms are spacious, appropriately lit and well equipped. Pupils use a range of augmentative communication systems throughout the school, including eye gaze technology.
- The outdoor area is appropriately maintained. There is a sensory trail that is suitable for pupils who are wheelchair users.
- The inspection was conducted without visiting the school site due to COVID-19 restrictions. Owing to this, I am not able to provide the full level of assurance to judge that the standards in the paragraphs in this part would be likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)a–34(1)c

- In response to an increasing demand for places in the surrounding area, the proprietor body is seeking to expand the number of pupils on roll. All places are commissioned through Devon County Council, who have recently requested a further allocation.
- There is sufficient space to accommodate additional pupils. Several rooms on the school site have either remained unused or have been utilised as breakout rooms or therapy spaces. Leaders have repurposed these areas and ensured that they are suitable as classrooms.
- Leaders have expanded the school's leadership capacity to include a middle leadership tier. Leaders understand the challenges that growth may bring but they have planned carefully and are well prepared to welcome additional pupils and staff.
- Governors offer helpful challenge and support. The head of education regularly reports to the board of governors. All partners are invested in working well together and providing an appropriate experience for pupils. During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders were determined that the school remained open so that the most vulnerable pupils were able to access the services they required.
- At the standard inspection in June 2018 and in this material change inspection, the independent school standards (ISS) have been met consistently. Leaders regularly evaluate their continued compliance with the ISS.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	113571
DfE registration number	878/6007
Inspection number	10167173

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Vranch House
Chair	Julia Tolman-May
Headteacher	Ian Norton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,300 – £38,480
Telephone number	01392 468333
Website	www.vranchhouse.org
Email address	mail@vranchhouse.org
Date of previous standard inspection	26–28 June 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	2 to 18	not applicable	not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	44	55	55

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	not applicable

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	36	not applicable
Number of part-time pupils	8	not applicable
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	44	55
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	44	55
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	44	55

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	8	11
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0

Information about this school

- Vranth House School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged two to 18 years.
- The school is owned and operated by a registered charity, directed and managed by a board of trustees. The board of trustees has legal responsibility for all the charity's activities. Since the last inspection, from September 2020, the school's head of therapy has taken up the position of chief executive officer of the charity. A management team consisting of the chief executive, head of education and business manager oversee the charity on a day-to-day basis.
- The charity has delegated responsibility for educational matters to a board of governors. The chair of trustees is also the chair of the school's governing body.
- The school provides education for pupils with physical difficulties and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have complex additional needs, including

complex medical needs. Many pupils have multisensory (visual and/or hearing) impairments. A small number of pupils have needs associated with autism spectrum disorder.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected in June 2018. All of the independent school standards were met and the school was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is operating beyond its registration agreement with the DfE. The school has exceeded the maximum number of pupils on roll that they are registered to admit. Devon County Council have commissioned additional school placements due to a shortage in the area.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. The inspection was conducted remotely. This was due to changes made to inspection activity during this period of COVID-19 outbreak Ofsted made this visit remotely to reduce the risk to the school's clinically vulnerable pupils.
- This was a material change inspection commissioned by the DfE. The school is applying for its maximum capacity to be increased from 33 to 55 pupils. The proprietor plans to use existing rooms within the school buildings which have been repurposed as classrooms.
- Off site, the inspector reviewed documents sent electronically by the head of education and head of therapy, relevant to the material change.
- Meetings were conducted remotely with the head of education; the head of therapy, who is also the chief executive officer for the proprietor body; and the chair of the trustees, who also acts as the chair of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a parent governor. The head of education conducted a virtual tour of the premises with the inspector. The inspector checked the single central register and sampled other safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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