

Acorn Wood

Watery Lane, Coton, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 3LR

Inspection dates

15 December 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

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(h) and 2(2)(i)

- The school's intended curriculum across key stages 1, 2 and 3 is largely based on the national curriculum delivered through a thematic approach. A focus of the curriculum is on practical learning and creativity, particularly through learning outdoors. An example of such a theme is 'plants'. Schemes of work based on this theme demonstrate how pupils' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic, and creative education will be developed. For example, in the technological scheme of work pupils will develop their creativity, mathematical and technical skills through designing a sensory garden.
- A clear focus is given to the development of pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics. For example, in food technology the scheme of work for the plants topic demonstrates how pupils will develop their mathematical skills through the weighing and measuring of ingredients, and their linguistic skills through expressing their likes and dislikes of different plants.
- The planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education scheme of work is likely to support pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics set out in The Equality Act 2010. For example, they will study a unit of work based on considering the ways in which it is positive to have differences between people.

Paragraphs 2(2), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii) 2(2)(e)(iii), 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j), and 4

- The quality of teaching and learning will be checked through the use of a monitoring cycle. This cycle will include termly learning walks led by leaders, including lesson visits, peer observations and external observations by, for example, school improvement partners or governors. Every half term the headteacher will monitor teachers' planning and assessment folders and evaluate pupils' progress information.
- Teachers and trainees will be supported with appropriate training. This will either be in-house training or external training provided by a local university. This will include the teaching of phonics, understanding behaviour, attachment developmental trauma

and the principles of neuroscience. Teachers will be supported in the moderation of pupils' work by working with local mainstream and independent schools.

- The assessment policy states that teachers will be expected to use formative and summative assessment to monitor pupils' progress over time. This will include pupils' academic and personal development. Leaders propose that the progress made towards a pupil's targets in their education, health and care (EHC) plan will be evaluated and discussed as part of the pupil's annual review. Reports to parents and care givers will include information about the pupil's progress, effort and attainment, teachers' comments, pupils' comments and, if appropriate, comments from the pupil's social worker.
- Pupils will be supported in making informed choices about a broad range of careers options. Planned activities include pupils accessing advice from an independent careers adviser and visits from local employers and businesses. Pupils will also have the opportunity to study for an external qualification in careers. As part of the course, they will study topics such as how to write a curriculum vitae.
- The potential needs of the pupils have been carefully considered by the proprietor in the design of the learning spaces. For example, they offer space and places for pupils to learn and play in different ways. They may choose to learn and play on their own, in pairs, in small groups, at tables and on the floor. This is likely to meet pupils' learning and well-being needs effectively.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii) and 5(d)(iii)

- The proprietor is fully aware of the potential additional needs of the school's prospective pupils. These are likely to include mental ill-health, decreased well-being, cognitive processing, attachment and developmental trauma, reduced cognitive processing and executive functioning skills, autism spectrum disorder and social learning difficulties. To help meet these needs, the planned curriculum is based on a nurture and therapeutic approach. Pupils will be placed into classes according to their emotional stage rather than their chronological age.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is likely to be supported well. The school has developed a charter that is based on rights and responsibilities and relational expectations for staff, pupils, parents and care givers. It is based on the school's core values. The school's 'Acorn Wood – The Gateway to Every Child's Success' includes good manners, responsibility, harmony and kindness.
- Pupils' cultural capital is likely to be developed well through extra-curricular activities such as visiting local garden centres and welcoming visitors to the school from local animal sanctuaries.
- It is clear in curriculum plans and further documentation how the school intends to promote fundamental British values. For example, in the proposed PSHE education scheme of work, pupils will study topics including how to show respect for different views, beliefs and lifestyles and why we have laws in this country.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

- The safeguarding and child protection policy adheres to current government guidelines. It clearly outlines how the school intends to support pupils with additional vulnerabilities. A comprehensive visitors guide outlines all the procedures visitors should follow when on site. These include who to report a concern to, first aid procedures and the use of personal devices.
- It is proposed that all staff will receive safeguarding training as part of their induction programme. This will include training on: the 'Prevent' duty, radicalisation and potential risks posed to pupils in the local area.
- The planned PSHE programme is likely to help pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils will learn about which people keep them safe.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), and 10

- There is a relationships and behaviour for learning policy in place. It acknowledges that behaviour is a form of communication. It is based on the belief that positive human socially interconnected relationships are the root of positive behaviour. It includes strategies for staff to use in managing behaviour, including how to support pupils to regulate and redirect their behaviour. It explains how incidents will be recorded and how staff and pupils will have an opportunity to reflect, following an incident.
- The anti-bullying policy takes a relational and restorative approach to bullying. A central focus for dealing with unwanted behaviours will be based on a process of reflection, restoration, repairing and reintegrating. The policy includes the signs and symptoms of bullying and the different forms it may take. It also outlines the support that will be given to both the perpetrator and victim.
- The PSHE programme is likely to support pupils in developing their understanding of bullying. Pupils will cover topics such as recognising behaviour that is not bullying and the characteristics and forms of bullying. This is likely to help prevent bullying incidents among pupils.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a), and 16(b)

- The premises are well maintained. An external fire check has recently been completed. Templates were shared with inspectors to show how the school intends to record fire safety checks. These checks include monthly visual checks of the building, checks on smoke ventilation, emergency lighting and the recording of fire drills.
- There is a policy in place that covers health and safety, first aid and the management of risks. It explains the responsibilities of the headteacher, the health and safety coordinator and staff. The policy covers a wide range of aspects of keeping pupils and staff safe. These include the arrangements for site security, the use of transport, procedures for manual handling and the administering of first aid. The policy also includes a generic risk assessment. It is proposed that all staff will have training on how to complete a risk assessment as part of their induction.

- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

- The proposed admissions and attendance registers adhere to government guidelines. For example, the attendance register will record morning and afternoon sessions. The admissions register will record at least two emergency contacts for each pupil.
- The supervision policy outlines the proposed arrangements for supervising pupils at the start and end of the school day. It also includes supervision arrangements for off-site activities. These arrangements are likely to keep pupils free from harm.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e) 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7)(a) and 21(7)(b)

- All required safeguarding checks have been completed for the proprietor. All checks are recorded and dated on an electronic single central register. The single central register will be updated as staff join the school.
- The proprietor has completed safer recruitment training. It is intended that there will always be at least two members of the recruitment panel who have completed this training.
- The proprietor does not intend to use supply staff, but is clear about the checks and procedures that would need to be followed if they did.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The school is newly built and refurbished to a high standard. All rooms are well lit and have good acoustics. The designated learning spaces are suitable for the proposed number of pupils. Each learning space is well resourced for the intended curriculum and method of delivery.
- There are suitable toilet facilities with hot and cold running water and safe handwashing facilities. The accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and the short-term care of sick and injured pupils is adequate.
- Drinking water is available for pupils in all learning spaces and is clearly marked. Pupils will be provided with their own drinking cups for indoor and outdoor use.
- The site has extensive outdoor areas that will provide adequate space for pupils to play and socialise. There is a separate area that the school intends to use for outdoor

learning, including a forest school. Pupils aged 11 and over will access physical education off site at local leisure centres.

- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(1)(j), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), and 32(3)(f)

- The school currently does not have a website. The proprietor provided all relevant documentation and policies required electronically or during the on-site visit.
- The school's prospectus includes all the necessary information parents and care givers are likely to need. By reading the prospectus parents and care givers can find out about, for example, the admissions process, the school day, the aims, ethos and beliefs of the school and how the school will meet their child's needs.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The school has a complaints policy. It adheres to the relevant guidance. For example, it includes both formal and informal processes and timescales in which complaints should be dealt with.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor demonstrates a good knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards. She has an extensive and varied experience of education and care, and has connections across a wide range of education providers and external agencies. This is likely to support the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), particularly social, emotional and mental health needs and attachment, well.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010. There is an appropriate accessibility policy and plan in place.

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	148192
DfE registration number	893/6043
Inspection number	10172467

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	Shropshire Academy and Learning Trust
Chair	Sarah Morgan
Headteacher	Sarah Morgan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000–£45,000
Telephone number	07968 086169
Website	The school does not have a website
Email address	sarahmorgan@shropshirealt.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	5–13	5–13
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	30	30

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	30
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	30
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	30
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	30

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	0	9
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is set in approximately two acres of rural farmland. It consists of three learning spaces, a kitchen, a medical room, a meeting room, a reception area, a staff kitchen and a relaxed well-being workspace for staff.
- The school proposes to cater for 30 pupils aged five to 13 years. Most pupils are likely to have an EHC plan or are undergoing an assessment. The pupils are likely to have SEND linked to autism and reduced well-being.
- It is proposed that local authorities will place pupils at the school.
- The proposed school does not intend to use alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious character.

Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered. This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspectors conducted a tour of the premises with the proprietor. The proprietor is also currently the headteacher, the leader responsible for safeguarding and the special educational needs coordinator. Safeguarding and welfare arrangements were discussed as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation and policies submitted by the proprietor. Documents were also reviewed during the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor.
- There were no pupils attending the school during the inspection.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Heather Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector

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