

# Fernways School

Hatton Hill, Windlesham GU20 6AB

**Inspection date**

8 July 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 1 and 2*

- Pupils coming to Fernways will have social, emotional and mental health needs associated with autism spectrum disorder. Leaders intend the curriculum to focus on preparing pupils for their future lives, specifically through developing their social interaction and communication skills. Leaders' planned approach combines therapies and social skills work with experience of a range of different subjects. This approach looks likely to meet the needs of the pupils that the school intends to admit.
- Pupils will study a broad range of subjects, in line with those covered by the national curriculum. Leaders' long-term plans incorporate a similar depth of knowledge as might be seen in a mainstream provision. This knowledge is intended to be the vehicle through which pupils will develop the communication skills and wider attributes to be successful once they leave the school. Pupils will work towards achieving external accreditations, including in English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11.
- The headteacher describes current subject planning as being a starting point. She intends curriculum provision to develop over time, in response to pupils' emerging needs and adapting to account for gaps in pupils' learning. What is currently in place is fit for purpose, adopting and building on what has been seen to work well in other Kedleston schools.
- Leaders have prioritised getting high-quality English and mathematics provision in place. Subject specialists have been appointed to join the school in September 2021, bringing useful experience and expertise of working in specialist settings. Plans for supporting pupils in the early stages of reading have been thoughtfully considered, incorporating the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics.
- Medium-term planning shows pupils revisiting key themes year on year. This is intended to give pupils the chance to revisit, practise and develop what they have learned before, often via a different context. This approach looks likely to be a manageable way of working with mixed-age classes, where pupils may have different learning priorities. It also looks set to enable teachers to quickly identify and address gaps in learning for pupils joining the school mid-year.

- Pupils will follow a programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) as part of their weekly routine. Leaders plan to build on learning from these formal sessions during assemblies and tutor sessions. PSHE plans are well thought out, incorporating relevant and age-appropriate topics in a coherent way. Careers information, advice and guidance is integral to these plans.

#### *Paragraphs 3 and 4*

- Leaders intend growing the school slowly over time. Plans for staffing reflect this intention. Initial plans for how pupils will be grouped and taught are sensible. Staff have sufficient expertise to deliver the planned curriculum when the school first opens. The headteacher has already considered the likely next stages of staff's recruitment, prioritising the need to appoint someone with science expertise in the near future.
- Leaders have given careful thought to how they will identify pupils' learning and development needs when they join the school. They are alert to the importance of acquiring as full a picture as possible, supplementing information from pupils' education, health and care plans with what they can glean from pupils, their families and previous schools where relevant. Their planned admissions procedures look likely to enable them to do this successfully.
- The planned curriculum reflects and supports the promotion of fundamental British values. Tolerance and respect are central to the school's intended ethos. A range of cultures and faiths are represented within the topics that leaders plan for pupils to study.
- Leaders intend adopting an assessment approach that has been successful in other Kedleston schools. This looks likely to give them accurate and useful information about how well pupils are learning. It also looks set to be able to help teachers to identify precisely what pupils need to learn next.
- Leaders have ensured that this part of the independent school standards is likely to be met.

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

### *Paragraph 5*

- Leaders place great value on this aspect of the proposed school's provision. They recognise that pupils' future success will depend on how well they develop personally, as much as on the subjects that they learn. As such, they have planned the school's provision with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at the core.
- The headteacher is determined that learning about different cultures and beliefs will be all about 'living it, not just sticking it on the curriculum'. She gives convincing examples of how this has been planned in across the range of experiences that pupils will have while at the school. For example, pupils will find out about the history of dreamcatchers and green men while participating in forest schools. They will come together to celebrate significant events in each other's cultures and in British society more generally.
- The planned religious education curriculum gives pupils the opportunity to explore a range of beliefs and philosophies. Central to this, leaders intend providing pupils with

the chance to explore their own views, recognising that their thinking counts and matters.

- Pupils are likely to have been absent from formal education for a while before joining the school. As a result, their social development will be of paramount importance. Careful thought has been given to how staff will ensure that pupils have the opportunity to interact with each other, especially during the early stages when numbers on the school site are likely to be low.
- Leaders have made initial attempts to reach out to the local community, seeing this as an important part of the school's work. They have lots of ideas for how they anticipate involving pupils in charitable work, bringing knowledge of what they have implemented successfully in other settings.
- Leaders are mindful of how important it will be for staff to be skilled and knowledgeable about the PSHE curriculum they will be delivering. They have planned helpful and ongoing training and checks on quality. They anticipate this will enable them to react swiftly to strengthen any areas of emerging relative weakness.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if granted permission to open.

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

#### *Paragraphs 6 and 7*

- Leaders' strong focus on pupils' well-being is evident through all aspects of their planning for this proposed school. It reflects clearly in their planned safeguarding arrangements.
- The written safeguarding policy is published on the proposed school's website. It provides a detailed and helpful reference point for all those involved in keeping pupils safe. It accurately reflects current legislation and aligns with local authority arrangements.
- The headteacher will be the school's designated safeguarding lead. She will be supported by two other named colleagues. While leaders have already completed relevant training, they intend doing more training early in the autumn term to ensure that their knowledge is sufficiently secure.
- The proprietor body lends useful expertise and help to the school's safeguarding work. As well as supporting school leaders in training other staff, it has well-developed plans for monitoring the quality of the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders have identified appropriate methods for recording and reviewing worries that arise about pupils. These place them able to act promptly if concerns start to build over time. Links to safeguarding experts beyond the school look likely to help ensure that leaders make timely decisions about when pupils may need extra support.

#### *Paragraphs 9 and 10*

- Leaders' intentions to promote positive behaviours are reflected in a range of relevant written policies. These include specific arrangements around the use of exclusion and restrictive physical interventions, should these be necessary as a last resort. Of greater prominence, is their strong emphasis on helping pupils to make the right

choices about how to behave and on helping teachers understand how to de-escalate situations that may arise.

- The anti-bullying strategy reflects the school's focus on pupils' social and emotional development. It places suitable emphasis on preventing the likelihood of bullying incidents, through consistent promotion of respectful relationships.
- The system being used to monitor safeguarding concerns also applies to incidents of behaviour and alleged bullying. This has the potential to allow leaders to easily see any emerging patterns in negative behaviour, such as those linked to particular times of the day or week. They also provide a useful way for leaders and proprietors to identify emerging strengths or improvements in pupils' conduct.

#### *Paragraphs 11, 12 and 16*

- Planned routines around health and safety are rigorous and thorough. The proprietor body's expertise and experience in this area shines through. As such, the proposed school is well placed to fulfil this aspect of their role.
- Written policies for health and safety and risk assessment are published on the school website. They comprehensively identify expectations of staff, leaders and named representatives within the proprietor body. They emphasise that health and safety is everyone's responsibility.
- The proprietor body has made sure that generic risk assessments are already in place. These cover a range of risks linked to the premises and likely activities that pupils will undertake. Leaders plan to complete risk assessments for each pupil as part of their induction to the school.
- A fire risk assessment has been carried out by the development and estates manager, who is suitably qualified to complete out this task. Firefighting equipment is ready to be put in place and fire call points have been installed. An external assessor is due to come and complete a final fire risk assessment in the coming weeks, prior to the school's planned opening date.
- The school will have its own site manager who will have daily responsibility for health and safety arrangements. The proprietor body has clearly defined expectations for the tasks that the site manager will be expected to undertake at prescribed intervals. The proprietor body already has systems in place that enable it to check that activities are carried out as expected. It intends employing these systems in the proposed school.

#### *Paragraph 13*

- Arrangements for administering first aid are fit for purpose. They are captured in a written first-aid policy, which is published on the website. This policy considers relevant actions such as management of possible fractures, medical issues, illness and infection control. It also identifies how leaders and the proprietor body will monitor any incidents that may occur.
- Leaders intend for all staff to receive first-aid training. This is planned to be completed before the school opens its doors to pupils. This will provide sufficient cover for managing any first-aid incidents that may occur.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- Initially, leaders intend to open the school with a very small number of pupils. As such, the number of staff planned for September 2021 is sufficiently high to provide good levels of supervision of pupils. As the school grows over time, leaders anticipate keeping class sizes small. This will help to support supervision arrangements.
- Leaders have appropriate plans for supervising pupils outside of lesson times. They have thought about how to manage the start and end of each day, to ensure that pupils move safely to and from the taxi they arrive in. Supervision arrangements incorporate opportunities for staff to take breaks during the day.

#### *Paragraph 15*

- An admissions register is in place, ready to receive information about pupils once they are accepted onto the school roll. The register provides space to collect and record all of the information that schools are required to keep. Admissions procedures map out how information will be collected when leaders consider requests for pupils to join the school.
- Pupils will be registered as they are collected from their taxi at the start of each day. Attendance information will be stored electronically, using the same system intended for monitoring safeguarding and behaviour concerns. This looks likely to support leaders and proprietors in monitoring patterns in pupils' attendance over time.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

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

#### *Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21*

- Relevant school leaders are trained in safer recruitment procedures. Leaders understand the checks they are required to carry out on prospective employees. The proprietor body lends useful support to school leaders in ensuring that these checks are done rigorously and in a timely way. The headteacher's ownership of the recruitment process is clearly defined.
- Current staff and proprietor body representatives have been suitably vetted. Checks are in the process of being carried out for other members of staff who have recently been appointed and are yet to start work.
- The single central register of recruitment checks is fit for purpose. It captures all of the information that leaders are required to collate for staff, visitors and relevant proprietor body personnel. It indicates that leaders give this aspect of their work due diligence.
- This part of the independent school standards is likely to be met if the school is permitted to open.

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

#### *Paragraphs 22 to 31*

- The proposed school is based in a building which has previously been a school and a nursery. The building has undergone extensive refurbishment to make it fit for purpose. It comprises eight general classrooms, plus specialist rooms for art, science

and food technology. There is also a school hall, library space, three sensory rooms and a break-out space for key stage 2 pupils.

- The school building has been refurbished to a high standard. Lighting and acoustics contribute well to a conducive environment for learning. Spaces are clean, bright and suitable for the intended number of pupils. Specialist rooms look set to provide appropriate facilities for the subjects they are intended for. The art and science rooms are suitable to be used as additional general teaching classrooms if needed.
- Suitable toilet facilities are in place for the number of pupils the school wishes to accommodate. There are separate facilities for use by adults and disabled people. All facilities have hand-washing facilities. The hot water supply has temperature limiters fitted to prevent the risk of scalding. There are also two changing rooms available for pupils to use for physical education, each of which includes a shower.
- A small medical room is situated on the ground floor, close to an accessible toilet. This incorporates a suitable space for pupils to lie down and hand-washing facilities for hygiene control. Leaders intend fitting a secure medicine cabinet on the wall in this space, in the event that pupils require administration of controlled medicines during the school day.
- All of the water on the school site is supplied from the mains and is suitable for drinking. Nevertheless, leaders intend labelling the taps in the toilet facilities as not for drinking. They plan to install a drinks fountain in the school hall, which is constantly accessible to pupils and will also be used for mealtimes.
- There is outside space to the rear of the school building, which is exclusively for use by pupils. Leaders have divided this up thoughtfully to meet the needs of the different age groups the school intends to accommodate. There is a dedicated space sectioned off outside the key stage 2 classrooms, intended to be used as an outside learning area.
- At the time of this visit, work was being done to install a multi-use games area at the end of the garden, with subsequent work planned to turf the remaining outside space. There are also plans to install a 'trim trail' and some outside gym equipment, with all work expected to be finished by the end of July 2021. In the meanwhile, there is a completed courtyard which provides a suitable space for pupils to play and exercise outside.
- Leaders have considered how they can manage pupils' arrival and departure in a safe way. They are aware of the risks linked to the school building being very close to the road, which experiences reasonable levels of traffic. They have identified a 'drop-off' loop that will enable taxis to pull off the main road in order for pupils to alight and be escorted safely into the building. All of the space to the front of the school will be inaccessible to pupils during the day. It mainly provides parking space for staff.
- Leaders have ensured that this part of the independent school standards is likely to be met.

## Part 6. Provision of information

### *Paragraph 32*

- The proposed school already has a dedicated section on the proprietor body's website. This provides an easy way for prospective pupils, their parents and carers and referring local authorities to find out about the school.
- The school's intended ethos is captured clearly on the website. Admissions information is supported by a prospectus that is easily found and understood. Up-to-date versions of all of the required policies are published on the website. These include contact details for the school and proprietor body, the child protection policy and information about the intended curriculum.
- Leaders demonstrate being aware of the information they are required to provide to relevant stakeholders, including parents, prospective parents and local authorities who place pupils at the school. Websites for other schools in the Kedleston Group show that leaders are alert to other information they will need to publish once the school is open, such as the number of complaints and pupils' academic performance.
- This part of the independent school standards is likely to be met if the school is permitted to open.

## Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

### *Paragraph 33*

- The written compliments and complaints policy is published on the school website. It incorporates all of the information that leaders are required to share with pupils and parents. It puts pupils' thoughts and views at its heart.
- Arrangements for addressing concerns are appropriate and detailed. They provide the opportunity for issues to be resolved informally, or to be referred on to more formal action. The policy gives useful information about how each stage will work and how long it will take. It gives the opportunity for pupils to be represented by an advocate, should this be wanted. It also provides potential complainants with a route to take their complaints beyond the organisation if wished, suggesting a desire to act in pupils' best interests.
- Leaders look likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

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

### *Paragraph 34*

- At the time of this inspection, the headteacher remains in a leadership post at another school. She is due to leave that post very soon to take up her role at Fernways. Despite these current additional commitments, she demonstrates a strong vision for the education that the school intends to provide and how this responds to pupils' likely needs. She brings useful education and leadership expertise to her new role.
- The proprietor body is providing helpful expertise and support during the set-up phase of the proposed school. For example, the deputy headteacher has been seconded from another Kedleston school. He provides useful support to the headteacher, bringing knowledge of the systems and structures that the proprietor body uses

successfully in its other schools. This is helping to get the school ready to receive pupils, should it be granted permission to open.

- Arrangements for governance look likely to be rigorous and effective. Layers of leadership within the Kedleston Group identify specific responsibilities for monitoring standards in the school and for challenging leaders about the quality of what is on offer. Opportunities for leadership development and networking with other independent school providers are already established, providing a potential source of information and support for the new headteacher.
- Proprietor body representatives are knowledgeable about their work. They have devised ways of checking that the independent school standards are met as part of their routine monitoring of each of their schools. These routines are in the process of being put in place for this proposed school.
- Throughout this inspection, leaders' understanding of, and focus on, pupils' needs has been evident. A sense of moral purpose drives their work. As such, pupils' well-being is at the centre of every aspect of the plans for this proposed school.
- This part of the independent school standards looks likely to be met.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have written and published an equality and diversity policy. This gives a clear and appropriate indication of how leaders intend fulfilling their duties under the Equality Act 2010. It demonstrates that leaders understand what is required of them.
- The proprietor body has a structure in place across its schools to help leaders translate the intentions from the equality and diversity policy into a written accessibility plan. This piece of work is yet to be undertaken at Fernways. This is because, at the time of the inspection, work to complete the outside areas of the school is not quite complete. Once this is done, leaders intend walking the site before writing the final plan. This is so that they can make sure they identify and address any potential barriers to accessing any part of the school site.



## **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	148631
DfE registration number	936/6051
Inspection number	10193358

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
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Kedleston Schools (London) Ltd
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Hannah Stroud
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,795
Telephone number	01276 402 131
Website	<a href="http://www.kedlestongroup.com/our-schools-homes/day-schools/fernways-school/home">www.kedlestongroup.com/our-schools-homes/day-schools/fernways-school/home</a>
Email address	Fernways@kedlestongroup.com

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	50	50

## 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	50

Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	50
Of which, number of pupils an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 50
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 50

### Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	11
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	2

### Information about this proposed school

- Fernways School intends providing full-time education for pupils aged seven to 16. All pupils will have an education, health and care plan, with autism spectrum disorder as a primary need. Pupils are likely to have significant social, emotional and mental health needs linked to their diagnosis. They may not have attended a school setting for a period of time before joining the school. Pupils will be referred to the school by a local authority, which will pay their fees.
- The proposed school is based in a small Surrey village, close to the borders with Hampshire and Berkshire. The school will have sole occupancy of the building and outside space to the rear.
- Kedleston Schools (London) Ltd is responsible for the school's governance. It is the proprietor body for a group of schools and children's homes across England. All of these settings cater for children and young people with autism spectrum disorder and/or social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not intend having a particular religious character.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education. It was in response to the proprietor body's request to open a school. All of the independent school standards were considered.
- This is the first pre-registration inspection carried out for this proposed school. It is not currently operating as a school.
- The inspector considered a full range of evidence about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. She met in person with the school's deputy headteacher and the regional director for the Kedleston Group. She spoke via videocall with the headteacher, who was self-isolating at home at the time of the inspection. She toured the school site and reviewed relevant policies and other documents. She also spoke with the development and estates manager for the Kedleston Group and with the chief executive officer as representative of the proprietor body.

## Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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