

VTSS

Forest View, Mayfield Flat, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 0TU

Inspection dates

29 March 2022

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

Paragraph 2(1)–2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g)–2(a)(2)

- The school's curriculum will be closely aligned to the national curriculum. Leaders are aware that pupils will come from a range of backgrounds. Some pupils may not have attended school for extensive periods prior to joining. Leaders intend for the curriculum to be bespoke and designed to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of each individual pupil.
- A curriculum policy and schemes of work are in place. These will be further adapted to meet the needs of the school once leaders are more fully aware of the specific requirements of individual pupils that will attend the school. Leaders are experienced in working to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are also sensitive to the age range of pupils and how the curriculum will need to be tailored to meet all pupils' needs.
- The curriculum will be delivered through a thematic approach in Year 5 through to Year 9, although mathematics, English and science will mostly be delivered as discrete lessons. Older pupils will follow programmes of study that range from functional skill level through to GCSE qualifications. Again, leaders intend that the curriculum will be tailored to meet the interests and needs of individual pupils from Year 10 on upwards.
- Other aspects of the curriculum, such as personal, social and health education (PSHE), and sex and relationships education will also be delivered through timetabled lessons as well as through the school's pastoral support programme, including sessions at the start of the school day and other reflective periods.
- Leaders are aware of the requirement to provide secondary-aged pupils with good-quality careers guidance. The school's ethos and PSHE programme will ensure that fundamental British values are promoted.

Paragraphs 3–4

- The director has only recently appointed a headteacher. The headteacher designate is suitably experienced and has a background in teaching and leading in special schools. A recruitment process is under way for additional staff, who will be appointed to

substantive positions assuming the registration is approved. The director intends for all staff to be suitably qualified and experienced to ensure that the school's intended curriculum is delivered effectively and that all pupils are able to engage positively with learning in the classroom and beyond.

- Systems to gather information about pupils' academic, social and emotional development are in place. This includes provision for suitable baseline assessments to be made as pupils join the school, as well as ongoing assessment of the progress pupils are making through the school's curriculum.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in Part 1 are likely to be met.

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 development effectively through the taught curriculum and through establishing a strong and caring ethos at the school. The curriculum will also be underpinned by the school's therapeutic approach which will support pupils to engage with their education and develop key aspects such as building self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Curriculum plans ensure that pupils will learn about British values, as well as actively promoting an understanding of equalities at an age-appropriate level. A range of extra-curricular activities will also promote pupils' understanding of what it means to live in modern Britain, including visits out of school to local or national institutions, or external speakers or organisations visiting the school.
- The director and the headteacher designate are able to articulate a clear sense of the ethos of the school. Pupils will benefit from a culture that promotes respect for others and for themselves. They will be expected to take responsibility for their own behaviour and develop positive attitudes to their work.
- Leaders are already setting high expectations of themselves. Staff will be expected to provide positive role models for pupils. This includes ensuring that pupils are not exposed to partisan political or religious opinions.
- Leaders have ensured that all standards in Part 2 are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7–7(b), 9–16(b)

- The school's policies, written guidance and procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are sound.
- Key staff have already undertaken safeguarding training appropriate to their levels of responsibility. This includes safer recruitment training, and training as designated safeguarding leads.
- Induction training for new staff will be comprehensive. This will cover safeguarding training, and training to ensure that staff are aware of the school's wider policies and procedures to keep children safe. The director is clear that the school will not admit

any pupils before all staff have completed a comprehensive training package and are fully ready to provide a safe and nurturing environment for pupils.

- The safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is available on request.
- The behaviour policy is suitable for the ages and the needs of the proposed school's pupils. The school also has an anti-bullying policy which has close links to the behaviour policy. The behaviour policy sets out clear aims and lists the consequences of poor behaviour.
- Leaders have a good understanding of health and safety requirements, including the need for comprehensive risk assessments and other actions required to keep the school safe. A new fire risk assessment is in place. Service records for gas and electrical appliances are up to date. The school building is well maintained. A management information system is in place to ensure that leaders are aware of impending requirements to ensure that the school continues to be a safe place.
- Leaders plan to ensure that staff-to-pupil ratios are suitable at all times. Staff will be trained in first aid at a suitable level. Staff will also access bespoke training to support their understanding of the school's therapeutic approach to managing pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in Part 3 are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)–20(5)(c)(ii), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(6), 21(8)

- Leaders know about the checks that need to be made on adults working with children in regulated activities. These include all of the required verifications, such as medical fitness and qualification checks. Leaders are clear that staff will not begin work at the school without the necessary checks and references being in place.
- Leaders have already established a clear process for recruiting staff. This is in line with current guidance and requirements. Leaders have already completed safer recruitment training.
- The single central record of staff checks is already established. It is sound and is administered competently.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in Part 4 are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2)–29(1)(b)

- The proposed school is sited on pleasant plot with extensive views over the countryside. The newly refurbished facilities are of a high standard and include a small but well-equipped kitchen which will also be used as a teaching space.
- Classrooms and other learning spaces are of a suitable size and appropriately furnished to meet the needs of the pupils likely to be at the school.

- The outdoor area is extensive and will be used to facilitate different strands of the curriculum, as well as providing excellent space for pupils to play and take breaks from learning. Physical education will be provided off site at a local leisure centre.
- The lighting, heating and acoustics are all suitable for the pupils likely to be at the school. Outside, there is sufficient lighting around the buildings and in the grounds to ensure safe passage in the dark.
- There are adequate toilets and washing facilities for both pupils and staff. All facilities have sufficient water supplies, and the temperature of the hot water is regulated appropriately. Drinking water is available and labelled as such.
- There is allocated accommodation adjacent to the main school building for the medical examination and treatment of pupils, as well as the short-term care of those who are sick or injured.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in Part 5 are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)–32(1)(d), 32(1)(f)–32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(d)–32(3)(f), 32(4)–32(4)(c)

- It is not intended for the school to have a website at this stage.
- Leaders are aware of the requirement to provide specified information detailed within Part 6. This includes when pupils are funded or partly funded by a local authority. They also know that they need to have certain reports and other information as necessary available on request, particularly information required by parents, carers or local authorities.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in Part 6 are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33–33(k)

- The school's complaints policy and procedures are available on request. They set out clear timescales for the management of any complaint. The policy meets all of the requirements of Part 7. Leaders demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of the policy and how it will be implemented.
- Leaders plan to keep any copies of complaints confidentially and available for inspection on the school premises.
- Leaders have ensured that all standards in Part 7 are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- Leaders are knowledgeable and have a background in education and social care. They have a broad range of experience in working with pupils with complex SEND. Their rationale for registering the school is sound. It is clear to see that purposeful and

effective working relationships already exist within the small leadership team which is already established.

- The sole director is aware that he would benefit from effective external validation of the quality of education the school will eventually provide should the registration be approved. Arrangements are already in hand for this.
- Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the requirements within the independent school standards. They have ensured that the school is likely to meet all of these standards when it opens and are committed to ensuring that these requirements continue to be met. This includes actively promoting the welfare of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that all standards in Part 8 are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have compiled a suitable accessibility plan to improve access to the premises. Leaders intend to update the plan at appropriate intervals and dependent on the needs of pupils and staff once the school opens. The school is likely to meet paragraph 3 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	148888
DfE registration number	845/6069
Inspection number	10220874

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	Other independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Virtue Therapeutic Care & Education (East Sussex) Ltd
Chair	Matthew Wakeling
Headteacher	Janet Tremble
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000 to £80,000
Telephone number	01435 864 427
Website	None
Email address	admin@virtuechildren.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	9 to 18	9 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	Up to 12	Up to 12

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Boys
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	Up to 12
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	Up to 12
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 12
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 12

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	3 on opening
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is situated in a rural setting on the outskirts of Heathfield, East Sussex. It will cater for up to 12 male pupils between the ages of nine and 18 years with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils are likely to have an education, health and care plan. All pupils will be placed by local authorities.
- The school will not have a governing body in the first instance. The sole director will act in a governance role and be provided with independent, external advice provided from outside of the school.
- The director intends for the school to grow very slowly. It is not expected that 12 pupils will join the school straightaway should the registration be approved.
- It is not intended that the school will use alternative provision on opening.

Information about this inspection

- 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, safeguarding procedures and Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
- The inspector toured the main school building and outside areas. He reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the single central record, policies and curriculum information.
- The inspector met with the headteacher designate, the school's designated safeguarding lead (who has already been appointed) and the proprietor's sole director. The inspector also met with an educational consultant who is currently advising the director and the headteacher prior to the proposed school opening.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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