

# The Damara School

30 Bridge Street, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3AG

## Inspection dates

10–11 March 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)-(b), 2(2), 2(2)(a)-(i)*

- The school will provide five lessons every day. Pupils will also have daily breakfast club, lunchtime, tutorial and enrichment activities, providing them with 26 hours of on-site education each week.
- There is a written curriculum policy which reflects the school's aims. These are to provide specialist provision that meets pupils' academic needs as well as their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, across all key stages.
- All pupils will follow a broad and balanced curriculum that includes English, mathematics, science, physical education (PE), humanities, art, modern languages, design technology and computing. Most of these subjects will be delivered through thematic learning.
- Curriculum plans are in place to give pupils suitable experiences in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. These plans include detailed schemes of work for pupils in all key stages in the following subject areas: English and literacy; mathematics and numeracy; scientific knowledge; the society we live in; exploration of my imagination; the world of work; and mind, body and spirit.
- Daily learning during breakfast club, lunchtimes, tutorials and enrichment activities is not planned in the same detail as it is in lessons. There are no schemes of work for these aspects of the school's curriculum.
- Plans include, at a later stage, introducing a range of therapies, including speech and language, occupational therapy, psychotherapy, counselling, mindfulness, art and drama therapy.
- Careers advice and guidance will be taught through the theme of 'the world of work' to pupils in all key stages. This includes an early introduction to possible careers for pupils in key stages 1 and 2.

### *Paragraph 3, 3(a)-(j)*

- Curriculum plans indicate that teaching will enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability. The school's thematic approach to learning is intended to foster in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work, and the ability to think and learn for themselves.
- Procedures are in place to assess pupils' prior learning when joining the school. This includes assessing their understanding of phonics, to identify any gaps and consider what reading support each of them will need. Further assessments are planned in all aspects of pupils' learning, to take place six times each year.
- Staff currently employed are suitably experienced to teach the planned curriculum across the age range and for the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of the proposed pupils. The current staff are a headteacher, assistant headteacher, a teacher and a teaching assistant.
- Teaching will take place in five classrooms. All classrooms are suitably resourced, including having a computer and an interactive whiteboard. There is a small library which is currently being stocked with new books.

### *Paragraph 4*

- Nationally recognised tests and examinations, including end of key stage tests, GCSE examinations and vocational and entry-level awards, will be used to assess the outcomes achieved by pupils.
- The three independent school standards for the quality of education are likely to be met by the proposed school.

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

### *Paragraph 5, 5(a)-(d)*

- The proposed curriculum is designed to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learning about topics such as 'the society we live in' and 'the world of work' is intended to help pupils to develop their social awareness, understand the expectations of them, and reflect on their behaviour and conduct.
- The proprietor intends to give pupils opportunities to explore their imaginations and engage in weekly mindfulness tutorials. The aim of these activities is to help pupils to reflect on what they have achieved, discuss what they could do to improve further, consider the lives of others and contribute fully to school life.
- Personal social, health and economic education (PSHE) is included in all of the planned curriculum themes. This has been carefully mapped to ensure that pupils experience all aspects of PSHE. Thematic learning will be used to teach pupils about fundamental British values and the importance of cultural differences and diversity.
- Weekly enrichment activities will provide opportunities for pupils to work and play together, develop healthy lifestyles and gain in confidence. The off-site visits that are planned to take place each half-term are intended to broaden pupils' cultural understanding of the people who live and work around them.
- This independent school standard is likely to be met by the proposed school.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- The safeguarding policy was reviewed in 2020 and reflects the latest statutory guidance.
- Both of the designated safeguarding leads have undertaken suitable training.
- A range of policies are in place to manage pupils' health and safety, promote their well-being and keep them safe.
- All new staff will receive child protection training and further training in overseeing pupils' mental health as part of their induction when they start work in the school.
- As part of the school's admissions procedures, a range of assessments will take place to gauge pupils' prior learning, experiences and SEMH needs. This information will inform pupils' learning and personal needs.

#### *Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 10*

- Suitable policies are in place for managing behaviour, positive handling, pupil exclusions and preventing bullying. Procedures are in place for recording behaviour incidents.

#### *Paragraph 11, 12, 13, 16(a), 16(b)*

- All the necessary policies and risk assessments are in place to manage the health and safety of pupils on the premises, manage hazards on site and keep pupils safe when they leave the school site during the day.
- The school has a first aid policy and a book to record accidents.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- The ratio of pupils to staff will generally be two pupils to one adult, which is suitable to support the proposed provision.

#### *Paragraph 15*

- An attendance and admissions register is in place, ready to record all of the necessary information as pupils enrol or leave the school.
- The nine independent school standards for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are likely to be met by the proposed school.

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

#### *Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)-(f), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a)-(d), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a)-(c)*

- Two trustees have undertaken training in safer recruitment.
- Personnel files show that all of the necessary checks on staff have been made prior to them starting work in the school. For example, for newly appointed staff, two references have been received and followed up appropriately. Prohibition checks have been carried out on all teaching staff prior to the school opening.
- Staff have a range of relevant professional qualifications, experience and expertise to teach the proposed curriculum and support pupils' SEMH needs.

- Plans are in place to recruit additional staff over the next three years as the number of pupils increases.

- The school does not use supply staff.

*Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a)-(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5), 21(5)(a)-(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a)-(b)*

- A single central record of employment checks is in place and shows all of the required information, including section 128 checks of the proprietor.
- The four independent school standards for the suitability of staff and proprietors are likely to be met by the proposed school.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a)-(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a)-(c)*

- Suitable toilets, with washing facilities and hot water, are provided. These are 'unisex' toilets for boys and girls that can be locked from the inside. Procedures are in place to manage this safely. There are separate arrangements for staff. A disabled toilet is available on the ground floor.
- One shower facility is available on the school site. PE lessons are planned to take place off site at three different venues. Changing rooms will be available on these sites.
- There is a medical room on the first floor which has a bed, toilet and sink.

*Paragraph 25, 26, 27, 27(a)-(b)*

- The accommodation is a converted listed building over two floors. It comprises of a reception area, five classrooms suitable for teaching practical subjects, such as food preparation, science and design technology, a library, leadership room, and a sick bay. It has a small outdoor area for PE and play.
- The building has suitable sound proofing, natural light and electric lighting, and ventilation. Emergency lighting, smoke and fire alarms and fire extinguishers are all in place and are suitably checked and maintained.
- Drinking water is readily available and adequately labelled.
- The accommodation is suitable to support the proposed curriculum, the number and age range of pupils proposed at its opening, and pupils' particular SEMH needs.
- The outside area for pupils to play is very small. The proprietor intends to open the school for nine primary-aged pupils in the first year. There is sufficient space for these pupils to learn and play outside. As the school grows and accepts more pupils, this outdoor space will not be large enough for all pupils to play safely outside at the same time.
- The proprietor acknowledges that this issue presents a challenge for the school and that further arrangements will be necessary to keep pupils safe when playing outdoors. A programme of rolling breaktimes has been formulated, but this is very new and has not been fully risk-assessed.
- The seven independent school standards for the premises and accommodation are likely to be met by the proposed school.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1)(a)-(j), 32(2), 32(2)(a)-(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a)-(g), 32(4)(a)-(c)*

- The school does not have a website.
- All of the required information is available to prospective parents in the school's published prospectus.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available to parents on request. The school prospectus provides clear guidance to parents about how to request any information they may need.
- This independent school standard is likely to be met by the proposed school.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33, 33(a)-(k)*

- A written policy for handling complaints is in place. The policy provides clear guidance on procedures, timescales, composition of the panel, representation and confidentiality.
- This independent school standard is likely to be met by the proposed school.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

*Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a)-(c)*

- Local authority officers recognise there is a need for specialist provision in the area. They support the proprietor's application for registration as an independent school.
- The proprietor is The Lotus Academy Trust. Currently, there are nine trustees in place, one of whom is the headteacher. The headteacher and her assistant headteacher have extensive experience of teaching pupils with SEND and leading specialist settings.
- The proprietor has learned from the previous pre-registration inspection and shows a suitable understanding of the independent school standards. Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that the standards are met.
- Initially, governance of the school will be fulfilled by the trust board. As the school grows, the proprietor intends to form a local governing body to oversee the school's work.
- Links have been made with a local primary academy and key support services provided by the local authority.
- This independent school standard is likely to be met by the proposed school.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's accessibility plan provides details of how all pupils can access the curriculum, premises and information effectively.

## **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	148395
DfE registration number	926/6032
Inspection number	10177407

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 status	Independent school
Proprietor	The Lotus Academy Trust
Chair	Cathleen Catt
Headteacher	Sandra Govender
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £50,000
Telephone number	01842 773 670
Website	None
Email address	ceo@lotustrust.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 to 16	5 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	not applicable	39	9

### *Reason for inspector's recommendations*

- Currently, there is sufficient space for outdoor play for the nine primary-aged pupils who will attend in the first year of opening. As the school grows to 24 pupils in its second year, and 39 pupils by the third year, this outdoor space will not be large enough for all pupils to play safely outside at the same time.
- The proprietor recognises that further actions are necessary to ensure pupils' safety outdoors. The proprietor's proposed arrangements to manage this matter are new and have not been fully risk-assessed to manage increasing numbers of pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- As the school expands, the proprietor should request a material change inspection so that the number of pupils the school is registered for can be reconsidered.

## 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	39
Number of part-time pupils	not applicable	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	not applicable	39
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	not applicable	Not yet determined
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	not applicable	Not yet determined



## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	not applicable	2
Number of part-time teaching staff	not applicable	2
Number of staff in the welfare provision	not applicable	not applicable

## Information about this proposed school

- The proprietor seeks registration with the Department for Education as an independent school to admit pupils with predominantly SEMH needs.
- The proposed proprietorial body is The Lotus Academy Trust. The trust has nine trustees.
- A previous pre-registration inspection of the proposed school took place in December 2019 on a different site in Thetford. At this time, a number of independent school standards relating to premises and accommodation were judged unlikely to be met.
- The new proposed accommodation is a converted listed building. The premises is situated at 30 Bridge Street, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3AG.
- The proprietor is seeking to establish the school for up to 39 pupils. The proprietor plans to increase pupil numbers over a three-year growth plan. In its first year, the school plans to admit nine primary-aged pupils.
- The proprietor proposes to admit pupils from Norfolk and Suffolk local authorities.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the second pre-registration inspection of the proposed school.
- The proposed school is not yet operating.
- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic of 2020. Some of the inspection was conducted remotely. This was due to changes made to inspection activity during this period of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The inspector who visited the school site met with the proprietor, the headteacher and assistant headteacher and the site manager responsible for health and safety. She toured the premises and accommodation, scrutinised the single central record and met with leaders responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including a wide range of policies and procedures, the school prospectus and other information provided by the proprietor.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from Norfolk and Suffolk local authorities.

## Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cindy Impey

Her Majesty's Inspector

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