

# Clarity Independent School

Bridge Farm Barn, Woodhill Road, Sandon, Essex CM2 7SG

**Inspection date**

16 September 2021

**Overall outcome**

**The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

#### *Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i)*

- The standard inspection in February 2020 found this independent school standard to be un-met. Inspectors found weaknesses in implementing the planned curriculum. They also found that staff had not had the training they need to help them plan for pupils' academic learning effectively. In addition, pupils in mixed-age classes were often given the same work to do, regardless of their ability or starting point.
- The proprietor wrote an action plan in response to the judgement that the school requires improvement and that some of the independent school standards were not met. This action plan was evaluated by Ofsted in November 2020 and judged to be unsatisfactory overall and in respect of the quality of education judgement specifically. The proprietor has not modified the action plan in response to this judgement.
- Leaders have made some positive changes since the previous inspection. For example, curriculum overviews are now in place for the full range of national curriculum subjects and for all year groups.
- Leaders and staff have too little understanding of curriculum development. The rationale for the curriculum is weak. The curriculum is poorly sequenced. It is not clear how pupils are expected to learn about subjects, step by step.
- This independent school standard remains un-met.

#### *Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(g)*

- This standard was found to be un-met in February 2020. Inspectors found that some staff were very new and had not had enough training to deliver the curriculum effectively. They also found that not all staff were confident to teach across a range of subjects. In addition, approaches to assessment were still evolving.
- These issues were not addressed satisfactorily in the school's action plan, which was judged to be unsatisfactory in November 2020.
- The school has had a high staff turnover since the previous inspection. This has not helped in terms of ensuring general stability and that the quality of education improves quickly.

- Leaders and staff do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils academically. Pupils are given work to do that is too easy for them. The work pupils are given to do does not meet their needs well enough and they do not make the progress they are capable of. This is because of weaknesses in the construction of the curriculum, as well as in how it is delivered. For example, pupils' handwriting is poor in many cases. However, the curriculum gives no indication that this is a priority or how that priority will be addressed.
- This independent school standard remains un-met.

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

#### *Paragraph 7, 7(b)*

- This independent school standard was met at the previous inspection in February 2020. The school's safeguarding policy continues to meet requirements and to be fit for purpose.
- Weaknesses in safeguarding practice were apparent at this inspection. For example, staff were not informed about the most recent changes to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2021) before pupils returned to school for the start of the academic year. As a result, staff do not have sufficiently robust knowledge and understanding about current safeguarding practice. Planned training in this area took place in a 'twilight' session on the day of the inspection.
- Child protection records are not good enough. Leaders are moving to using an online system but have not completed this change. As a result, they are currently using two systems simultaneously, the online one and the previous paper-based one. Neither system contains all the information that it should. Child protection documents are kept in different places and leaders cannot easily lay their hands on all the information they need. Paper records are kept haphazardly. Actions taken in response to concerns are not always recorded. Leaders do not have a sufficiently strong understanding of what constitutes good record-keeping.
- This independent school standard is not met.

### Part 6. Provision of information

#### *Paragraph 32(1)(c)*

- The school did not have a website at the time that the previous inspection took place. A website is now available to parents and prospective parents. The school's safeguarding policy is available in the 'policies and documents' section of the website.
- This independent school standard is met.

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

#### *Paragraph 33*

- This independent school standard was met at the time of the previous inspection in February 2020 and remains met.

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

#### *Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)*

- This standard was not met in February 2020 because the proprietor had not ensured that all the independent school standards were met. Inspectors found that systems for

monitoring and reviewing the quality provided by the school were underdeveloped. They also found that leaders did not have an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness and that improvement planning was at an early stage of development.

- The proprietor did not include any specific actions to meet this standard in the action plan that they submitted for evaluation.
- Processes around self-evaluation are weak and underdeveloped. There is no evidence that any in-depth analysis, or appropriately self-critical evaluation of practice, has taken place. Leaders have too little knowledge and experience in this area. As a result, leaders think the school is better than it is.
- The school does not have a current action plan. The submitted plan, which was judged to be unsatisfactory, has not been amended, updated or modified. The school is not improving at the rate that it should be.
- This independent school standard remains un-met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school does not meet 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.

## School details

Unique reference number	146804
DfE registration number	881/6073
Inspection number	10206880

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 14 (temporarily raised to 15)
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Proprietor	Clarity SEN Consultancy Ltd
Headteacher	Debbie Hanson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,000 to £65,000
Telephone number	01245 408606
Website	<a href="http://www.clarity.essex.sch.uk">www.clarity.essex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@clarity.essex.sch.uk">admin@clarity.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	11 to 13 February 2020

## Information about this school

- The school's registration with the Department for Education (DfE) was approved in June 2019. It opened as an independent special school, catering for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, in September 2019.
- The registration with the DfE is for a maximum of 12 pupils between the ages of six and 14 years. During the academic year 2019/20, the DfE granted the proprietor temporary approval to admit pupils up to the age of 16 years. This temporary approval has expired. The DfE has granted a further temporary approval to admit pupils up to the age of 15 years, to cover pupils already on the school's roll.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils' needs include autism spectrum disorder; cognitive and learning needs; specific learning difficulties; moderate learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social development needs; communication and interaction needs; and physical disability.

- Most pupils have experienced significant periods of disruption to their full-time education in previous schools.
- The headteacher is the sole proprietor and director of the limited company.
- The school does not have a governing body.
- The school does not use alternative education provision.

## Information about this inspection

- 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.
- In February 2020, Ofsted conducted the school's first standard inspection. The school was judged to require improvement. Three of the independent school standards were not met.
- A material change inspection took place alongside the standard inspection in February 2020 to consider the proprietor's request for a material change to the school's registration. The proprietor sought to extend the upper age range from 14 years to 16 years. The same three independent standards not met at the standard inspection were not likely to be met if the material change was agreed by the DfE.
- On 24 September 2020, the DfE issued the proprietor with a notice, requiring the proprietor to prepare an action plan to show how the un-met standards will be addressed.
- The school submitted an action plan within the required timeframe. The plan was evaluated in November 2020 and was found to be not acceptable.
- The DfE wrote to the proprietor on 31 August 2021, stating that the action plan had been rejected by the Secretary of State for Education.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in February 2020. The inspection was conducted with no notice.
- In order to check compliance with the independent school standards, the inspector met with the proprietor (who is also the headteacher) and the deputy head; spoke with staff and pupils; spoke with a representative of the local authority; visited lessons and looked at pupils' work; looked at a range of documents; scrutinised the school's single central record of pre-appointment checks; and checked records of child protection concerns.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school does not meet the following independent school standards**

*Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection*

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
  - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
  
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

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

- 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)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

*Standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection*

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

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.



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