

Ash Meadow School

Gartons Lane, Sutton Manor, St. Helens, Merseyside WA9 4RR

Inspection date

20 October 2021

Overall outcome

The school is unlikely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b)

- The proprietor body has not ensured that the written curriculum policy includes enough detail to meet the independent school standards (the standards). Leaders have developed an overview of curriculum themes to be covered during the school year. However, there are no curriculum plans, or schemes of work, to accompany these themes. Plans do not include what pupils will learn. They do not take account of pupils' ages. For example, there is no curriculum plan for the teaching of phonics in key stage 1.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that the curriculum plans contain sufficient detail about the teaching of technology, human and social, or aesthetic and creative education across the proposed age range. As a result, the curriculum does not meet the requirements of the standards.
- The standards in this paragraph are unlikely to be met.

Paragraph 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii)

- The proprietor body has not ensured that the curriculum plans and schemes of work for the development of pupils' personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education are in place across all of the key stages for the proposed school.
- There are no curriculum plans to explain how respect and tolerance for all of the protected characteristics, as identified in the Equality Act 2010, will be positively promoted. This includes the teaching of fundamental British values. Plans do not take account of the different ages of the pupils who may attend the proposed school.
- The standards in this paragraph are unlikely to be met.

Paragraph 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)

- The proprietor body has a suitable careers programme in place to ensure that pupils receiving secondary education will have access to impartial careers advice. This programme will be delivered through a local college.

- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 2(h), 2(h)(i), 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g)

- The proposed school's assessment policy identifies the broad range of assessments that will be completed as part of the school's referral and admission process. The policy explains how the information gathered will be used to complement the targets set on a pupil's individual education, health and care (EHC) plan. The policy also identifies when additional assessment information will be gathered throughout the academic year.
- There are no curriculum plans or schemes of work in place across the required areas of learning as set out in the standards. Consequently, there is nothing for teachers to assess against to check what pupils know and can do. Pupils are unlikely to acquire new knowledge and make good progress.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that there are any suitable resources available to support pupils' learning across the broad range of subjects set out in the standards.
- The standards in this paragraph are unlikely to be met.

Paragraph 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)

- The proposed school's behaviour policy provides appropriate guidance for staff on how to manage pupils' behaviour effectively. The proposed strategies are likely to help pupils to regulate their own behaviour and to understand how their behaviour impacts on others. Leaders will also provide additional training for staff so that they are able to implement the policy consistently.
- The standards in this paragraph are likely to be met

Paragraph 4

- The proprietor body has ensured that a format for reporting to parents and carers is in place. However, as there is no suitable curriculum in place, there is no means by which to measure pupils' achievements against the curriculum. Teachers will be unable to check what pupils know and can do.
- The standard in this paragraph is unlikely to be met.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that all standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii)

- The proprietor body has not ensured that there are suitable plans or schemes of work in place for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is limited evidence to indicate how fundamental British values will be promoted in an age-appropriate manner.
- There is little information about how teachers will encourage respect and tolerance for others, paying due regard to the protected characteristics.
- The standards in this paragraph are unlikely to be met.

Paragraph 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders have made assurances that staff would not promote any partisan or political views in the teaching of any subject. However, there is no evidence to say how such steps to gain assurance will be taken.
- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable behaviour policy in place. Leaders intend to provide additional training for staff on how they can support pupils to understand right from wrong.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that all standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is an appropriate number of staff with responsibility for safeguarding. Plans are in place to ensure that all staff will receive suitable safeguarding training as part of the proposed school's induction procedures.
- A detailed safeguarding and child protection policy is in place. The policy takes account of current government guidance. The proprietor body has ensured that there are suitable strategies to support staff in keeping pupils safe. Leaders demonstrate an understanding of how to help pupils to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable written behaviour policy in place for the proposed school. Roles and responsibilities are clearly explained. The policy provides appropriate guidance for staff about the strategies that they can use to help pupils to regulate their own behaviour. An appropriate range of rewards and sanctions are provided to promote pupils' positive behaviour.
- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable written policy for the prevention of bullying. There are clear explanations of the different forms that bullying can take and the signs to look out for. The policy provides guidance for staff on the strategies that they may use to prevent bullying. The policy also sets out clear procedures for what to do should bullying occur.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a suitable record-keeping system in place to record any incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including bullying.

Paragraph 11

- The proprietor body has ensured that a comprehensive health and safety policy is in place. Current staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. Plans are in place to ensure that all staff will receive suitable safeguarding training as part of the proposed school's induction procedures.

Paragraph 12

- The proprietor body has ensured that the new fire alarm system has been installed by a competent person. All emergency lighting and emergency fire exits are also linked to the fire alarm system. Fire evacuation procedures are clearly displayed throughout the building. However, the proprietor body has not ensured that the proposed school building is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 regulations. Plans are in place to rectify this.

- This standard in this paragraph is unlikely to be met.

Paragraph 13, 14, 15

- A suitable first-aid policy is in place. The policy sets out the actions staff need to take in the event of an accident, including the procedure to follow when recording any incidents or accidents. The proprietor body has ensured that there are an appropriate number of staff with an up-to-date first-aid qualification.
- The proposed number of staff to pupil ratio is appropriate to ensure that pupils will be well supervised throughout the school day.
- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a comprehensive admissions policy for the proposed school which complies with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. There is a suitable attendance registration procedure in place for the proposed school.

Paragraph 16

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable risk assessment policy in place. The policy includes guidance for staff on how to complete risk assessments for a variety of activities in order to mitigate risk to both themselves and pupils. This includes when going off site for physical education lessons at a local sports centre.
- The proprietor has not ensured that all standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 17, 18(1)–18(2)(e)

- There are appropriate systems in place to check that all staff are suitable to work with pupils. These include an enhanced criminal record check, identity checks and checks to ensure that all staff have the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to support the needs of pupils well.

Paragraph 19(1)–19(2)(d)(ii)

- Leaders do not intend to use supply staff. However, if it becomes necessary, leaders will ensure that any supply staff will have the appropriate knowledge and skills to work with the pupils who will attend the proposed school. All required checks will be completed before the supply staff start working at the school.

Paragraph 20, 21(6)–21(7)(b)

- All of the required prohibition checks for the proprietor body and leaders have been completed. These include all safeguarding checks and checks under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.
- The proprietor body has ensured that all the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23–23(1)(c), 24–24(2), 25, 26, 27–27(b), 28(1)–28(2)(b), 29(1)–29(1)(b)

- The proposed school is a new building. It is situated over two floors and has been designed specifically for the sole use of the proposed school. The proprietor body has been involved with the design of the building and outdoor provision.

- The building is in good order and has been finished to a high standard. All corridors and stairwells are well lit and spacious. Banisters are at a suitable height for the ages of the intended pupils.
- The building has six rooms dedicated as teaching spaces. All of the rooms are well ventilated with suitable acoustics, heating and lighting. Every room has access to suitable drinking water which is clearly labelled and will be available for pupils throughout the day.
- There is a dedicated medical room. The room contains a suitable bed, with appropriate pillow and coverings. It is adjacent to a separate toilet facility and shower with hot and cold running water. There is a well-stocked first-aid kit available in the room.
- There are suitable toilet and hand-washing facilities on each floor for the sole use of pupils. The toilet on the ground floor for the use of visitors is also suitable for the use of people with a disability.
- The outdoor space has a clearly demarcated parking and drop-off area. The perimeter fencing is secure and of a suitable height. The proprietor body has ensured that there is suitable external lighting at the entrance to the building.
- The grounds of the proposed school have a well-designed landscaped area. This space includes dedicated planting and a large, grassed area for pupils to play on. There is also a patio area for outdoor seating. The tarmacked area is suitable for playing and for the physical education (PE) curriculum for younger pupils. It is intended that older pupils will have their PE sessions at a local sports facility.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)–32(1)(j), 32(2)–32(2)(d), 32(3)–32(3)(g)

- The proposed school does not currently have a website. Plans are in place to set up a website. The proprietor body has ensured that the safeguarding policy is available on request. Other policies, including the school's prospectus and the arrangements for admissions, are also available for parents, carers and others on request.
- All pupils who will attend the proposed school will have an EHC plan. The proprietor body understands its duty to report the expenditure of funds for pupils placed in the school to the commissioning local authorities.
- Leaders have designed a suitable format in which to report a pupil's annual progress and achievements to parents. The proposed format also includes the opportunity for pupils to comment on their own achievements throughout the academic year.
- The proprietor body has ensured that all the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33–33(k)

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable written policy for the handling of complaints. Leaders have ensured that the written policy is available for parents on request.

- The policy clearly sets out the procedures to be followed in the case of a complaint. These include the role of the independent panel and a complainant's right to appeal. The three-stage process includes appropriate timescales for dealing with any concerns.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has not ensured that a suitable curriculum is in place ready for the school to open.
- The lack of a suitable curriculum limits teachers' ability to deliver a suitable education and hinders teachers' ability to check what pupils know and can do.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that the quality of education that will be provided at the proposed school will meet the anticipated needs and ages of pupils. Pupils are unlikely to make progress, achieve well and be well prepared for the future, academically or personally.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that all the school standards regarding the safety and welfare of pupils and staff are likely to be met. In particular, they have not ensured that the proposed school building is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 regulations.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements, as set out in the annex of this report.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	148797
DfE registration number	342/6007
Inspection number	10206913

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	Bright Futures Ltd
Chair	Daniel Jones
Headteacher	Vicky Tijana
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £53,984.58
Telephone number	01925 759 162
Email address	ashmeadowschool@brightfuturescare.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	5 to 19	5 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	35	35

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	35
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	35
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	35
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	35

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5	7
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	14

Information about this proposed school

- This is the first pre-registration inspection of Ash Meadow School. The proposed school will cater for 35 pupils from five to 19 years of age.
- It is likely that most pupils who will attend this proposed school will have an EHC plan, predominantly for autistic spectrum disorder and/or social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The route for a place at the school will be via a referral from a local authority. Leaders propose to work closely with neighbouring local authorities in the first instance.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine if the school is likely to meet the independent school standards prior to opening as a registered school.
- During the inspection, an online meeting was held with a representative of the proprietor body.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and the head of school.
- The inspector also reviewed a range of documentation relating to the independent school standards.
- A tour of the premises was carried out. Documentation about the suitability of the school's premises and the documentation relating to the reduction of risk were also reviewed.
- The inspector reviewed policies relating to welfare, health and safety, including the procedures in place for the recruitment of staff for the proposed school.
- The inspector checked a range of evidence relating to the proposed curriculum, including schemes of work and assessment arrangements.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely to meet the following independent school standards

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 sub-paragraph (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; and
 - 2(1)(b)(ii) do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school’s aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
 - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 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(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;

- 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(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range; and
 - 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.
- 4. The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school’s own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

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

- 5. The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
- 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;

- 5(c) precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school; and
- 5(d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils–
 - 5(d)(i) while they are in attendance at the school,
 - 5(d)(ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or
 - 5(d)(iii) in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 12. The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].

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; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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