

The Lowen School

Lower Dimson Farm, Gunnislake, Cornwall, PL18 9NS

Inspection dates

3–4 February 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

Paragraphs 2(1)(a)–2(2)(i)

- Leaders are ambitious for pupils, who will have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including significant cognitive impairment and communication and language difficulties.
- Leaders have clear expectations of what they want pupils to learn. They have designed the curriculum carefully, with the needs of pupils in mind. As a result, pupils are likely to benefit from a well-structured and personalised education.
- Leaders intend to use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, alongside curricular aims, to ensure that pupils are supported and challenged effectively. Leaders expect teachers to adapt lessons and sequences of learning to enable pupils to achieve in the range of subjects taught.
- Schemes of work and curriculum plans cover all required subjects, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and creative education. Pupils are likely to benefit from a rich curriculum to fulfil their different learning and developmental needs.
- Leaders will check pupils' progress and attainment frequently. If pupils fall behind, leaders will implement 'barrier plans' to swiftly identify and resolve any issues.
- Leaders have a strong understanding of the vulnerabilities associated with pupils who require specialist provision. Consequently, the curriculum will take full account of British values, as part of the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme.
- Curriculum plans are likely to foster respect for other people. Leaders will expect teachers to plan activities to explore pupils' thinking and develop their personal and social development. For example, there are planned opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship to learn about different religions.
- Leaders have already given much thought to implementing high-quality and impartial careers advice. Work experience is likely to include jobs in school, as well as in local businesses, where appropriate. Leaders want pupils to gain experience and

qualifications to help them onto the next stage of their lives, including employment for post-16 students.

Paragraph 3, 3(a)–(j)

- Teachers and teaching assistants will use a range of appropriate resources to support pupils in lessons. For example, visual timetables, pictorial activity cards and word prompts will be used to help pupils interact with those around them. This will aid pupils to be motivated and take steps to learn for themselves.
- Teaching approaches will include specialised techniques and follow the advice of other experts, including speech and language therapists. The recommendations of other professionals will inform how lessons are delivered, to get the best for pupils.
- The reading strategy appropriately identifies the importance of early communication and language as precursors for reading. Leaders are taking action to improve their understanding of how to teach synthetic phonics, as this may be necessary for some pupils, depending on their stage of reading.
- Teachers are likely to ensure that pupils behave in a respectful and considerate manner, both in lessons and at other times during the day. The school's behaviour policy clearly sets out how pupils and staff should take steps to maintain a harmonious environment for all.
- Lessons are unlikely to be discriminatory in any sense. Leaders' plans show clear intentions actively to promote British values, including democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. These will be linked to helping pupils learn more about themselves and understand the world around them.

Paragraph 4

- Leaders have an agreed assessment framework. Teachers will check pupils' progress frequently, including using the targets on pupils' EHC plans. They will use benchmarks set out in the school's core curriculum. This will include reading, writing and mathematics as well as speaking and listening. Pupils' targets are likely to reflect the highly individualised needs of each pupil.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a)–5(d)(iii)

- Leaders want to enhance pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural (SMSC) development with appropriate content for all, including citizenship in key stages 3, 4 and 5.
- The SMSC and PSHE education policies are likely to promote pupils' understanding of British values. For example, the PSHE education policy is underpinned by seven core principles, aimed at improving pupils' tolerance of and respect for others.
- Leaders have incorporated the school's 'PBS' (positive behaviour strategy) with the PSHE education policy. As a result, there is a clear correlation between leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour and their social and emotional development.

- British values are at the heart of the school's ethos and the SMSC curriculum. The headteacher provides strong assurances of the importance of this, including protecting pupils from radical views and partisan political views.
- Teachers are expected to challenge stereotypes and tackle any radical or extremist views. Pupils will be taught how to stay safe and make valuable contributions to the world around them. It is likely that the school will effectively promote The Equality Act 2010 with sensitivity and regard for the protected characteristics.
- Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They want pupils to share in the running of the school and have a voice. For example, pupils will have the opportunity to be on the school council or to have other jobs that allow them to contribute to the school community.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a)–(b)

- The proprietor has ensured that the school complies with the latest safeguarding guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The child protection and safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. Leaders demonstrate good knowledge of safeguarding arrangements, including child protection.
- Leaders are making sure that all staff and governors will be fully trained to look after pupils. For example, all necessary checks of current staff and governors comply with the requirements of 'Keeping children safe in education (2020)'.
- Leaders have an online program to log pupil welfare concerns and ensure that these are followed up. Staff know how important it is to make timely referrals to children's services, and how to deal with allegations made against members of staff.
- Leaders are implementing safeguarding and health and safety policies prior to the school's registration, where these are pertinent. For example, the current COVID-19 (coronavirus) risk assessment is in full effect for staff and visitors, and safer recruitment processes are currently being used to appoint staff.
- Leaders understand their responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. They are well prepared to look after the most vulnerable pupils who will be joining them, should the school open.
- The culture of safeguarding is likely to be effective.

Paragraphs 9–10

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a written behaviour policy. The policy takes full account of the vulnerable nature of pupils attending the school. The school's positive behaviour approach is at the core of leaders' expectations. Pupils are likely to be supported well to attend and achieve.
- Leaders consider the use of sanctions, particularly exclusion, to be a last resort. Details of sanctions for pupils' misbehaviour, including exclusion, are ready to be published on the school's website.

- The school has an anti-bullying policy which, along with the positive behaviour policy, aims to promote harmonious relationships through communication, mutual respect and tolerance.

Paragraphs 11–12

- The proprietor has ensured that there is an appropriate health and safety policy. This covers the range of risks associated with the running of the school. The health and safety officer has completed a range of appropriate audits with external experts to ensure that the school is ready to open.
- Leaders are fully aware of their duty to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. As a result, the accommodation and premises have fire extinguishers, well-lit emergency lighting, fire doors and a designated fire assembly area. The fire marshal checks the school's equipment and maintains logs appropriately.

Paragraphs 13–15

- A first aid policy has been drafted and is ready for publishing on the school's website.
- All staff have completed paediatric first aid training to an acceptable standard. The headteacher and proprietor have stipulated that this will be a requirement for all staff appointed to work in the school.
- Leaders anticipate that all pupils will have an EHC plan. They plan that pupils will have individual supervision if this is required.
- The proprietor has appropriate plans to ensure that admission and attendance records are likely to be maintained rigorously and in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Leaders intend to use an online program to align pupils' attendance with other records and personal data.
- The admissions register is likely to be well maintained, including keeping a track of onward destinations, to prevent pupils from missing education.

Paragraph 16, 16(a)–(b)

- Leaders have written an appropriate risk assessment policy. This reflects the uniqueness of the provision and its context.
- Risk assessments will be implemented for various activities, such as learning outside and swimming, or when making use of the local park. Every pupil will have an individual risk assessment, matched to their EHC plan. The risk assessment will be reviewed each week. Leaders will also introduce an additional 'safety plan' if pupils are identified at the highest level of risk.
- Leaders expect to hold morning briefings and after-school catch-up sessions, each day, to check the pupils' well-being. These will be in addition to the routine activities already established to safeguard pupils.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 18(2)–18(3), 19(2)–19(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c)

- The proprietor is likely to ensure that all necessary pre-employment checks are completed in line with the statutory guidance of the Secretary of State, and the independent school standards.
- The proprietor has a single central register that is being maintained and updated, in readiness for the school's registration. This complies with the independent school standards. It takes the full range of personnel checks expected of different staff, supply staff and leaders, into account.
- The school is not expecting to use supply staff. The headteacher intends to provide cover using staff who are already known to the pupils, given the complex nature of the special needs that the pupils are likely to have.
- A member of the proprietorial board has received the appropriate enhanced criminal checks from the Secretary of State, in anticipation of the school's opening.

Paragraph 21(1)–21(7)(b)

- The single central register is likely to be well maintained and legible, being in an electronic format.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)–24(2)

- The school has suitable toilets and washing facilities for the sole use of pupils. These can be secured from the inside for use by one pupil at a time.
- There is a fully functioning shower on site for pupils aged 11 years or over who may receive physical education.
- The school has a designated medical room for the short-term care of pupils, including during emergencies. The medical room is conveniently located next to a separate toilet and washroom.
- Leaders ensure that toileting, washing and emergency care or medical facilities comply fully with the independent school standards.

Paragraph 25

- The proprietor acquired the premises in September 2020. Since then, there has been some refurbishment, following its previous use as a children's nursery. The site is spacious and affords ample room for pupils' education, relaxation and recreation. The premises include a lawned area and a separate car park, which is fully secured for pupils' safety. The school site, which includes three classrooms, a reading room, kitchen and gardens, is sufficiently large to accommodate 12 pupils, aged between seven and 18.
- At the time of this inspection, there were still some minor works needed to be completed. Leaders are implementing a maintenance plan to ensure that these are done urgently.

- The main works that must be completed include tidying the outdoors and the removal of some loose slabs, and cleaning heavily mossy areas. These cause a slip or trip hazard. A fence also needs to be installed to prevent pupils from accessing an old stable house and field. A few window restrictors also need to be attached to first floor windows. It is entirely realistic for these to be fully rectified within a couple of days, and well before the school's proposed opening in March 2021.

Paragraphs 26–28(2)(b)

- The acoustics and sound insulation are appropriate for the premises and the proposed activities as a special school.
- Rooms are well lit. There is a good source of natural light in every room. The premises benefit from double-glazed windows, which contribute well to the ventilation, light and sound insulation on the property.
- The proprietor has followed advice to ensure that the school has appropriate external lighting. There are plans to install more external lighting for added safety and security.
- The proprietor has a safe source of drinking water, coming off the mains supply, in the kitchen. The school has a suitable supply of water across the entire property.
- Drinking water sources are clearly marked for pupils.
- The temperature of hot water does not pose a scalding risk to users. Taps are pre-set on a thermostat to regulate the water temperature for the whole premises.
- All facilities for drinking, washing and the separate toilet areas are likely to be readily accessible to those who use the school, as needed, throughout the day.

Paragraphs 29(1)(a)–(b)

- The school has suitable outdoor space for pupils to play games for recreation, relaxation, and as part of the curriculum. An area of lawn can be used for small games and other physical activities to benefit pupils of all ages, including post-16 students.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)–32(1)(c), 32(1)(f)–32(3)(f)

- Leaders have already ensured that all policies are ready to be made available to parents. They understand that information must be made available to parents upon request, including policies for admissions, the curriculum, pupil behaviour and health and safety.
- At the time of this inspection, some of the required information was not yet published on the school's website. For example, governors' roles and the school's ethos statement. However, the headteacher has collated all required information and intends to upload this once the school's registration has been approved.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- The proprietor has a comprehensive complaints policy that meets the requirements of the independent school standards. The policy provides information about the nature of different complaints. It sets out how complaints may be resolved on an informal or formal basis.
- The process for escalating a complaint is clear. This includes relevant timescales and details of support for the complainant. The policy gives appropriate guidance for what to do next, should a complainant not be fully satisfied with the internal investigation.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is a fair complaints process in place. For example, this includes steps to hear a complaint with fully independent members. There is an agreement to use members from a local primary school to provide additional capacity for this.
- It is likely that leaders will take all complaints seriously and record these diligently, as part of the school's policy and practice.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)(a)–(c)

- Leaders have a strong moral imperative which is driving their ambition to open the school. Their extensive experience of working with pupils who have complex cognitive and learning needs means they are well placed to create a nurturing and ambitious school. Leaders have appropriate plans to be ready for their intended start date of March 2021.
- The proprietor is taking the right steps to ensure rigorous accountability in the school's work. Leaders have identified potential weaknesses, including conflicts of interest, which could arise in a small school. As such, the school will use external consultants to provide additional challenge and rigour in holding the headteacher to account.
- The proprietor has appointed school improvement partners to help them monitor the school development plan. This will provide a basis for external validation and accurate self-evaluation.
- Leaders, including governors, demonstrate a secure understanding of the independent school standards.
- Leaders show great passion and integrity. They have the right knowledge and expertise to ensure that the pupils who attend this school are likely to be supported well, in all aspects of their care and education.
- Leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They have already started to take the right action for school improvement planning. For example, they have identified early reading and phonics as a focus for further development.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an acceptable accessibility plan.

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	148342
DfE registration number	908/6011
Inspection number	10172706

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 special day school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	South West Complex Care Ltd
Chair	Tyler Collins
Headteacher	Tyler Collins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,000
Telephone number	01822 851761
Website	www.southwestcomplexcare.com
Email address	admin@southwestcomplexcare.com
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	N/A	7 to 18	7 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	N/A	12	12

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	12
Number of part-time pupils	N/A	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	N/A	12
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	N/A	12
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	N/A	12

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	N/A	2
Number of part-time teaching staff	N/A	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	N/A	4

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located just outside Gunnislake, Cornwall.
- Leaders expect all pupils to have an EHC plan. The school is equipped to cater for pupils who have a range of special educational needs, including autism spectrum disorder and significantly impaired cognitive and learning development.
- The school is likely to admit pupils who are at risk of exclusion or have struggled in mainstream schools and other specialist provision.
- The proposed school will be owned by South West Complex Care Limited.

- The school will be managed by a governing body on behalf of the proprietor. A chair of governors has been appointed to oversee the running of the school.
- The school intends to start with a few pupils and reach its capacity over time. The size of the staff will expand accordingly, to reflect any changes to the number of pupils on the school roll.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the Secretary of State for Education. It was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.
- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education. It was the provider's first pre-registration inspection.
- This inspection took place over two days on 3 and 4 February 2021, due to restrictions caused by COVID-19. The first day was conducted remotely. This consisted of documentation checks and discussions with leaders, via video conference. The inspection was completed on-site the next day. This involved further discussions with leaders, and a review of health and safety policies (Paragraphs 11, 12 and 16). A check of the school's premises and accommodation (Part 5) was also undertaken.
- The inspector checked the school's safeguarding policies, and matters relating to safe recruitment and the single central register.
- Discussions were held with three governors of the proprietorial board, one of whom is the headteacher.
- The proposed school is not currently operating.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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