

Life Skills Manor for Autism

Life Skills Manor School @ Baypoint, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich, Kent,
CT13 9QL

Inspection dates

9 November 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 1–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h)– 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)–2A(2), 3–4

- Leaders have a clear and detailed vision for the education they intend to provide at Life Skills Manor for Autism. The curriculum is intended to prepare pupils to become positive role models in and effective contributors to society. Leaders have planned a curriculum intended to develop pupils' independence through learning transferable life skills.
- The curriculum policy reflects leaders' ambitions, including the aspiration that pupils will go on to lead successful adult lives. The written policy is reflected throughout the range of individual curriculum policies and plans. Curriculum plans consistently support the promotion of fundamental British values.
- The academic curriculum and subject policies detail leaders' ambition to ensure that pupils acquire strong academic skills, particularly in English, mathematics and science. The detailed 'life skills' curriculum encompasses personal, social and health education and includes elements such as: developing self-confidence, keeping physically and emotionally healthy, developing financial capability and being prepared for the next stage in education or employment. Relationships and sex education will also be part of this curriculum.
- The planned curriculum is suitably broad and includes artistic, sporting, creative and technical opportunities, such as cookery, first aid, computing and forest school activities. Learning will lead towards nationally accredited qualifications by the end of Year 11, including BTEC National Diploma Level 1 and Level 2 First Awards and GCSE options.
- Leaders have considered how pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be supported with their learning. For example, the curriculum will be adapted according to the individual needs of pupils and support staff will be employed. It is anticipated that all pupils attending the school will have an education, health and care plan.

- The headteacher and the appointed class teacher both possess extensive relevant experience of teaching pupils with autism spectrum disorder. They also have relevant subject knowledge and leadership experience. Staff are experienced in assessing pupils' learning and approaches are set out suitably in planning and policy documents. Assessment information will be shared routinely and regularly with parents and carers both informally as well as more formally through written reports and parent consultation events.
- Leaders are adamant that pupils will receive expert careers advice and guidance and some links with possible providers of work experience are already established. Leaders have thought about the need to offer broad and impartial advice. 'Careers-thinking' will feature as a routine aspect of the curriculum for pupils throughout the school.
- The proposed school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if granted permission to open.

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

Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)

- Leaders and staff will promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development effectively through the taught curriculum and through establishing a strong ethos of tolerance and respect between staff and pupils.
- The understanding and embodiment of 'life skills' sits at the heart of the school ethos. Many of the curriculum details demonstrate the importance of SMSC at this school. For example, there are wide opportunities planned for pupils to work in different groups and in different environments, such as in building an outdoor shelter, or in cooking food from different cultures and sharing this with visitors.
- The proprietor, the headteacher and the chair of the governing body articulate a clear sense of the ethos of the school. Building positive relationships and teamwork that develop pupils' confidence are very much part of the 'life skills' curriculum. Parents and families will be regular, welcome visitors to the school. Leaders see the engagement of families as an important ingredient in securing pupils' long-term success.
- Leaders understand that pupils attending the school may be vulnerable to negative suggestion and influence and will ensure that pupils are not exposed to partisan political or religious views.
- The school is likely to meet all of the requirements in this part of the standards.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6 – 7(b), 9–16(b)

- Arrangements for safeguarding are robust. The headteacher, proprietor and chair of the governing body are all knowledgeable about key safeguarding documents and roles. The single central record is set up and is fully compliant. Safe recruitment processes have been followed carefully.

- The written safeguarding policy is comprehensive and meets relevant legislation and statutory guidance requirements. Intended procedures for identifying and acting upon safeguarding concerns are clear.
- The policy provides helpful information and direction to staff, leaders, parents and carers. It is available on the school website.
- The headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead. He is trained and has experience of this role. Leaders understand the need to provide training for all staff as they are recruited. Plans also exist for keeping all staff's knowledge up to date over time.
- Behaviour and anti-bullying policies are in place. Leaders' aspirations for a harmonious and collaborative community are reflected in these documents. Positive recognition and rewards, including activities such as a game of pool with the headteacher, are an important feature of the school's approach.
- Admissions and attendance registers will be maintained in accordance with paragraph 15 of the standards. Leaders are determined that pupils will attend well and will monitor this closely.
- Supervision of pupils is carefully considered, and risk identified. The school is situated within a large building and not all entrances and exits are secure. Appropriate risk assessments are in place.
- The school has health and safety and risk assessment policies that are fit for purpose and appropriately reflect legislation. Whilst the headteacher will take responsibility for the school site on a daily basis, experts will be commissioned when necessary, for example to check electrical appliances.
- Fire safety has been considered. There is a recent detailed fire risk assessment and appropriate, checked equipment is located at key points around the school.
- There is a first aid policy and first aid arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff will undertake training as they are recruited. First aid is one of the key themes in the school's 'life skills' curriculum, reflecting leaders' desire that pupils should be ready and able to make a positive contribution to society.
- The school is likely to meet all of the requirements of this part of the standards.

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

Paragraphs 17–18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(6)–21(7)(b)

- Leaders are confident, but not complacent, in their knowledge of checks required to be completed on prospective employees and those responsible for governance. Records of recruitment processes to date, seen by the inspector, were meticulous.
- At the time of inspection, the single central record was fully compliant. Leaders demonstrate understanding of the requirements of Part 4.
- Leaders do not intend to use supply agency staff.
- The requirements of these parts of the independent standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22–24(1)(b), 24(2), 25–29(1)(b)

- The school will occupy a former sports and social club building. The school is accessed via its own secure entrance. The school office and main classrooms also exist within the secure area of the building. The sports hall, the kitchen and some other spaces offer access to the wider building. These areas will continue to be used, occasionally, by members of the public. Suitable risk assessments are in place.
- Teaching spaces are freshly decorated and furnished. Rooms are bright and light, with views over expansive playing fields. The number and size of rooms ready for use is suitable for up to 22 pupils.
- The school has appropriate toilet facilities with hot and cold running water. The temperature of the hot water did not pose a scalding risk. Drinking water is readily available and is labelled as such.
- Showers and changing facilities are available within the sports complex and will be available for pupils' sole use at certain times.
- The medical room is fit for purpose, with hand-washing facilities and a toilet close by.
- The outside space available to pupils is large. The area has boundary fencing. There is also a multi-sports court, where it is anticipated pupils will spend their breaktimes.
- This part of the independent school standards is likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)– 2(1)(d), 32(1)(f)–32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii)–32(5)

- Leaders understand the range of information that they are required to make available to prospective pupils, parents and stakeholders. Much information is already available on the school website. For example, contact details for school leaders and safeguarding, curriculum, complaints and behaviour policies are easy to find. The school website is welcoming and straightforward to navigate. Leaders are ensuring that it is kept updated.
- Leaders are aware of the requirements of Part 6. They are aware of the importance of effective communication. As well as plentiful opportunities for informal dialogue, formal plans are in place for reporting termly on pupils' academic attainment and progress. These reports will take the form of written feedback and parent consultation events.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33–33(k)

- The school's complaints policy and procedures are fit for purpose. They set out clear timescales for the management of any complaint and who will consider them.
- The complaints policy allows for complaints to be resolved informally wherever possible. When necessary, procedures for escalating complaints to more formal processes are clearly laid out.

- The requirements of this part of the independent school standards are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(2)

- Leaders' ambition to establish an inspiring and engaging special school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder is readily evident. Work completed to date, including the refurbishment of buildings and the development of policies, has all been to exacting standards.
- Leaders have extensive relevant experience, in terms of teaching, leadership and governance. This includes experience of leadership in maintained and independent special schools. The one teacher recruited at the time of inspection is also highly experienced in teaching pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- At the time of inspection one governor had been recruited. This governor brings expertise in school leadership as well as in governance. Leaders are in the process of recruiting a wider governing body.
- Leaders are likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have produced a helpful accessibility plan that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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	148860
DfE registration number	886/6168
Inspection number	10209905

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 status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Life Skills Manor Ltd
Chair	Paul Barrett
Headteacher	Paul Barrett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,000
Telephone number	01304 747464
Website	www.lifeskillsmanor.co.uk
Email address	paul@lifeskillsmanor.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	10 to 16	10 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	22	22

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	22
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	22
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 22
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 22

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	9
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- Life Skills Manor for Autism intends to provide full-time education for pupils aged 10 to 16 who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school will have a focus on developing pupils 'life skills'. The life skills curriculum will sit alongside traditional curriculum content.
- The school will have a proprietorial body. One member of the proprietorial body is also the headteacher. The proposed school currently has one governor. It is intended that there will be a governing body, with approximately six members.
- The proposed school will occupy part of a sports and social club premises, known as Bay Point. The premises are located between Sandwich and Ramsgate, CT13 9QL.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education in response to an application from the proprietor body to open a school.
- This was the first pre-registration inspection of the proposed school. The purpose of the inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Schools must comply with the independent school standards to be registered.
- The inspection focused on compliance with the regulatory requirements of the independent school standards, as well as safeguarding procedures and Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
- The inspector met with the two proprietors, one of whom is also the headteacher. The inspector also met with the first governor to be recruited. The inspector discussed leaders' aims and ambitions for the proposed school and scrutinised a wide range of documentation.
- The inspector toured the main school building and other parts of the premises that will be used by pupils and occasionally by members of the public. The inspector also looked at the outside space and facilities.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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