

# Graduately-Developing-Futures

Valley View Farm, Castle Farm Road, Lytchett Matravers, Dorset BH16 6DA

**Inspection date**

8 June 2021

**Overall outcome**

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

## Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1)(a)–2(2)(i)*

- Since the previous pre-registration inspection, the proprietor and other leaders have developed their understanding of the curriculum. They now have clear plans and expectations of what they want pupils to learn in different subjects.
- The proprietor intends to use the national curriculum to ensure sufficient breadth and ambition for pupils. There are appropriate schemes of work for all subjects. These set out the sequence of knowledge that pupils should acquire.
- Leaders share a strong vision, which are they are likely to communicate well through the curriculum. They want pupils, many of whom may be demotivated when they arrive, to enjoy learning outside. Leaders rightly regard the curriculum as the means to get pupils back on track. They want pupils to live the school's motto, 'engage – motivate – inspire'.
- Leaders have started to adapt a commercial scheme for the curriculum. The recently appointed teachers are identifying where they want to adapt the scheme, so that their pupils can start to catch up as soon as the school opens. However, there are some subjects that still need further development, such as modern foreign languages and geography.
- Leaders are planning a curriculum to take full account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. Most, if not all pupils, are likely to have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, including for a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Leaders intend to use pupils' EHC plans, alongside curricular aims, to ensure that pupils are supported and challenged effectively. Teachers will adapt lessons or sequences of learning to take account of the needs of each pupil.
- Schemes of work and curriculum plans cover all required areas, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and creative

education. Pupils are likely to benefit from a rich curriculum, based on their work and experiences on the farm.

- The curriculum is designed for pupils aged between 6 to 11 years. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has systems to support pupils whose knowledge and understanding are below their chronological age. This includes helping pupils, who have fallen below age-related expectations, to catch up.
- The proprietor has taken the right steps to address previous concerns about the teaching of early reading and phonics. There is now a rigorous systematic, synthetic phonics programme in place. As a result, pupils are likely to benefit from a coherent and well-planned early reading strategy.
- Since the previous pre-registration inspection, leaders have continued to ensure that plans for a high-quality personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum remain at the heart of their work with pupils. PSHE is rightly considered to be a priority, particularly to help rebuild pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- Curriculum plans are likely to foster respect for others. Teachers have plans to encourage pupils to learn about alternative ways of living and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. For example, when COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions are lifted, leaders want to invite guest speakers to meet with pupils or take pupils out on trips to experience other faiths and religions.

*Paragraph 3,3(a)–(j)*

- Teachers will use the advice of other external partners to plan work for pupils, including behavioural therapists and educational psychologists. Consequently, lessons are likely to be planned well to take the full range of pupils' needs into account.
- The proprietor has invested in appropriate resources to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. For example, there are laptops for each pupil in computing, and the school is well resourced to fully implement its phonics programme.
- The proprietor has plans to implement timetables that will include daily mathematics and English lessons, as well as phonics. This will be supplemented by a wide range of other subjects, so pupils are likely to have fully planned and challenging timetables.
- All teachers are receiving appropriate professional development and training in phonics and early reading. This is regarded as a priority so that pupils can catch up and learn to read as quickly as possible.
- Leaders and teachers continue to expect pupils to behave well. There are appropriate school plans and policies, which, in tandem with pupils' unique learning plans, are likely to promote positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils, who already use the site as alternative provision, build positive relationships with staff. They are quick to learn about their responsibilities. For example, pupils are keen to undertake their daily duties to care for the animals. Adults continue to foster good relationships with pupils. These are enhanced through engaging in practical farm-based activities which meet the pupils' social and emotional needs.
- Curriculum plans and sequences of work clearly show leaders' intentions to promote fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law and tolerance. These

are linked to the school's PSHE curriculum, to help pupils learn more about themselves and the world around them.

#### *Paragraph 4*

- Leaders have an agreed assessment model that will check pupils' attainment and progress in each subject, as well as evaluate pupils' attitudes to learning. This combined approach will help to evaluate pupils' disposition and readiness to learn, as well as academic progress. Teachers will report to parents each term.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

#### *Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)*

- The proprietor and other leaders continue to be committed to promoting the SMSC development of pupils. This is evident in the quality of provision and activities already in place for pupils using the setting currently. Leaders' determination to 'make a difference' for the most vulnerable pupils is central to their mission.
- Staff, including those who have only recently been appointed, have a shared ambition to help pupils learn to be confident and successful individuals. The SMSC development and PSHE policies are likely to promote pupils' understanding of British values.
- The PSHE curriculum aims to teach right from wrong and respect for civil and criminal law. The school will also provide time for staff and pupils to talk and to understand the implications of a person's words and deeds. The site allows plenty of room for pupils to enjoy physical space for personal reflection and meditation.
- Leaders have plans to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Leaders will introduce activities that allow pupils to express their views and opinions. For example, the school will introduce a school council, once it is registered. As a result, pupils are likely to develop critical speaking and listening skills, to help them cope with their feelings and express their opinions.
- Leaders continue to place a strong emphasis on promoting life skills. For example, when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, leaders intend to take pupils shopping and provide other experiences to help prepare them for life beyond school and home.
- Teachers and pupils are expected to challenge stereotypes and any radical or partisan views. Pupils will be taught how to stay safe in modern Britain. It is likely that the school will effectively promote The Equality Act 2010 with regard to protected characteristics.
- The proprietor has ensured that staff are recruited and trained to work with pupils who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. As a result, adults have the expertise to work effectively with pupils experiencing difficulties or trauma.
- 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 proposed school is likely to comply with the latest safeguarding guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This includes the implementation of the safeguarding and child protection policy. Leaders, staff and

governors demonstrate the appropriate knowledge of safeguarding arrangements to keep pupils safe, including child protection.

- The proprietor ensures that all staff are trained appropriately and are eligible to work with pupils. For example, all the necessary checks of staff and governors comply with the requirements of 'Keeping children safe in education (2020)'.
- The proprietor is qualified in health and safety. For example, he is sufficiently qualified to teach others, including in areas of fire management and first aid. He brings this expertise to the working environment so that, although the site has lots of potential hazards from being on a farm, these risks are managed well.

#### *Paragraphs 9–10*

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a written behaviour policy. The policy takes full account of the vulnerable nature of the pupils attending the provision, including those with SEMH needs or autism spectrum disorder. Pupils are likely to be supported well to attend and achieve.
- Leaders promote positive behaviour. They consider the use of sanctions, including exclusions, to be a last resort. The school is likely to have effective procedures for understanding and managing pupils' behaviour.
- The school is likely to have an effective anti-bullying policy. Staff intend to promote harmonious relationships, respect and tolerance through discussion and reasoning.

#### *Paragraphs 11–12*

- The proprietor has an appropriate health and safety policy. This covers all relevant matters, including fire risk management, first aid and administering medication. Staff have a good understanding of what it takes to keep pupils safe during the school day.
- The proprietor undertakes all necessary checks and audits to ensure that the school is ready to open. Leaders take health and safety seriously, particularly given the needs of the pupils and environment in which they will work. They have taken all reasonable and practicable steps to ensure that the farm setting is a safe place.
- 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, clear emergency signs and directions for evacuation and designated fire assembly points. Alarms and other equipment are checked regularly in accordance with regulations.

#### *Paragraphs 13–15*

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a suitable first-aid policy on the school's website.
- Staff receive appropriate induction and refresher training for first aid. The proprietor is qualified to deliver this on site. As a result, staff are well trained and demonstrate good understanding to look after pupils, for example, in the event of an accident.
- Leaders anticipate that all pupils are likely to have an EHC plan. As a result, they expect that pupils will have individual supervision, as required. The proprietor has also appointed additional staff, including qualified teachers, so that there is additional capacity to cater for the needs of all pupils.

- The proprietor intends to use an online system to ensure that admission and attendance records are likely to be maintained rigorously and in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, when the school opens. This may be used for reporting to parents and the local authority, as required.

*Paragraph 16, 16(a)–(b)*

- The proprietor has ensured that there is an appropriate written risk assessment policy. This takes into account the context of the provision and the vulnerability of the pupils who for whom the school is intended.
- Leaders ensure that there are a range of relevant risk assessments in place to reduce the risk of harm for pupils, including for off-site activities. Risk assessments will be implemented for different activities, such as learning outside, feeding the animals and travel to local destinations.
- Pupils' risk assessments will take full account of their needs, including those pupils with an EHC plan. Leaders intend to review these risk assessments on a daily basis to make sure that pupils are kept as safe as possible.
- Staff will hold daily briefing sessions to review the needs of every pupil. In this way, risk assessments will be regularly checked and updated to reflect pupil's ongoing needs. This 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

*Paragraphs 18(2)–21(7)(b)*

- The proprietor is likely to ensure that all necessary pre-employment checks are completed in accordance with the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the independent school standards.
- The proprietor has an appropriate single central register (SCR) in place, in readiness for the school to open. Leaders ensure that the full range of personnel checks expected of different staff, volunteers and leaders are to be checked before they can work with pupils.
- The proprietor does not intend to use supply staff. This is to provide continuity and familiarity for pupils, as well as ensuring staff's eligibility to work safely with pupils.
- The SCR 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)(a)–29(1)(b)*

- The proprietor ensures that there are separate chemical toilets for the sole use of pupils.
- The premises have a designated space for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, including in the case of emergencies. The room allocated for this has a screen for privacy and a bed. It is located in a convenient place, adjacent to toilets with

access to running water, and near the car park (in the event of an emergency service being required). The room has a fully equipped first-aid kit.

- This school will operate on six acres of farmland. The ground, therefore, is uneven in places and could present hazards. However, the proprietor has taken all reasonable and practicable steps to mitigate this risk. For example, there are designated trails for easy access and movement around the farm.
- The premises consist of yurts, barns, polytunnels and stables for teaching and meeting rooms. These have been converted to meet their intended purpose. For example, the sensory room has been fitted with electricity and a cooling system so that pupils can go there and relax when they are feeling overwhelmed.
- Leaders ensure that the acoustic conditions are suitable for the different rooms and spaces in use on the site.
- Some of the rooms in the stable block require further work to make sure that the acoustics, light and ventilation are suitable, before these can be used as computing, and art and design rooms. The proprietor has plans to ensure these facilities will comply with the independent school standards before they are to be used by pupils. This work will not interfere with the school's readiness to open.
- The internal lighting for rooms is provided through a variety of sources, including solar lights and lamps. These enable the spaces to be appropriately lit for their purposes, including for example, reading in the yurts.
- Since the previous pre-registration inspection, the proprietor has installed external lighting to key positions on the site. This provides appropriate illumination to make travel to and around the school safe, particularly when it is dark.
- The nature of the site presents challenges with regards to basic amenities, including running hot water, drinking water and how light and heating are provided. However, the proprietor takes all reasonable and practicable steps to ensure that these are provided. For example, safe drinking water is imported each day and is readily available for pupils in many locations. Pupils are also encouraged to bring their own water bottles which can be refilled throughout the day.
- The site has two running taps for hot water. The temperature is regulated so that these do not present a scalding risk to pupils.
- Staff make effective use of the extensive grounds. The outdoor space is conducive to promoting a range of curricular activities, including physical education and games.
- There is plenty of space for pupils to relax and play outside, as well as to get involved with caring for the different animals, including pigs, alpacas, rabbits and guinea-fowl.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

## Part 6. Provision of information

### *Paragraphs 32(1)–32(4)(c)*

- Since the previous pre-registration inspection, the proprietor has created a website. This provides all relevant information about the school. The proprietor makes it clear that information on the school's website can be made available in hard copies, upon request.

- The school's website publishes the necessary information to comply with the independent school standards. For example, a written curriculum, health and safety, and behaviour policies are provided. The website also provides contact details, the complaints policy and safeguarding information, including the safeguarding and child protection policy.
- The proprietor has already ensured that the school's remote education policy is available on the school's website. This fully complies with the latest guidance, 'Review your remote education provision (January 2021)', as set out by the Department for Education.
- The proprietor's aims and vision are presented clearly on the school's website. Leaders' present their intentions to provide a positive learning experience so that pupils, who may feel lost or marginalised from previous experiences in education, can join the school and begin to rebuild their education.
- The proprietor ensures that information is available for pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Leaders have plans for reporting to parents and accounting to local authorities about the progress of every pupil. As part of this, the governing body will have systems in place for explaining how public funds are being spent on the needs of each pupil with an EHC plan.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

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

##### *Paragraph 33, 33(a)–(k)*

- The proprietor continues to have a complaints policy that fulfils the requirements of the independent school standards. The policy provides information about how to pursue formal and informal complaints, and the process for resolving these.
- The policy contains appropriate information for escalating complaints, including to a panel hearing, should this be required. The proprietor understands that the panel must include at least one member who is independent of the running of the school. The policy includes relevant timescales and guidance for what a complainant may reasonably expect as a complaint is investigated.
- It is likely that the school will take complaints seriously and record these appropriately, as part of the school's policy and practice. These records will be made available for inspection, as necessary.
- 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)*

- Since the previous pre-registration inspection in July 2020, the proprietor and governors have taken effective action to tackle the weaknesses identified in Parts 1, 5 and 8 of the independent school standards. For example, leaders have introduced an appropriate phonics programme, so that those pupils who still need it can catch up quickly.

- The proprietor and governors recognised that the challenges of being a school are far more rigorous than operating as an alternative provision. As a result, the governing body took decisive action to agree terms of reference with clear responsibilities and implement a staffing structure to meet their ambitions.
- The proprietor and governors have recently appointed four qualified teachers, including an appropriately trained SENCo and a headteacher. This adds vital knowledge and expertise to the school's senior leadership team. Consequently, the school is now able to demonstrate increased capacity to operate as a registered special school.
- The governing body has appointed a school improvement partner to provide external challenge. This will take the form of termly visits to monitor the implementation and impact of the school development plan.
- The proprietor and senior leaders are ambitious for pupils, including what they expect teachers to know for delivering the curriculum. For example, all staff must attend training to understand progression in phonics.
- Subject leaders have been appointed for English and mathematics. There is professional training and development in these subjects, including moderation with other schools. This will provide further means for external checks and balances. However, there is still some way to go before curriculum leaders for all subjects are all appointed and fully trained for their roles.
- Leaders, including governors and senior staff, now demonstrate a secure understanding of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor has policies in place that appropriately reflect the school's character and context, providing assurances that the school will keep pupils safe from harm, particularly given the complex needs and vulnerabilities that many will have.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor and leaders are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. There is a published accessibility plan that is fit for purpose.



## **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	148046
DfE registration number	838/6013
Inspection number	10196813

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 special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	GDF Consultancy.com Ltd
Chair	James Gregory
Headteacher	James Gregory
Annual fees (day pupils)	£85,000
Telephone number	07854434575
Website	<a href="http://Graduatelydevelopingfutures.co.uk">Graduatelydevelopingfutures.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:jag@gdfconsultancy.com">jag@gdfconsultancy.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

## Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	12
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who is looked after by a local authority	12
Total hours operating as a school per week	12
Total hours of teaching provided per week	12

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	6–11	6–11	6–11
Number of pupils on the school roll	12	36	12

- The inspector recommends that the maximum number admitted should not exceed 12 pupils. This is because the site can safely accommodate this number of pupils. To exceed this may potentially compromise the safety or well-being of the pupils, for example, when arriving and departing from the site.

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	12	36
Number of part-time pupils	12	36
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	12	36
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	12	36
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	12	36

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	6	8
Number of part-time teaching staff	3	3
Number of staff in the welfare provision	4	5

## Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located in Lytchett Matravers, Dorset.
- Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole local authorities are currently using the provider as an alternative provision for pupils with an EHC plan. These pupils are on short-term and reduced timetables, so the provision does not currently meet the definition of an independent school.
- The school intends to admit pupils with complex SEND needs, most prominently those with SEMH difficulties, as well as others. Some may have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils who attend the school are likely to have an EHC plan.
- The proposed school is expected to operate with a small governing body. Upon registration, the headteacher (designate) will take up the post of headteacher and the proprietor will assume the role of chief executive officer.

## Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to evaluate the provider's readiness to open as a school. The inspector checked all relevant independent school standards.
- The inspector evaluated a range of evidence, including policies and plans relating to each part of the independent school standards. The inspector scrutinised health and safety documentation, including the safeguarding and child protection policy. The inspector checked the school's staff recruitment and vetting processes, and the SCR.
- The inspector undertook a tour of the school, accompanied by the proprietor, to evaluate the suitability of the school's premises for the purposes of being a special school.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, the director of learning, the headteacher (designate) and all other recently appointed teachers, including the SENCo. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body.
- This was the third pre-registration inspection. The first took place on 18 December 2019. The second took place on 16 July 2020.
- Gradually-Developing-Futures is currently operating for up to 12 pupils as an alternative provision, all of whom have an EHC plan. The age range for this provision

is for pupils from 6 to 11 years, most of whom have an SEMH diagnosis. No pupil exceeds a maximum of between 10 and 12 hours of teaching on site, per week. During the inspection, the inspector spoke briefly with a pupil in Year 3. However, no teaching was formally observed as part of the inspection process.

### **Inspection team**

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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