

The Outdoors School

Straw Barn, Barton Lane, Shillingford Abbot, Exeter, Devon EX2 9QQ

Inspection date

19 August 2021

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2

- Leaders have designed and implemented a unique curriculum offer. The offer has the needs and attributes of the pupils who attend the school at its centre. Leaders have appropriate experience of education, including in specialist settings. They have used this experience, and the vision of directors, to develop a clear and appropriate curriculum policy. The policy appears on the school website alongside other related policies. There are clear and appropriate plans that supplement these curriculum policies. They reflect the aims and values that underpin leaders' vision and have fundamental British values weaved throughout them.
- As well as the headteacher and deputy headteacher, there is a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and inclusion officer. Together, they have developed systems and processes to ensure that the curriculum and organisation of the school meet the individual needs of each learner.
- All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Curriculum planning considers the range of needs of the pupils. Pupils learn through six distinct areas that have equal weighting and allow pupils to progress academically, as well as in their personal development, self-esteem and self-regulation. The curriculum offer is appropriately broad and balanced. Plans to extend provision to include key stage 4 pupils are well conceived. They are rightly designed to build on the successes many pupils have had since arriving at the school. Personal, social and health education is one of the six distinct areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils benefit from learning opportunities that marry up with the school's aims and visions and the expectations of the independent school standards.
- Careers advice and work experience are already integral parts of the curriculum offer. Detailed provision is ready for pupils who are about to enter Year 9. Leaders have appropriate plans to build on this further if the material change is granted. For example, leaders intend to use the Gatsby benchmarks to ensure that their curriculum

offer meets expectations. There are also plans to work collaboratively with local settings to add value to the careers advice that pupils can already draw on.

Paragraph 3

- Teaching at the school facilitates the successful implementation of the well-designed curriculum. Leaders have strengthened their recruitment processes to ensure that they appoint the right people, with the right skills, to make this possible. The skills and experience of teachers include expertise across all subjects of the national curriculum. Teachers are well qualified. They use well-conceived planning to deliver lessons, aimed to secure progress for individual pupils.
- New teachers benefit from a lengthy induction process. This allows them to understand the expectations of the school and the needs of learners. Consequently, teachers are well placed to succeed when teaching the pupils, many of whom have multiple, complex needs. The same teachers will deliver the curriculum to older pupils should the material change be granted.

Paragraph 4

- Leaders have developed a useful and wide-ranging system for assessing pupils' work and progress over time. When pupils arrive at the school, leaders have useful processes for assessing pupils' needs. These include baselining pupils' attainment and checking any barriers they have to learning. These assessments are carried out across the first term after the pupils arrive. From this, end-of-year targets are agreed, utilising the detail within the education part of pupils' EHC plans. Leaders and teachers then use this information to assess pupils' progress, ensuring that they regularly review this with pupils and their parents in order to keep them ambitious and relevant. Leaders intend to use these established processes with older pupils should the material change be granted. Furthermore, leaders have already organised how they will ensure that pupils can complete relevant qualifications in key stage 4. Depending on their abilities, pupils will have access to GCSEs, ASDAN and functional skills qualifications.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5

- Leaders, including directors, have ensured that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of pupils will be met. The curriculum is well considered, balanced and carefully designed to meet the needs of individual pupils. The design of the curriculum and its successful implementation mean that pupils develop improved social skills rapidly once they start at the school.
- As part of the curriculum, pupils benefit from regular assemblies. Assemblies are either delivered to small groups or as a whole school. Whole-school assemblies include assemblies where pupils' successes are celebrated. Leaders, also, utilise whole-school assemblies to cover important elements of the personal, social and health education curriculum.
- Opportunities to learn in the natural world are a central element of the curriculum. As a result, pupils benefit from plentiful opportunities for self-exploration within the

natural world. This means that there are regular opportunities within the curriculum to promote spirituality, such as the 'sit spot' activity when learning in the woodland.

- All elements of the current curriculum will be included in the design of the curriculum for older pupils.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- Leaders at all levels, including directors and senior leaders, work effectively together to achieve their vision to provide an alternative approach to education for pupils who struggle within mainstream learning. They continually strive to find ways to improve how the school can effectively meet the needs of pupils. This has led to leaders' request to extend provision so that pupils who have benefited from their approach already can continue to do so.
- Leaders' actions and plans for improvement and development give appropriate consideration to the independent school standards. Leaders can already demonstrate the positive impact of the alternative approach to learning that they offer. For example, in considering their plans for the proposed material change, they have rightly looked at ways to broaden how careers advice is offered and woven into the curriculum.
- Governance arrangements are a strength. Both directors act as governors and hold leaders to account for the success of the school. For example, the headteacher and other leaders provide regular reports that include detailed information about key elements of provision. The headteacher's report includes important information relating to safeguarding. This allows directors to understand in detail how often there are incidents of poor behaviour, how they were handled, what triggered the incident and how it was resolved.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	146200
DfE registration number	878/6075
Inspection number	10203268

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	The Outdoors Group Ltd
Chair	Shevek Pring
Headteacher	Mrs Robyn Vincent
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000 to £64,000
Telephone number	01392 832 632
Website	www.outdoorsgroup.co.uk/outdoorsschool
Email address	admin@theoutdoorsschool.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	10 to 12 March 2020

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 14	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	33	Not applicable	Not applicable

Pupils

	School's current position
Gender of pupils	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	31
Number of part-time pupils	2
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	33
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	33
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	33

Staff

	School's current position
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	12
Number of part-time teaching staff	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	55

Information about this school

- The Outdoors School is an independent special school. Pupils who attend the school all have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils typically have social, emotional and mental health needs and/or autism spectrum disorders.
- Leaders' vision for the curriculum is based on forest school principles and restorative education. Teaching takes place outdoors.
- The school caters for pupils between the ages of seven and 14. There are currently 33 pupils on the school's roll. Leaders propose to raise the age range to 16. The maximum number of pupils on roll will remain at 90.
- Currently, all pupils have an education, health and care plan funded by Devon County Council.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education in order to consider the school's request for a material change.
- The purpose of the inspection was to consider whether leaders' proposal to extend the age range the school caters for would be likely meet the independent school standards. This was the school's second material change inspection.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with one of the proprietors, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENCo and the school administrator.
- The inspector scrutinised curriculum planning, reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including policies and procedures and information relating to the management of pupils' behaviour, including records maintained by school staff.
- The inspector also reviewed material available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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