

Banks House School

Inspection dates

27–28 January 2021

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

Paragraph 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)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) for full-time provision for up to six pupils, aged from 13 to 19 years, with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Most pupils will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Many will have experienced disruption in their previous schooling. Pupils will often arrive at short notice at different times throughout the year. Some pupils may only be placed at the school for a short period of time.
- The taught curriculum will start at 9.00am and finish at 3.30pm. There will be short breaks between sessions and 45 minutes for lunch. Staff will use a variety of methods to engage pupils, including social stories, yoga, reward activities, reflection time and assemblies.
- As reported in the previous pre-registration visit in June 2020, curriculum plans specify the knowledge and understanding that pupils should learn, how this will be achieved, and how staff will check.
- The curriculum includes English language, mathematics, history, geography, science, food technology, computing, physical education (PE), and art.
- Leaders have set up three curriculum pathways to meet a wide range of pupils' academic needs and abilities.
- The plans presented for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education are consistent with the group's ethos of improving pupils' education, health and well-being and social and community inclusion.
- The careers programme provides pupils with opportunities for visits to different places of work, as well as work experience and volunteering opportunities. Pupils will learn from the experiences of visiting speakers, and have access to an independent adviser. Support plans are in place to help pupils when applying for jobs or further education courses.

- This standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)

Paragraph 4

- Pupils will be assessed on entry to the school to determine the most appropriate curriculum for them. Leaders have started to adapt generic plans to meet the needs of prospective pupils. More detail will be added when staff have more information on pupils' specific needs.
- The main classroom is large, with a movable dividing wall. This gives the school plenty of room to provide their planned assemblies as part of their PSHE curriculum.
- Staff are well qualified to carry out their roles. They bring a range of valuable experiences of working with vulnerable young people.
- The senior teacher will deliver much of the curriculum in the purpose-built classroom. The headteacher will also teach. Pupils will also be supported by their personal support worker. Plans are in place to recruit additional teaching staff.
- The proprietor has ensured that staff collaborate with and seek expertise from other similar schools in order to share best practice.
- Leaders are building up an appropriate range of resources to help pupils to access different aspects of the curriculum.
- Leaders have drawn up a suitable behaviour policy to help staff effectively manage pupils' behaviour during lessons.
- Suitable assessment processes are in place linked to the courses on offer at the school. Pupils will complete a range of nationally recognised qualifications.
- This standard is likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 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), 5(d)(iii)

- The PSHE curriculum is centred around promoting equality, independence and pupils' access to the community. Key to this is improving pupils' powers of communication, enabling them to negotiate social situations more easily. In turn, pupils will be supported to regulate their emotions and behaviours more successfully, giving them access to a far wider range of valuable opportunities and experiences.
- There are a wide range of activities and visits to help develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness effectively. The focus is on encouraging pupils to be responsible citizens, who understand democracy and the rule of law, and who build an understanding and respect for those with different cultures, beliefs and lifestyles.
- Staff have planned different ways to help pupils to access activities, including social stories, highly visual resources, reward times and assemblies.
- The curriculum is supported by planned visits to public services.
- This standard is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b),

- The school's policies for safeguarding, safer recruitment, whistleblowing, staff conduct, and internet filtering are in place and compliant with statutory guidance.
- Leaders, including members of the advisory board, have had up-to-date training in safeguarding and safer recruitment. They have a good understanding of safeguarding risks and how to take action to mitigate these, including those that are local to the area, such as county lines drug- and gang-related activity and extremist political organisations.
- Safer recruitment processes are thorough. Leaders understand the correct processes to follow in the event of safeguarding-related allegations being made against staff. Leaders understand the impact of recent changes to statutory guidance upon their provision.

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

- The school's rules are clearly set out within policy documents, as are details of how leaders will ensure that sanctions are applied consistently, reasonably and fairly.
- Systems for the tracking and monitoring of pupils' behaviour are well considered. They should enable all staff to have a secure and regularly updated overview of the behaviour of each individual and anything that might affect it.

Paragraph 10

- The school's anti-bullying policy is clear and comprehensive. Leaders have thought about a range of different types of bullying, and how to respond, record and follow up on incidents.
- Clear curriculum links with the PSHE programme exist to educate pupils about the consequences of bullying, and the actions to take if pupils experience bullying.

Paragraph 11, 12, 13

- The school's policies for health and safety, fire safety and first aid are all suitable, as are the supporting policies such as those relating to the support of pupils with medical conditions. A wide range of health and safety checks take place on a daily or weekly basis, as appropriate. Water condition, legionella, and gas boiler checks are regular and up to date.
- Fire exit signs and drinking water signs are all in place, as are fire doors, fire alarms and smoke detectors. Regular checks ensure that this equipment is in good working order. Staff understand their responsibilities and records indicate that fire drills take place regularly.
- Locked first aid cabinets are located in every room, as are 'grab packs' for use in emergencies. Regular checks to ensure that cabinets are well stocked are made and recorded. Staff have up-to-date first aid training. Suitable arrangements are in place for the recording and reporting of accidents or medical emergencies.

Paragraph 14

- The proprietor plans to never have more than six pupils on roll. Leaders' clear plans and the high staff-to-pupil ratio should ensure close supervision, supporting pupils to learn effectively and play collaboratively.

Paragraph 15

- The school's admissions arrangements and policy are fit for purpose as are the arrangements for registering pupils.
- An electronic system has been designed for the registration of pupils. The correct codes will be used to record absence.
- An admissions register template is in place which indicates that leaders will obtain and record the required information.
- Leaders understand how entries into the register must be made and the procedures to be followed once pupils leave the school.

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

- The school's risk assessment policy is suitably detailed. There are clear instructions for staff to follow when planning activities. There is an appropriate system in place for the creation, sharing, review and managerial sign-off of this documentation.
- Leaders have carried out a variety of-site, room-based and subject curriculum assessments. These assessments highlight the most significant risks attendant upon particular activities or contexts and list suitable actions to be taken to mitigate risks.
- These nine independent school standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 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)

Paragraph 19(2), 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)

Paragraph 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)

Paragraph 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)(c), 21(6)

- All of the necessary pre-employment checks relating to the suitability of staff to work with children have been carried out. These meet statutory requirements.
- The proprietor does not intend to employ supply staff. However, leaders are aware of the required checks that need to be made before any person undertakes supply work, should the need arise.
- The proprietor is in the process of recruiting additional staff.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the necessary checks on those responsible for governance, including those relating to section 128 of the Act, have been carried out.

- All appropriate checks on the suitability of staff, governors and the proprietor body are recorded on the school's single central record.
- These independent school standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c)

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

Paragraph 25

Paragraph 26

Paragraph 27, 27(a), 27(b)

Paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- Toilet facilities, shower facilities and changing accommodation are all provided in line with requirements. All toilets have access to hot and cold water. Water temperature is optimal. The medical room is near to a toilet and includes a washing facility.
- Suitable drinking water facilities are available to pupils at all times and are properly labelled.
- The building is in excellent repair and is furnished to a very high standard. The site is being well maintained and cleaned thoroughly. Health and safety and risk assessment policies and procedures are comprehensive, and are clearly being followed.
- Rooms have adequate sound insulation and lighting. Exterior lighting is in good order.
- Pupils will have access to a lounge area and a sensory room. The kitchen area will be used for food technology lessons and consists of new, purpose-built furniture, appliances and equipment.
- The garden is enclosed appropriately and of a good size. There is a range of well-maintained sports equipment available to pupils. There is plenty of space for pupils for PE and also for recreational time at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The site is surrounded by high wooden fencing and locked gates which will help to ensure pupils' safety.
- These independent school standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 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)(ii), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f)

- The school's website is not currently in operation.
- A covering letter, together with the school's information brochure, contain all of the required information about the provision, including contact details for the headteacher and the chair of the advisory body. The letter advises parents and carers that all policies are available upon request.
- Leaders understand the requirement to provide an annual written report detailing pupils' progress.

- Pupils who will have a place at the school will be fully funded by the local authority. Leaders are aware of their responsibility to provide the local authority with a breakdown of that income and expenditure.
- This independent school standard is likely to be met

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 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), 33(k)

- The complaints policy includes suitable information and arrangements required for the handling and recording of complaints.
- This standard is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor and leaders have a clear vision about what they want to provide for pupils at the school. The personalised educational provision will remain small. Staff ratios will be high in order to give pupils the personal support they need to succeed. There are no plans to take more than six pupils at any time.
- Leaders have rigorous processes in place to obtain and collate pupils' information before enrolment. This means leaders can accurately assess whether the provision will be able to effectively meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders work closely with other specialist providers. Their openness to collaboration and working with others to share best practice bodes well. Leaders have well-considered plans in place to realise their ambitions.
- The proprietor has recruited staff with sufficient expertise to be able to realise the school's aims. Many have significant experience of education and working with vulnerable pupils who have additional needs.
- Leaders have put suitable processes in place to monitor the effectiveness of the provision. The advisory board will be responsible for governance. Members of the board possess a wide range of valuable experience and desirable skills. This group is well placed to hold leaders to account.
- This standard is likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's disabled access policy provides details of how leaders have made, and will continue to make, adaptations to the premises, the curriculum and to communication, so that all are equally accessible to all pupils.
- School leaders have ensured that the requirement 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.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	148346
DfE registration number	926/6030
Inspection number	10177406

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Cascade (Banks House) Ltd
Chair	Graham Goforth
Headteacher	Carol Ryan
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £47,000
Telephone number	01603 441497
Website	No website currently in operation
Email address	schools@cascade-care.com
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	N/A
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who is looked after by a local authority	N/A
Total hours operating as a school per week	N/A
Total hours of teaching provided per week	N/A

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	N/A	13–19	13–19
Number of pupils on the school roll	N/A	6	6

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	N/A	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	N/A	6
Number of part-time pupils	N/A	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	N/A	6
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	N/A	To be determined
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	N/A	6

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	N/A	3
Number of part-time teaching staff	N/A	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	N/A	6

Information about this proposed school

- The proprietor seeks registration with the Department for Education as an independent special school to admit pupils with SEND.
- The school anticipates admitting pupils who may have specific, moderate or severe learning needs, including pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. In addition, pupils may have social, emotional and mental health needs or speech, language and communication needs.
- The proprietor has appointed a headteacher and a senior teacher and is currently seeking to recruit a further two teachers.
- The proprietor proposes to admit pupils from placing local authorities, primarily Norfolk local authority. Pupils are likely to arrive at the school with gaps in their knowledge and skills, owing to long periods without formal education.
- Some pupils may only attend this school for a short-term placement of a year. Others may attend for longer.
- The overarching ethos of the curriculum is to help pupils to catch up so that they can successfully reintegrate into a mainstream or specialist provider.
- The proprietor body is Cascade (Banks House) Ltd. The named chair of the proprietor body on the application form is Graham Goforth, the group chief executive officer.
- Sonnie Rozenbroek, the group compliance director, is the chair of the school advisory board. Other members of the board include staff from the group, such as the directors of education and finance. Rachel Quick, the principal of a local special school for pupils with autism, has also agreed to serve on the board.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Some of the inspection was conducted remotely. This was due to restrictions placed on non-essential travel during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- This is the third pre-registration inspection for the proposed school.
- The inspection was conducted with two days' notice.
- The proposed school is not operating currently. The proprietor plans to open the school as soon as the registration is confirmed, and placements are finalised.
- Evidence gathered to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards comprised:
 - an onsite tour of the premises and accommodation
 - an onsite check of the single central register and a meeting with staff who were involved in undertaking the checks on the single central record
 - onsite meetings with the senior teacher, the designated safeguarding leader, the headteacher (remotely) and other staff
 - online virtual meetings (including formal feedback) or telephone calls with the chair of the proprietary body, the director of compliance from the Cascade Group, the head of school and the senior teacher (also the curriculum leaders), a member of the school advisory board, and other staff in the organisation
 - scrutiny of documents provided by leaders.
- An inspector had a telephone call with a representative from the local authority to gain their views.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jason Howard

Her Majesty's Inspector

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