

The Secret Garden

Shustoke Hall, Moathouse Lane, Shustoke, Birmingham B46 2RJ

Inspection dates

9–10 February 2021

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens. It is currently operating without registration.

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

- The school's proposed curriculum is based on national curriculum expectations. Pupils joining the school are likely to have had significant periods of disruption to their education. As such, the curriculum policies and schemes of work outline how the school will aim to adapt the curriculum to re-engage pupils in their learning.
- The school's aim is to provide pupils with individualised learning programmes in a nurturing environment, including the use of the farming resources available on site. The policies outline specific interventions, such as art therapy and emotion coaching, to enable pupils to access academic learning. Pupils' social and emotional well-being is likely to be further supported through therapy sessions with the donkeys and other animals on site. The individualised programmes are likely to take into account pupils' needs, as identified in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- The proposed schemes of work cover all the subjects across key stages 2 and 3 in the national curriculum and identify how learning will be developed and built upon from Year 3 to Year 9. For example, pupils will study literature such as 'The Iron Man' and 'James and the Giant Peach' in Year 3, and this will progress to studying 'A Christmas Carol' and 'Frankenstein' in Year 9. The school intends to make the teaching of reading a priority and has appropriate resources in place to develop pupils' phonic knowledge and reading skills.
- Curriculum plans and schemes of work are supplemented by enrichment activities such as trips to places of worship and museums, outdoor learning and visiting elderly folk in care homes. If implemented effectively, the proposed curriculum is likely to give pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education and should enable pupils to make good progress.

- The proposed careers education is threaded through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. For example, in Year 7 pupils will learn about enterprise, including Fairtrade enterprise. In Year 9, pupils will focus on possible careers they could aim for. The careers education also includes information about tackling gender stereotyping in the workplace. Leaders have a range of proposed careers activities, including links with local employers and visits to colleges and universities.
- The proposed PSHE curriculum is wide-ranging. It covers all aspects of PSHE education, including healthy relationships and sexual health. The school's approach to helping pupils self-regulate their behaviours is likely to help pupils make strong progress in PSHE education, as well as the rest of the curriculum. The plans do not undermine fundamental British values, and pay due regard to the protected characteristics as set out in The Equality Act 2010. They are likely to help pupils to become responsible citizens.
- The proposed assessment system is comprehensive. It is likely to enable staff to make detailed assessments of pupils' achievements in all subjects. Pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs can also be incorporated into the system to enable teachers to plan to meet pupils' overall specific learning needs. The assessment system has the facility to record pupils' achievements in a range of ways. This is important because pupils are likely to access their learning in varied learning environments, including working with the animals on site. The assessment system is likely to be able to provide detailed information about pupils' progress and academic performance.
- The school's plans, schemes of work and assessment systems indicate that teachers have the necessary skills to teach pupils well. They demonstrate that teachers have a strong understanding of how to adapt teaching, including using a range of resources to teach pupils effectively.
- Leaders have 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 spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) policy sets out the school's aim to: 'provide an education that provides learners with opportunities to explore and develop their own values and beliefs, spiritual awareness, high standards of personal behaviour, a positive, caring attitude towards other people, an understanding of their social and cultural traditions and an appreciation of the diversity and richness of the cultures, particularly British culture'. The policy sets out how the aims will be achieved, including cross-curricular links to subjects such as physical education (PE), art, religious education and music.
- The policy identifies a number of values that will be promoted such as telling the truth and respecting the rights and property of others. The policy states that pupils' SMSC development will be further supported through extra-curricular activities, including workshops, sporting opportunities and mindfulness. It also outlines proposed links with the wider community, including visiting speakers, involvement in charity fundraising and working with parents.
- The proposed SMSC policy is supported by the school's British values statement, the proposed PSHE curriculum and the proposed behaviour policy. The policy outlines a

range of ways that pupils will develop as confident individuals. There is nothing to suggest that the proposed curriculum would undermine fundamental British values or not pay due regard to the protected characteristics. There is nothing to indicate that pupils will be exposed to partisan political views.

- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b) and 32(1)(c) [Part 6. Provision of information]

- The school's safeguarding policy reflects current government guidelines and is available on request.
- New staff receive detailed information about the school's safeguarding policies and procedures on induction. Staff training is updated regularly. Staff currently working at the school receive daily briefings to ensure that any concerns about pupils can be shared.
- Leaders record and follow up any safeguarding concerns quickly. They work with a range of external agencies, including sharing information with other schools where pupils are on roll, to make sure that pupils are kept as safe as possible.
- Staff are acutely aware of the significant vulnerabilities of the pupils they are likely to have on their roll if registration is granted. As such, they have developed a PSHE curriculum that will help to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including when out in the community and when using technology.
- Leaders have proactively sought advice and guidance from consultants and the local authority to ensure that their safeguarding policies and procedures are robust so that they can keep pupils as safe as possible.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 6, 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The behaviour policy outlines how leaders propose to provide pupils with clear and simple behaviour expectations, a structured school day and a safe and consistent nurturing environment. The rights and responsibilities of pupils and staff are set out in the policy. The school is committed to 'dealing with behaviour restoratively' and the policy sets out three levels of restorative practice. The policy sets out consequences of poor behaviour, including the exclusions process. It also details the school's approach to physical intervention. Leaders have proposed behaviour plans in place which are likely to include measures to avoid trigger points that may lead to negative behaviour incidents.
- The anti-bullying policy contains a clear statement that bullying in any form will not be tolerated. It links closely with the behaviour, PSHE and SMSC policies. The policy sets out how pupils who have been bullied will be supported, but also how the perpetrators will be helped and educated to change their behaviour.
- Leaders have gone to great lengths to ensure that the school's site is safe and secure. They have sought specialist advice from external consultants to improve the health and safety measures, such as fire safety. All guidance has been followed. Fire regulations are met, and a full range of fire safety checks are conducted regularly.

- The buildings and grounds are exceptionally well-maintained. Risk assessments identify any potential hazards and actions are taken to mitigate the risks. For example, additional and clear signage has been installed around the moat to warn of the dangers of the deep water. Gardening, technology and cooking equipment is safely stored, with clear expectations set out for the safe usage of the equipment. Safety procedures are also in place for when pupils are working with the animals.
- The first aid procedures are all in place, with an appropriate number of staff trained as first aiders. There is a dedicated medical room that is suitably equipped to provide care for sick pupils.
- The proposed admissions, attendance and supervision procedures are fit for purpose and will further support the safety and well-being of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(1), 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(1), 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), 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)

- The school ensures that all required safeguarding checks are carried out on staff prior to them starting work at the school. Personnel folders demonstrate that leaders take safer recruitment seriously and ensure that all references are followed up and information from potential candidates is verified.
- Leaders have 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)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The premises are clean and are likely to provide a positive and appropriate environment for pupils to learn. Suitable washing and toileting facilities are available. The school intends to use a local gym facility to deliver PE, which will provide showering facilities when needed.
- The mobile classrooms are newly installed and provide excellent lighting and appropriate acoustic conditions. External lighting has been installed and is functional.
- Drinking water is available throughout the buildings and is labelled clearly. Hot taps pose no risk of scalding.
- The outdoor space will provide pupils with an excellent space to play. There are a number of animal areas, a paddock to walk the ponies and donkeys, a garden area, fields and hard-standing areas for pupils to relax.

- Leaders have 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)(d), 32(1)(j), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(i), 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) and 32(3)(f)

- The school's ethos states 'Our setting provides a unique opportunity for the children to learn about the need to take responsibility for others as well as themselves. There is an emphasis on both indoor and outdoor learning, and on relating the two to each other.' Leaders' organisation of the resources and environment is likely to enable them to achieve this ethos.
- At the time of the inspection, the school's website was not live. However, all documentation required under this part was made available on request. Leaders demonstrated a secure understanding of all the information, which was clearly presented in a range of policy documents.
- Leaders have 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 complaints policy is in writing and was made available on request. The policy sets out clear timescales in which complaints should be considered, investigated and reported back to the complainant. There are informal and formal proceedings set out, along with details about how an appeals panel would be set up. The policy outlines how complaints will be stored securely and will be made available on request to the Department for Education (DfE) and for the purposes of inspection.
- Leaders have 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)

- Leaders, including governors, have demonstrated a very secure understanding of the independent school standards. They have actively sought advice and guidance from a range of different agencies, including working closely with the local authority, so that they have the skills to ensure that the standards are likely to be consistently met.
- Leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting pupils' well-being. The proposed education, utilising both indoor and outdoor learning, is focused on supporting pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. They have taken great care to develop a positive and stimulating learning environment to enable them to achieve this. They have also ensured that all staff receive training and support to enable them to support pupils' well-being.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have ensured that the school is likely to meet the requirements of schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010. The equality and accessibility policy sets out how the school intends to be fully accessible to all. The main classroom buildings are accessed by ramps.

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	148243
DfE registration number	937/6033
Inspection number	10177039

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 school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	The Secret Garden School Limited
Chair	Annette Gadd
Headteacher	Annette Gadd
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,000 – £70,000
Telephone number	01675 488825
Website	www.thesecretgarden.org.uk
Email address	agadd@thesecretgarden.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	4
Number of pupils of compulsory school age for whom a statement is maintained under section 324, or who is looked after by a local authority	4
Total hours operating as a school per week	28
Total hours of teaching provided per week	20

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7–14	7–14	7–14
Number of pupils on the school roll	0	32	32

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	32
Number of part-time pupils	4	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	4	32
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	4	32
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	4	32

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	1	6
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	0

Information about this proposed school

- The school is set in a rural location and comprises three mobile classroom buildings and a range of barn and outdoor facilities to support outdoor learning, gardening and cooking activities and work with animals.
- The school is proposing to provide education for pupils in key stages 2 and 3.
- The school proposes to cater for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs who are likely to have had disruption to their education. All of the pupils are likely to have an EHC plan.
- The school is proposing to use a local gym facility to provide physical education.
- The school is not proposing to use any alternative provision for its full-time pupils. However, the school will provide some alternative provision for pupils who attend other schools.
- At the time of the inspection, the school's website had not gone live. However, all documents required were made available on request.

Information about this inspection

- This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to an application by the school for registration. The inspection focused on all parts of the independent school standards.
- Four pupils are currently dual-registered with the school. The school is providing alternative provision for these pupils on a part-time basis. At the time of the inspection, no pupils were attending the school. No teaching was observed.
- Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the current national lockdown restrictions, this inspection was carried out remotely, with an on-site visit made on day two of the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, headteacher, leaders responsible for safeguarding and a teacher remotely on day one of the inspection.
- A tour of the proposed site was conducted with the headteacher on day two of the inspection.
- The lead inspector examined a range of documents, including: the school's safeguarding policy and documents and policies relating to fire safety, supervision, health and safety, risk assessments, behaviour and anti-bullying. Documents relating to teaching and learning and the curriculum were scrutinised. The school's schemes of work and plans were reviewed.
- The school's record of safeguarding checks made on staff and pupil safeguarding records were examined by the lead inspector.

Inspection team

Ann Pritchard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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