

# Dovecote School

Shapwick Manor, 21 Station Road, Shapwick, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 9NJ

**Inspection date**

8 June 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

*Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4*

- Leaders have thought deeply about the curriculum the school will teach. They have an ambitious vision for creating personalised learning for the pupils. To that end, they have created a flexible curriculum framework that can be adapted to meet the needs of pupils when they arrive at the school.
- All pupils are expected to have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The pupils will typically have autism spectrum disorder, with additional social, emotional and mental health needs, particularly anxiety. Many will have a history of disrupted education and the curriculum has been specifically designed to support these pupils to achieve.
- The school will have thorough processes to promote accurate identification of needs and a smooth transition into the school. This is likely to mean that each pupil will follow an appropriate curriculum based on their starting points in terms of knowledge and skills and the targets in their EHC plan. The curriculum will allow pupils to develop literacy and numeracy. There is an appropriate phonics programme in place for those pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read, whatever their age. The curriculum is broad and will allow, where appropriate, pupils to achieve accredited qualifications such as GCSEs. In addition to offering a range of academic courses, the school will use its extensive grounds to provide land-based courses, such as in horticulture and animal husbandry. The personal, social and health education programme is comprehensive in scope.
- The school will ensure that secondary-aged pupils receive impartial, up-to-date careers guidance through an external provider. Leaders have thought clearly about how to ensure that their pupils get appropriate work-related learning and work experience.
- The school's post-16 provision is intended to cater for pupils who need more time to complete their GCSEs or other qualifications. Leaders have an appropriate programme

in place to do this, although they do not anticipate having any students of this age when the school begins to operate.

- Leaders have appropriate plans in place to provide pupils with relationships and sex education, although the plans for the secondary age-phase are less developed than those for the primary age-phase.
- Leaders have ensured that classrooms are well resourced.
- The curriculum is likely to prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of life in modern Britain. It actively promotes fundamental British values.
- Leaders have a clear framework in place to assess pupils' progress regularly.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met.

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

### *Paragraph 5*

- Leaders have given careful thought to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It is at the centre of the school's plans, given that most pupils will join the school with a background of disrupted education or considerable time out of school. Leaders' SMSC programme will focus on developing attributes such as self-knowledge, resilience, social skills and independence.
- Leaders have thoroughly audited their proposed SMSC programme to ensure that it is likely to meet the standards. It aims to promote tolerance and respect, paying attention to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

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

### *Paragraph 7*

- Leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of how to create an effective safeguarding culture. They are fully aware of the risks that pupils with autism spectrum disorder might face, for example when online. Leaders have considerable experience in safeguarding and are taking steps to ensure that they always have the most up-to-date knowledge of the procedures of each local authority that will place pupils at the school. A system to record and act on any safeguarding concerns is already in place.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), who is also the headteacher, and the deputy DSL are already suitably trained to carry out their roles. There are also other people trained to the same level among the staff who have already been appointed.
- The school's safeguarding policy is on its website and follows the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Leaders have acted swiftly to incorporate into their procedures the proposed changes to 'Keeping children safe in education' that will come into effect in September 2022. This is clear evidence of their ability to keep abreast of changes to safeguarding guidance and to act swiftly on these.

#### *Paragraphs 9, 10 and 14*

- Leaders have drawn up a written behaviour policy that is likely to promote good behaviour. It sets out the rewards and sanctions the school will use. Leaders have an anti-bullying strategy that sets out how they will deal with bullying when it occurs, but that also seeks to reduce the incidence of bullying. Pupils will be properly supervised at all times.

#### *Paragraphs 11, 12, 13 and 16*

- The proprietor has written health and safety and risk assessment policies in place. The action leaders have taken so far to improve the quality of the premises indicates that the school is likely to meet the relevant standards if the school opens. For example, leaders have thorough processes to ensure water quality and safety by, for example, regular flushing of the system to reduce the risk of Legionella.
- Leaders have carried out a fire risk assessment, using an external contractor. They have acted on its advisory recommendations to reduce further the risk of fire. Fire safety equipment is regularly maintained. Emergency exits are clearly signed and unobstructed. The school is likely to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 if it opens.
- Leaders have ensured that a first-aid policy is in place. All staff will be trained in first aid. The headteacher has undergone paediatric first-aid training.
- The proprietor already has electronic admission and attendance registers in place.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

#### *Paragraphs 18, 19, 20 and 21*

- The proprietor has already appointed some staff and has carried out all the required checks. These are recorded clearly and efficiently in the school's single central record. This indicates that the school is likely to meet the standards relating to the recruitment of suitable staff when it opens.
- Leaders only intend to use agency supply staff in exceptional circumstances. They are aware, however, of the procedures they need to follow and the checks they need to make should they do so.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

#### *Paragraphs 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29*

- The proposed school will occupy a Grade II listed building which has been impressively refurbished to a very high standard by the proprietor. The building was formerly a school and it has been thoroughly renovated throughout. It sits in substantial grounds and has a 6.5-acre sports field across the road. There is, therefore, substantial space for leaders to realise their ambition to provide a substantial element of land-based learning in their curriculum. Additionally, it has a

large sports hall and an outdoor tennis court. There is clearly sufficient space for pupils to undertake physical education and to play in.

- Classrooms are spacious for the number of proposed pupils. They are well lit and have appropriate acoustics. There are also appropriate therapy rooms, including a sensory room. Appropriate external lighting is in place.
- There are suitable separate toilet facilities for boys and girls. There are also separate changing rooms with plenty of showers. Hot and cold running water is available. Hot water supplies do not pose a scalding risk and the proprietor undertakes regular temperature checks to ensure this. Suitable drinking water is available and appropriately signed.
- There is a medical room with a bed, two sinks and a self-contained toilet.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

## Part 6. Provision of information

### *Paragraph 32*

- The school already has a website and this contains all the information that is required to be provided or made available to parents and carers. This includes the school's safeguarding arrangements and the policies relating to admissions, behaviour and exclusions, anti-bullying, health and safety, first aid and complaints.
- The website also contains a clear explanation of the school's ethos and approach to education.
- Parents will receive regular reports about their children's progress, including an annual written report.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

## Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

### *Paragraph 33*

- The school's complaints procedure meets the requirements of the standards. For example, it includes clear timescales for each stage of the complaints procedure.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

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

### *Paragraph 34*

- The chief executive officer (CEO) and the headteacher both have significant experience in setting up and running successful independent schools. They also have experience in the maintained sector. They have successfully applied this experience to the setting up of Dovecote School. They clearly demonstrate that they possess the knowledge and skills that make it likely that the standards will be met consistently if the school opens.

- Leaders have a clear vision of the school they want to run and how it will operate. This is reflected both in their approach to the curriculum and in the considerable resources they have committed to the premises of the proposed school. Their commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for a group of pupils who have not thrived in mainstream education is obvious.
- Initially, the school had planned to have a governing body but this has now been changed to an advisory body. The governance role will be carried out by the CEO on behalf of the proprietor. The proprietor recognises that this relatively recent change to arrangements means that some policies need to be redrafted to reflect this.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has drawn up an 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 | 149071   |
| DfE registration number | 933/6020 |
| Inspection number       | 10231224 |

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                           | Dovecote School Ltd  |
| Headteacher                          | Neil Gage  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)             | £68,000 to £78,000   |
| Telephone number                     | 01458 333127   |
| Website                              | <a href="http://www.dovecoteschool.co.uk">www.dovecoteschool.co.uk</a>           |
| Email address                        | <a href="mailto:jgoddard@dovecoteschool.co.uk">jgoddard@dovecoteschool.co.uk</a> |
| 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            | 5–18              | 5–18                       |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | Not applicable            | 75                | 75                         |

## Pupils

|   | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Gender of pupils                                    | Mixed                     | Mixed             |
| Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age | Not applicable            | 75                |
| Number of part-time pupils                          | Not applicable            | 75                |

|  |                |    |
|--|----------------|----|
| Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities                              | Not applicable | 75 |
| Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan                               | Not applicable | 75 |
| Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan | Not applicable | 75 |

## Staff

|   | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | Not applicable            | 11                |
| Number of part-time teaching staff            | Not applicable            | 0                 |

## Information about this proposed school

- The school is owned by Dovecote School Limited, whose main office is at the school site. The school is in the village of Shapwick, Somerset. The premises were bought by the company in 2021, but were previously used by another independent school that closed in March 2020.
- The school proposes to be registered to cater for a range of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but in practice aims to cater for pupils with autism spectrum disorder with anxiety.



## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education. Its purpose was to determine whether the school is likely to meet the independent school standards were it to be entered on the register of independent schools. This was the proposed school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector met the CEO, the headteacher, the human resources manager and the special educational needs coordinator. He reviewed documents provided by the school in support of the application. He toured the school buildings and grounds.

## Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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