

# Mill House School

Riverside Studios, Coventry Road, Kingsbury B78 2NP

**Inspection date**

31 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

*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)*

- Leaders have developed a comprehensive curriculum policy that includes a broad range of subjects. Leaders are determined that the proposed school will focus on academic success for all pupils as well as being a place where pupils develop personally, socially and emotionally. Leaders intend for the curriculum to be bespoke to each pupil and tailored to meet individual special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum policy is supported by appropriate long-term schemes of work and detailed plans for each subject. Leaders have given careful thought to what they want pupils to learn and be able to do. Small steps detailed in the schemes are intended to help overcome any of the barriers to learning that pupils' individual needs may present. The curriculum is suitably ambitious.
- Leaders gained extensive experience in designing curriculum plans in their previous employment. They have made sure that the curriculum for this school is broad, with an appropriate emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders see these skills as being fundamental to the future success of their pupils. Opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are woven into the curriculum plans and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are likely to study a range of subjects, including science, history and geography. Creative opportunities, such as art, music and drama, are also included. Leaders provide sufficient detail in the schemes of work that show how they will support and challenge pupils to achieve their best. Leaders are determined to maximise academic and personal achievement.
- It is proposed that pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) will be regularly timetabled. This includes health and personal well-being, living in the wider world and relationships and sex education. The scheme sets out how leaders will build pupils' resilience, well-being and positive mental health so that they leave school as

confident, well-adjusted young people who are able to make a positive contribution to society.

*Paragraphs 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii) and 2(2)(e)(iii)*

- Leaders are aspirational for their pupils and have created a well-developed careers programme so that pupils can access appropriate advice and guidance. Leaders have mapped out when and where careers advice and guidance fits for every year group. They use the Gatsby benchmarks to inform their programme and provide pupils with many and varied opportunities to consider what their future might hold.
- A specific part of the careers programme called 'Ready for work' bridges school and the workplace. It includes modules on financial awareness and money management, writing a CV, applying for a job and interview skills. Leaders aim for pupils to see the value of the work they do in school as a means to further training or employment.
- Strong links exist with local colleges, training providers and a wide range of businesses. An independent careers adviser and a local authority careers hub are also planned to support the programme. Through these links, leaders intend to challenge stereotypes and broaden pupils' horizons so that they can see what is possible.

*Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), and 3(j)*

- Leaders intend to recruit specialist teachers to work in the school. They are keen to ensure that staff have good subject knowledge.
- Leaders intend that teachers will adapt the schemes of work to meet pupils' individual needs. It is likely that teachers will be supported to use a range of teaching methods and approaches to meet the needs of the pupils. Leaders plan to provide some individual tuition or small group support to provide pupils with the extra help they may need. Various resources have already been ordered to support the delivery of the curriculum and leaders plan to purchase additional resources once pupils' individual needs are known.
- The headteacher is a highly experienced senior leader. She has high expectations and is determined to ensure the school provides each pupil with a high-quality learning experience. She has extensive experience in staff development and performance review discussions. A clear plan is in place for checking the quality of teaching and learning over time. This includes checking a wide range of evidence such as regular scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson visits.
- Leaders recognise the importance of continuing professional development and training for all the staff. A schedule of regular meetings and training sessions has been devised with a clear focus on teaching and learning.

*Paragraph 4*

- Leaders have developed a suitable assessment policy and framework. This includes a baseline assessment on entry to the school to determine pupils' academic and personal needs. There are plans for other formative and summative assessments throughout the year. The policy makes provision for these to be reported to parents.
- Leaders propose to follow a cycle of 'plan, do and review' to set appropriate targets for each pupil, particularly for those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- 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)*

- Leaders have drawn up a comprehensive scheme of work to support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils. Leaders have mapped out the elements of the scheme for each year group. Links to SMSC development are also evident in subject-specific schemes of work. The scheme links closely with the PSHE education programme and the aims of the proposed school.
- Building a school that is inclusive and provides pupils with a chance to excel is at the heart of the reasons why the leaders want to establish the school. They demonstrate a deep commitment to working with pupils who have previously struggled to access education successfully. Leaders plan to help pupils understand how they can contribute to society. This will begin by contributing to the school community and various charitable events.
- A range of extra-curricular activities are planned in order to enrich pupils' experiences and raise their aspirations. These include theatre visits, a singing club, chess club and a relaxed social session called 'cake and chat'.
- Leaders intend to provide many and varied opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of British values, different faiths and traditions.
- The school's policies make positive references to all the protected characteristics set out in legislation. Many are expanded on in schemes of work. A comprehensive visitors' policy explicitly states that pupils will not be exposed to partisan views.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

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

- Leaders have developed a whole suite of safeguarding documents. This includes a detailed safeguarding and child protection policy, a leaflet for visitors and a child protection training schedule for all staff. Safeguarding arrangements are strong, and leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of how to keep pupils safe. They have extensive experience in this area and understand how important it is to remain vigilant. They understand how to record concerns and make referrals to external agencies.
- Leaders have a suitable safeguarding policy in place. It is up to date and takes account of the latest guidance from the Secretary of State. Leaders plan to review this annually. They intend to make the policy available to parents and also to place it on the school's website. The policy indicates that pupils will learn to keep themselves safe through the PSHE curriculum. Leaders are already trained as designated safeguarding leads. Safeguarding training is included in the induction package for all new staff. It includes areas such as sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism and e-safety.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

- Leaders have developed an appropriate behaviour for learning policy. It sets out clearly how they will develop restorative practice and support pupils to develop the skills to manage their own behaviour over time. It explains the duty of care members of staff have for each pupil.
- There is a suitable anti-bullying policy that defines the different forms of bullying. It explains how staff can identify and report concerns about bullying as well as how the school will respond to such issues. This policy links with the PSHE scheme of work where pupils will be taught about bullying and supported to develop the skills to help them deal with any situation.
- Leaders have developed an appropriate system to log any incident of poor behaviour. They intend to track the nature and frequency of any behaviour incident. Leaders plan to cross-reference these with any other concerns. Leaders intend to audit incidents and concerns regularly in order to take any action necessary to prevent a reoccurrence.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

- Leaders take their responsibilities for health and safety very seriously. One of the members of the proprietor body has extensive experience and qualifications in health and safety. Leaders have a detailed and fully comprehensive health and safety policy. They have procedures in place to check the premises and address any issue. They ensure that all relevant checks are undertaken and that the premises are maintained to a good standard. This policy and practice are likely to ensure that pupils are kept safe and well.
- Fire risk management is extensive. Leaders carry out fire risk assessments, and evacuation procedures are in place. Leaders shared their records detailing the fire drills and equipment checks that have already taken place. They have notified the fire brigade of the intention to establish a school on the premises and follow the advice given. Leaders have taken appropriate action to ensure that the proposed school is likely to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- A first aid policy is in place and leaders intend to ensure that sufficient numbers of staff are trained in basic first aid procedures. First aid boxes are located in several places in the building for ease of access. Leaders shared examples of individual pupil medical plans and how they would seek parental consent for the administration of medicines where appropriate.
- A written risk assessment policy is in place. Leaders shared a range of risk assessments that have already been carried out. Leaders have a clear understanding of hazard identification and the implementation of control measures.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

*Paragraphs 14 and 15*

- The proposed school's ethos is one of inclusivity, and leaders want pupils to feel they belong from the start. They have considered how best to supervise pupils. The intention is that pupils are always with an adult. Staffing ratios will reflect this.
- Leaders have set up an admissions register to record the details of any pupils who attend the school. They understand how to set up attendance registers and are aware

of the requirements to code any absence using the official Department for Education (DfE) codes.

- Leaders have 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) and 21(6)*

- No staff have been appointed yet to the school. However, leaders have extensive experience in recruiting staff. They are trained in safer recruitment and have set up robust procedures for the recruitment of both teaching and non-teaching staff. These include checking details carefully, asking appropriate questions, and seeking two references.
- Leaders have created a single central register (SCR) ready to record the necessary information relating to staff who are likely to be employed at the school. They are clear about the pre-employment checks they are required to undertake before staff begin work at the school.
- Members of the proprietor body and board of governors will be included on the SCR. Section 128 checks have already been completed on members of the proprietor body.
- The proposed school does not intend to operate with supply teachers. However, leaders are aware of the procedures they should follow in the event of employing agency staff.
- Leaders are clear about their responsibility in carrying out checks on volunteers and external consultants who may work with the school. They have a volunteer policy in place which includes an expression of interest form as well as asking for references. Leaders plan to include volunteers on the SCR.
- 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), 25, 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a) and 28(2)(b)*

- The proposed school is situated in a building previously used as a music and recording studio. Currently, the building is used to offer alternative provision. The premises are all on one level and fully accessible to users with disabilities.
- There is a secure entrance, and access to the building is controlled. All visitors can be checked.
- The building comprises one large room designated as a classroom and hall, plus three smaller group rooms. There is a reception area that is also used as a breakout space

for group teaching and one-to-one sessions. Leaders are clear about how they will use this space to meet pupils' needs.

- There is an office space and staff and pupil toilets. The staff toilet also serves as a disabled toilet. A small kitchenette provides space to make drinks and heat meals in a microwave.
- The toilet facilities are well maintained. There is running hot and cold water that is regulated by a thermostatic mixing valve. Drinking water is readily available in a location well away from the toilets. Taps are labelled accordingly. Leaders also intend to provide bottled chilled water for pupils.
- There is no provision for changing or showers on site. Arrangements are in place for physical education to be taught at a local leisure centre where showers and changing rooms are provided.

*Paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(1)(c) and 24(2)*

- A room is available to serve as a designated medical room when required. It has a fold away bed and contains a washing facility. It is near to a toilet facility. A first aid kit is available in the room. Leaders say that the room may be used for administration purposes depending on need, but will not be used for teaching.

*Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a) and 27(b)*

- The building is maintained to a good standard. It is likely to meet all the requirements for the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Leaders work closely with the landlord to ensure that it is cleaned and looked after.
- The acoustic features and sound insulation are likely to be suitable, given the building's previous history as a recording and music studio. Lighting is good throughout the building, and there is good provision of external lighting all around the outside of the proposed school site.

*Paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)*

- Outside play space is limited but safe. It provides a quiet area for pupils to sit and chat. Leaders intend to make use of a local park for more physical breaktimes where football and basketball can be played. They also have plans to use a country park located in the immediate vicinity to provide pupils with an alternative outdoor space. Leaders are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that risk assessments are in place and that pupils are appropriately supervised when leaving the school site.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

## Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraphs 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(1)(k), 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) and 32(3)(g)*

- During this inspection, leaders shared a draft version of the proposed school website they are in the process of establishing. They are fully aware of what the school should publish on its website. They also know to provide information in an alternative format on request.

- Documentation for the website is already prepared. Information for parents includes the admissions policy and process, as well as a school prospectus. The school's values and ethos statement, complaints policy and information relating to behaviour, anti-bullying and exclusions are readily available.
- A section of the website is focused on safeguarding and mental health and well-being. It includes the safeguarding and child protection policy, and how the school will manage allegations. It names the designated safeguarding leads and provides information about external agencies that parents and pupils can contact for advice.
- Leaders have created appropriate documents ready to share pupils' progress with their parents. The annual report template identifies pupils' progress and attainment. Leaders shared with the inspector how this report will be supported by termly updates for parents. Leaders know what information they will publish on the website when reporting the school's academic performance.
- Leaders are aware of their duties in relation to EHC plans, and the provision of income and expenditure statements to local authorities.
- The draft website sets out the contact details for the school and the proprietor body. Leaders intend to include details about governance on the school's website once the governing board is fully in place.
- 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)*

- Leaders have drawn up a detailed complaints policy and procedure. Appropriate timelines and the right for parents to be accompanied at any panel hearing are included. A flow chart and complaints proforma accompany the policy. These make it easy for parents to follow the procedure and notify the school of concerns should they ever need to raise a complaint.
- Leaders understand their responsibility to keep clear written records of any complaints and the action taken to deal with them. Leaders stress that they hope to address any complaints informally in the first instance.
- Leaders have plans to ensure that the complaints policy is available on the school website once the website is up and running.
- 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 have a wealth of educational and business experience. They have worked in a range of educational settings and have been successful in various senior leadership roles. They currently run an alternative educational provision centre. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the independent school standards and have worked diligently to prepare for this inspection over the last two years.
- Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They demonstrate a deep commitment to improving the life chances of pupils who have previously struggled to be successful at

school. They have considered carefully the needs of prospective pupils and have planned an appropriate curriculum to meet them. Pupils' well-being and academic achievement are a priority for leaders, and they actively promote this in their policies and planned provision. Leaders are likely to fulfil their responsibilities to actively promote the well-being of pupils.

- Leaders are in the process of establishing a governing body to have oversight of the proposed school's work and hold leaders to account. A chair of the governing body has been identified, and leaders plan to work with the chair to recruit additional members. Leaders are keen to ensure that there is an openness and transparency in all the school's business.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.
- All of the independent standards are likely to be met in this part.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility plan fully reflects the statutory requirements.
- The policy for equality and diversity is clear about how leaders will monitor and support all of the protected characteristics. Leaders have ensured that these are made explicit in most of the school's policies. Leaders are fully aware of local contextual issues and how they need to promote equalities to help pupils cope with life situations.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met when the school opens.

## **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	148398
DfE registration number	937/6034
Inspection number	10180107

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	Special Educational Services Ltd
Directors	Claire Fyfe and Judith Little
Headteacher	Claire Fyfe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,000 to £60,000
Telephone number	07494 973 915
Website	Not in place currently
Email address	office@brightsparkslearningcentre.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

## Pupils

	<b>School's current position</b>	<b>School's proposal</b>	<b>Inspector's recommendation</b>
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11–19	11–19
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	20	20

## Pupils

	<b>School's current position</b>	<b>School's proposal</b>
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	15
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	5
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	20
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	15
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	15

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	5.5
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	6
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	2

## Information about this proposed school

- Mill House School is proposed to be an independent school for up to 20 boys and girls aged 11 to 19. The proposed school aims to open in June 2021. The proposed school is located in a single storey building previously used as a recording and music studio. The school plans to offer both full-time and part-time places.
- The proprietors currently run an alternative education provision for 11 to 18-year-olds on the proposed school site. This provision will be reduced and run alongside the independent school if registration is granted.
- The proposed school aims to offer a small, calm centre with a focus on therapeutic care, restorative behaviour management and high academic standards. Many pupils are likely to have missed substantial amounts of schooling and have significant gaps in their learning.
- The leaders propose to provide for up to 20 pupils with an EHC plan. These pupils are likely to have a range of needs, including cognitive, specific and moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health needs, and speech, language and communication needs, and those of pupils with an autism spectrum disorder.
- The school's ethos statement states that 'Mill House School aims to provide an outstanding, highly personalised educational experience for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, enabling them to overcome barriers to learning and achieve academic and personal success'.
- The school does not intend to make use of any off-site alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards if it is given permission to open. It took place during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic of 2021. All of the inspection was undertaken on site, adhering to appropriate social distancing requirements.
- This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- During the inspection, the leaders asked the inspector to reconsider the proposed pupil numbers submitted on the original application form. This was due to a change of location for the proposed school after the initial application had been submitted. A revised application was submitted to the DfE, but leaders had not amended the proposed pupil numbers at that point. The proposed building is smaller than the one originally planned for the school. Leaders proposed that the school be registered for 20 pupils, not 40 as in the original application.
- During the inspection, the inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including that associated with the curriculum, behaviour and safeguarding. She visited the proposed site of the school and toured the premises. Discussions were held with the two members of the proprietor body, one of whom is also the headteacher.
- The inspector took account of arrangements for pupils' welfare and safeguarding. This included reviewing the proposed school's safeguarding policy, checks on the suitability of staff, the health and safety policy, and fire risk assessments.

## Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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