

# Merrywood House Independent Special School

The Old Pheasantry, Merrywood Grove, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 7HF

**Inspection date**

11 June 2021

**Overall outcome**

**The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1)–2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h)–2(2)(i), 3–4*

- The curriculum policy, subject overviews and schemes of work set out clear aims for the younger and older pupils that the school proposes to admit in addition to the current age range. The proprietor intends to continue the approach used for the current pupils. This is a therapeutic method combined with academic learning. This approach, and the plans provided, take account of the likely needs of pupils. All pupils will have education, health and care plans for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The ethos of Merrywood Education is to 'nurture children through education'. The academic curriculum will be delivered according to pupils' prior learning and their starting points. Many pupils will have experienced trauma and have specific special educational needs linked to this. The aim is to ensure that pupils are able to become successful and happy adults in modern Britain.
- The academic curriculum is planned to deliver a wide range of learning so that pupils acquire speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematical skills appropriate for their ages. Subjects include English, mathematics, science, technology, art, music, computing, history, geography, physical education (PE) and religious education. Leaders also intend that pupils will attend leisure centres local to each campus to further their study of PE.
- Leaders intend that reading will be a priority for all pupils. To support this aim, all staff will be trained to teach a recognised phonics programme. Resources that match the programme have been purchased. As with current pupils, leaders intend that all primary-aged and many secondary-aged pupils will read to an adult and listen to stories every day.
- The plans provided indicate that, as for current pupils, all pupils will receive impartial careers learning and guidance from a range of sources. This is supported with careers education intended to encourage pupils' ambition and help them to make informed choices.

- As with the current provision, class sizes will be small, with short, one-to-one sessions for therapeutic provision or academic teaching as required. Leaders intend for all staff to be well trained and for teachers to have qualified teaching status. Leaders intend to continue their system of jointly planning and teaching with staff to enable them to monitor that the curriculum is taught as they plan. They will replicate the before- and after-school briefings and training currently held for staff at the Tadworth Campus for those at the Sandmartin Campus.
- A wide range of staff development is planned, from safeguarding to behaviour management and subject-specific training. An assistant headteacher has been appointed to oversee the work at Sandmartin Campus and the executive headteacher will travel between both campuses.
- Leaders intend to continue to engage the services of specialists, including an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist and occupational therapists. They intend this provision to underpin pupils' progress in all aspects of their education.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

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

### *Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)*

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is intended to be promoted through the 'personal education' curriculum. This covers relationships and sex education and social, health and economic education. Pupils will learn about wider British society and values. For example, they will consider the democratic process and how laws are made in England. Leaders have put in place well-considered checks to ensure that political issues will be discussed and covered in a balanced way.
- The plans for personal education and tutorial sessions indicate that regard is paid to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. Pupils will be taught to respect others, including those with different religious beliefs or sexual orientations.
- Many of the intended activities aim to develop pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence and help them to navigate the wider world. Leaders intend the whole educational approach will help pupils to consider their behaviours and develop strategies to support their successful interaction with others. They aim that pupils will transition successfully to other special or mainstream schools when they leave Merrywood.
- Leaders have considered skills and attributes required for independent adulthood and aim to develop these from an early stage. Leaders have clear plans to adapt and extend their current work to meet the needs of the proposed younger and older pupils.
- The requirements in this part are likely to be met.

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

### *Paragraph 7–7(b)*

- The proprietor is the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). She has a team of deputy DSLs. All are trained to the appropriate level and display strong understanding of the

requirements of the role.

- The written policy and associated procedures to safeguard and protect pupils are detailed and take account of national requirements and local safeguarding partners. Leaders show a strong awareness of the potential safeguarding risks associated with the local contexts and have set out well-informed mitigations and responses.
- Leaders will continue their routine safeguarding training and updates with all staff. For example, alongside formal face-to-face and online training, leaders currently hold daily discussions about pupils. In these, staff consider possible scenarios and share any relevant information. Leaders aim to promote a keen awareness of the need to be alert and to share all niggles that might help to inform the bigger picture about each pupil.

*Paragraphs 11, 12, 14, 16–16(b)*

- The proprietor has adapted the current health and safety policy to take account of the intended admission of younger and older pupils than the school is currently registered to admit at Tadworth Campus. The proposed actions and checks are well considered and cover relevant requirements.
- The proprietor has published a comprehensive health and safety policy for the proposed Sandmartin Campus. This is equally detailed and based on relevant requirements and external specialist advice. Appropriate routine checks are planned and will be recorded clearly.
- The Sandmartin Campus has been recently refurbished. This work includes a new fire safety system, fire doors and extinguishers throughout. A qualified fire assessor has produced a full assessment of both sites and certified their compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The proprietor has made sure that these assessments inform the school's risk assessments and routine checks.
- Alongside the overall school risk assessment policy, leaders have produced various risk assessments for buildings, activities and pupils. These are appropriately detailed and take full account of specialist advice and the context of the school.
- Leaders have appointed suitably qualified staff and aim to continue this approach. For example, the proprietor intends to only appoint teachers who hold qualified teacher status. Teachers will be supported by a range of experts, such as behaviour specialists and therapists. The proposed supervision for pupils is appropriate at both sites.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

*Paragraphs 18(2)–18(3), 19(2)–19(3), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(6)*

- The proprietor has a strong understanding of the requirements for appointing staff to work with children. The proprietor will continue to make required checks before any adult works with pupils. These checks are recorded on a single central register. They include confirming identity, medical fitness, qualifications and background.
- Leaders do not intend to use supply staff but know what checks will be required if they need such personnel. Alongside the required safeguarding checks, they will ensure that they are satisfied as to their suitability before allowing them to work with

pupils.

- Required checks have also been made and recorded for the members of the advisory board. Occasional visitors, such as specialists coming to assess pupils and adults helping with a learning activity or providing independent careers advice, will be required to confirm their identity and disclosure and barring service information. This information will be checked, and they will be accompanied by a member of staff when they are working with pupils, whether physically in the school or communicating via video call.
- It is likely that the requirements in this part will be met.

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

*Paragraphs 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2), 25–29(1)(b)*

- The Tadworth Campus is already registered and meets the standards for seven to 11 year olds. Classrooms and facilities are appropriate for the younger and older age ranges that the school proposes to admit. Appropriate adaptations have been made to resources and spaces to make sure that the proposed younger pupils will be suitably accommodated. There are no changing or showering facilities on site but leaders propose to continue taking pupils to the local leisure centre for PE and activities that will require such facilities.
- The Sandmartin Campus is a recently refurbished premises that was originally designed and built as a special school. Rooms are light and bright with good acoustics. Leaders have allocated spaces thoughtfully, providing for a wide range of activities. There are specialist rooms for technology, cooking and science. All key stages have a sensory room and therapy spaces. All areas will be furnished to a high standard, with fittings and fixtures appropriate for the ages and needs of the pupils. There is secure entry and exit to the site.
- There are separate toilet facilities for pupils and adults in each site, all clearly marked as such. Sandmartin has an accessible toilet that may be utilised by pupils and adults, as per regulations. All toilet facilities have a ready supply of hot and cold running water. The boiler at Sandmartin Campus is recently serviced and the hot water in one side of the building had to be reduced in temperature during the visit. At this site, there is a facility for pupils to change and shower, but leaders intend to make use of the local leisure centre for PE so pupils will more routinely use those facilities.
- Both sites have medical rooms with washing and toilet facilities. However, at Sandmartin, leaders plan to have washing facilities installed in a room with better communication that will make for easier supervision of pupils who are unwell. Medicines will be kept in a locked cabinet and administered by suitably trained staff.
- The Tadworth Campus is set in a generous wooded area. This has been arranged into zones for pupils to play and to learn. The pond is securely fenced off, as is the shared, open lawned area that is shared with a provider that does not operate during school hours. Pupils are supervised in all these areas.
- At the Sandmartin Campus, the immediate outside is a compact but safe space. Leaders intend to provide appropriate resources for all age ranges of pupils. Different age groups will use the space at different times and be supervised. There is also a community space just outside the school that leaders plan to use. They have clear

plans for supervision and risk assessment for when this is used. External lighting is well placed and aids safe entry and exit to the premises.

- In both sites, drinking water is readily available and clearly marked as such.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has produced accessibility plans for both campuses. These were adapted on the day of the inspection. They set out appropriate steps to ensure that disabled pupils have access to the school's curriculum, physical environment and information.

## **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.

## School details

Unique reference number	147600
DfE registration number	936/6035
Inspection number	10192166

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Trauma-informed therapeutic school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Merrywood Education Ltd
Headteacher	Miss Michelle Quayle (executive headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£56,400
Telephone number	01737 336352
Website	merrywood.org.uk
Email address	admissions@merrywood.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	7 to 11	5 to 13	5 to 13
Number of pupils on the school roll	17	60 in total (16 at Tadworth Campus and 44 at Sandmartin Campus)	60 in total, being split between 16 at Tadworth Campus and 44 at Sandmartin Campus.

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	17	60
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	17	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	17	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	17	60

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	18	34
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0

## Information about this school

- Merrywood House Independent Special School is for pupils aged seven to 11 years. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority, which funds their place. All pupils have complex social, emotional and mental health needs, often linked to adverse childhood experiences and trauma. All have an education, health and care plan. All have a medical diagnosis, such as autism spectrum disorder or depression.
- The school is currently based at: Merrywood House School, The Old Pheasantry, Tadworth KT20 7HF. The proprietor has recently overseen the refurbishment of a second site, approximately 10 miles away: Sandmartin Campus, Sandmartin Way, Wallington SM6 7DF. It is intended that pupils will be based at one or other campus, depending on their needs, but they might access facilities at either site. For example, the Tadworth Campus has extensive grounds that pupils at Sandmartin Campus might travel to use. Pupils do not attend alternative provision.



- In January 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) approved a temporary increase of capacity for an additional pupil from January 2021 until 30 July 2021, taking the total number of pupils on roll to 17.
- The school opened in December 2019. The executive headteacher is the sole director of the proprietor body, Merrywood Education Ltd. She is supported by two assistant headteachers and intends to base one at each site. There is an advisory board providing challenge and support to the proprietor.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to the proprietor's initial request to increase the number of pupils from 16 to 18 and expand the age range (currently seven to 11 years) to take pupils from ages five to 13. When the inspector notified the proprietor of the inspection, the proprietor informed Ofsted that the new building was ready for inspection and they would be applying for a material change to increase the admission number to 60 pupils. In discussion, it was decided to consider all changes in one visit.
- The inspector toured both school sites with the proprietor and met a range of school staff, including the assistant headteachers. She spoke to the chair of the advisory council by telephone and two members of the advisory council via video call. The inspector also spoke with pupils at the Tadworth Campus. She reviewed a range of relevant documents provided by leaders and from the school's website.

## Inspection team

Lucy English, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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