

Acorn Park School

Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, Norfolk NR16 2HU

Inspection date

21 September 2021

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The requirements for this independent school standard were met at the standard inspection in February 2020 and the first progress monitoring inspection in February 2021. Leaders have continued to ensure that pupils are safe and that their welfare is well managed.
- Since the previous progress monitoring inspection, the school's safeguarding and child protection policy has been updated. It reflects the latest statutory requirements, including the September 2021 'Keeping children safe in education' update. It is published on the school's website.
- All visitors sign in at reception on arrival before being permitted to enter the school. Visitors always wear a visitors' badge and lanyard while on site. Appropriate checks are made on visitors to the school.
- There is a culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff's training is up to date. Leaders have systems in place to check that staff have understood the latest statutory guidance in order to ensure that pupils are kept safe in school. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. They implement all statutory guidance appropriately.
- Five school leaders are designated safeguarding leads and undertake routine and appropriate training. Regular meetings, which are attended by senior leaders and specialist staff, ensure that safeguarding concerns are managed properly.
- Leaders work with a wide range of external agencies, including social services and the police, to ensure that pupils receive the timely help and support that they need to stay safe. Staff know pupils' individual circumstances well. They take action that helps ensure pupils get the right help at the right time.
- Leaders have ensured that the requirements contained in these paragraphs of the independent school standards remain met.

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

Paragraphs 18–18(3), 19(2)–19(2)(d)(ii), 20(6)–20(6)(b)(iii), 21

- These standards were met at the independent school standard inspection in February 2020 and the first progress monitoring inspection in February 2021 and continue to be met.
- A single central record of recruitment and vetting checks is in place and this record is suitably maintained. All appropriate checks have been made on staff, according to their role in the school.
- Leaders are aware of the pre-employment checks that they need to carry out. Leaders routinely review the single central record to ensure that it meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders carry out the necessary safeguarding checks when they use supply staff. The school does not routinely intend to use supply staff in the future.
- Leaders, including the head of service and head of school, have had safer recruitment training. They use this effectively during the recruitment process for the appointment of any prospective staff.
- Leaders have ensured that requirements contained in these paragraphs of the standard remain met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b)

- The requirements for this independent standard were not met at the standard inspection in February 2020. This was because the school had not been well led and managed and had been in decline. Interim leadership was in place at the time.
- The requirements for this independent standard were not met at the first progress monitoring inspection in February 2021. This was because many of the processes and procedures which leaders had introduced for the curriculum and management of the school were very recent. The quality and sustainability of the recent improvements had not been checked and reviewed over time.
- The school's leadership capacity remains stronger than at the time of the standard inspection in February 2020. The new leadership positions have been firmly established. The head of service has high expectations and has shared them with staff, governors and the proprietor body. He holds staff to account for their areas of responsibility. Leaders at all levels have the necessary knowledge to continue to lead the school forward. Staffing is now stable.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how to design and manage the school's premises to ensure that pupils' safety and welfare needs are met. The changes were initially unsettling for pupils, parents and staff. Pupils have adjusted well to the planned restructuring and new curriculum design. On the day of the inspection, pupils were seen to be focused on their learning. They were very respectful of each other, adults and visitors. Leaders are clear about what they want to provide for pupils and the outcomes they seek for them.
- Previous systems to monitor the effectiveness of the school on behalf of the proprietor have been reviewed and strengthened. The head of service has a clear understanding of the school. An 'operations and quality checklist' is in place. This ensures that leaders

understand their roles and responsibilities, that clear lines of accountability have been established and that an appropriate monitoring schedule is now in place.

- Leaders have self-evaluation and improvement planning documents which are being acted on and routinely reviewed. Leaders at all levels are systematic about the collection of information to enable them to make adjustments to raise the consistency and quality of provision.
- Leaders are fulfilling their roles consistently and effectively to actively check and review the quality and sustainability of the improvements made over time. They have systematically addressed the shortcomings identified at the previous monitoring inspection.
- Parents and carers continue to be very supportive of the school and what it achieves for their children. Leaders provide weekly newsletters and coffee mornings to assist communication between home and school.
- Safeguarding remains effective.
- All of the independent school standards looked at during this inspection were found to be met. Leaders are exhibiting the ongoing capacity to maintain the independent school standards on a consistent basis. The requirements for this standard are now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 8. Leadership and management

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Standards checked which were met at the previous inspection. These standards remain met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety

- 7 The standard is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

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

- 18(1) The standard in this paragraph relates to the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff at the school, other than the proprietor and supply staff.
- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act;
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(i) the person's identity;

- 18(2)(c)(ii) the person’s medical fitness;
- 18(2)(c)(iii) the person’s right to work in the United Kingdom; and
- 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person’s qualifications;
- 18(2)(d) the proprietor ensures that, where relevant to any such person, an enhanced criminal record check is made in respect of that person and an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as practicable after that person’s appointment;
- 18(2)(e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person’s suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person’s appointment.
- 19(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 19(2)(a) a person offered for supply by an employment business to the school only begins to work at the school if the proprietor has received-
 - 19(2)(a)(i) written notification from the employment business in relation to that person
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(aa) that the checks referred to in paragraph 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vii) and (b) have been made to the extent relevant to that person
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(bb) that, where relevant to that person, an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check; and
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(cc) if the employment business has obtained such a certificate before the person is due to begin work at the school, whether it disclosed any matter or information; and
 - 19(2)(a)(ii) a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate obtained by an employment business before the person is due to begin work at the school;
 - 19(2)(b) a person offered for supply by an employment business only begins work at the school if the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the work for which the person is supplied;
 - 19(2)(c) before a person offered for supply by an employment business begins work at the school the person’s identity is checked by the proprietor of the school (irrespective of any such check carried out by the employment business before the person was offered for supply);
 - 19(2)(d) the proprietor, in the contract or other arrangements which the proprietor makes with any employment business, requires the employment business to provide-
 - 19(2)(d)(i) the notification referred to in paragraph (a)(i); and
 - 19(2)(d)(ii) a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate which the employment business obtains,

- 19(3) Except in the case of a person to whom sub-paragraph (4) applies, the certificate referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(a)(i)(bb) must have been obtained not more than 3 months before the date on which the person is due to begin work at the school.
- 20(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if-
 - 20(6)(a) MB-
 - 20(6)(a)(i) is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that individual is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of that Act; and
 - 20(6)(a)(ii) does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 20(6)(b) subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the Chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB-
 - 20(6)(b)(i) where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check;
 - 20(6)(b)(ii) checks confirming MB's identity and MB's right to work in the United Kingdom; and
 - 20(6)(b)(iii) where, by reason of MB's living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining an enhanced criminal record certificate is not sufficient to establish MB's suitability to work in a school, such further checks as the Chair of the school considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - 20(6)(c) subject to sub-paragraph (8), where the Secretary of State makes a request for an enhanced criminal record check relating to MB countersigned by the Secretary of State to be made, such a check is made.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(2) The register referred to in sub-paragraph (1) may be kept in electronic form, provided that the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether-
 - 21(3)(a)(i) S's identity was checked;
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any

disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;

- 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications;
 - 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
 - 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d);
 - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
 - 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e), including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained; and
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
- 21(4) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.
- 21(5) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to supply staff-
- 21(5)(a) whether written notification has been received from the employment business that-
 - 21(5)(a)(i) checks corresponding to those referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vi) and (vii) have been made to the extent relevant to any such person; and
 - 21(5)(a)(ii) an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check,
 - 21(5)(b) whether a check has been made in accordance with paragraph 19(2)(e) together with the date the check was completed; and
 - 21(5)(c) where written notification has been received from the employment business in accordance with a contract or other arrangements referred to in paragraph 19(2)(d) that it has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate, whether the employment business supplied a copy of the certificate to the school.
- 21(6) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation each member ("MB") of a body of persons named as the proprietor appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether the checks referred to in paragraph 20(6)(b) were made, the date they were made and the date on which the resulting certificate was obtained.
- 21(7) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of a body of persons named as the proprietor in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007
- 21(7)(a) whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (6) was made; and
 - 21(7)(b) whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request.

School details

Unique reference number	135066
DfE registration number	926/6152
Inspection number	10203487

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	12
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Nick Simpson
Headteacher	Peter Marshall (Head of Service)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£64,000
Telephone number	01953 888656
Website	www.acornpark.org.uk
Email address	admin@acornparkschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	25 to 27 February 2020

Information about this school

- All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- Admission to the school is via local authority placement.
- To date, since the school opened in 2005, Ofsted has conducted ten inspections and evaluated three action plans:

- 17 July 2006, a standard inspection when overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good
- 7 July 2009, a 'light touch' inspection when school was judged to remain good
- 13 May 2010, an emergency inspection when independent school standards were not met
- 19 May 2011, an emergency inspection when independent school standards were not met
- 3 October 2012, a standard integrated inspection when overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory
- 24 June 2014, an emergency inspection when independent school standards were not met
- 21 October 2014, an evaluation of an action plan which was deemed to be acceptable
- 5 February 2015, a progress monitoring inspection when the independent school standards were met
- 26 April 2016, a standard inspection when overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement
- 27 July 2016, an evaluation of an action plan which was deemed to be acceptable
- 9 May 2018, a standard inspection when overall effectiveness was judged to be good
- 25 February 2020, a standard inspection where the overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate
- 20 October 2020, an evaluation of an action plan which was deemed to not be acceptable.
- 12 February 2021, a progress monitoring inspection when an independent school standard was not met.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education.
- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the second monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in February 2020 when the school was judged inadequate.
- The inspection was conducted with no notice and by one inspector.
- The inspector held meetings with the head of service, the head of school and other senior leaders. She spoke with the chair of governors, who is a regional director, to discuss the improvements made since the last inspection.
- The inspector spoke with staff and had a phone conversation with a representative of Norfolk local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including recruitment and employment checks on staff and information to determine the progress that has been made since the previous inspection.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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