

Merrywood House Independent Special School

The Old Pheasantry, Merrywood Grove, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 7HF

Inspection date

23 June 2022

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)–2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h)–2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)–2A(2)

- The school has had a very recent and successful full standard inspection. The inspection took place earlier in the current academic year and found the school to be good in all areas. The report talks about the high expectations of pupils, the school's ambitious curriculum and staff's clarity about the important things pupils need to learn. It also describes the effective support given for pupils' particular needs and the suitable priority given to reading. All of the independent school standards were met.
- Leaders intend that the proposed extension to the upper age range of pupils will very much build on the school's existing and recognised effective practice. If granted, it will enable the school to see existing pupils through the final year of key stage 3. Leaders have planned a suitable curriculum that builds on pupils' prior learning and takes account of preparing them for key stage 4 and beyond.
- The breadth and range of subjects will remain the same as they do for the start of key stage 3. These aspects are likely to continue to meet the independent school standards. That said, leaders are rightly seeking to shift the balance to ensure that pupils are enabled to build on their successful personal development and their increasing capacity to apply themselves academically. In this way, leaders intend to use curriculum time carefully to ensure that pupils are best placed to access future options. For example, they plan to increase the amount of time allocated to science so that pupils have learned more of the content they need to, in order to go on to subsequent courses.
- The full inspection found the quality of education to be good. The key stage 3 lessons visited as part of this inspection built clearly on pupils' previous learning. Work in pupils' books shows the same systematic approach. There is a suitable focus on the knowledge and understanding that teachers want pupils to develop. In lessons, teachers maintain this focus through their clear questioning and targeted support for individual pupils. Relationships are warm but purposeful. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and can recall and explain their learning.

- As pupils' learning through the curriculum progresses, so leaders review their assessment procedures to ensure that these are equally aspirational. The long-term aim is that pupils gain the recognised qualifications of which they are capable.
- The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the material changes are applied.

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

Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)

- The recent standard inspection found that the promotion of pupils' wider development was embedded throughout the work of the school. It also highlighted the wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their individual talents and interests.
- Pupils will continue to benefit from the range of enrichment opportunities available to existing pupils. Aspects of personal development such as relationships and sex education will continue to develop in an age-appropriate way. The school plans to continue to tailor this to individual needs as necessary and appropriate. There is rightly a strong emphasis on equipping pupils with the knowledge and understanding they need to overcome potential additional vulnerabilities which may put them at increased risk or limit their ability to keep themselves safe.
- The requirements of this part are likely to continue to be met if the material changes are granted by the Department for Education (DfE).

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- Leaders have evidently thought carefully about the proposed changes. They continue to think towards and plan for the future, prioritising the needs of current pupils and making decisions about the school's growth in this light.
- The recent standard inspection found that members of the school's advisory board were highly skilled and experienced in their specialist areas, providing the proprietor with an equal measure of challenge and support. With no hint of complacency, since the previous standard inspection, the proprietor has further strengthened quality assurance arrangements across both campuses. There were no issues with the standards that were checked as part of this inspection.
- Leaders have wasted no time acting on the findings of the school's first full inspection to further strengthen practice. The school has worked on sharpening the focus on the knowledge pupils are acquiring, as seen in the lessons visited during this inspection. All staff, including support staff, have benefited from further training in this important area. Senior leaders have had further training and development, encouraging and developing their reflective practice.
- The full inspection found that safeguarding was effective and the culture strong. There continues to be a suitable safeguarding policy published on the school's website. Leaders have already acted in anticipation of new guidance issued by the Secretary of State due to come into effect from September. Evidence from this inspection indicates that the safeguarding policy continues to be implemented effectively.

- The Sandmartin premises are likely to be able to accommodate safely the additional six pupils proposed as part of this material change inspection.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to continue to be met if the DfE approves the requested changes to the school's registration.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	147600
DfE registration number	936/6035
Inspection number	10243900

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002. The purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Merrywood Education Ltd
Headteacher	Michelle Quayle
Annual fees (day pupils)	£56,400
Telephone number	01737 336352
Website	www.merrywood.org.uk
Email address	head@merrywood.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	2 to 4 November 2021

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 13	5 to 14	5 to 14
Number of pupils on the school roll	59 (Capacity 60)	66	66

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	54	Not to exceed a total of 66 on roll

Number of part-time pupils	5	Not to exceed a total of 66 on roll
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	59	66
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	59	66
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	59	66

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	17	18
Number of part-time teaching staff	2	2

Information about this school

- Merrywood House Independent Special School currently provides full-time education for pupils aged five to 13 years. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority. All pupils have complex social, emotional and mental health needs. These are often linked to adverse childhood experiences and trauma. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school opened in December 2019. The executive headteacher is the sole director of the proprietor body, Merrywood Education Ltd. There is an advisory board providing external challenge and support to the proprietor.
- The school operates from two sites. In addition to the school's registered address shown at the top of this report, the school operates from a second site approximately 10 miles away known as the 'Sandmartin Campus'. The address of the Sandmartin Campus is Sandmartin Way, Wallington SM6 7DF.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.
- The school received its first full standard inspection from 2 to 4 November 2021.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE to consider the proprietor's request for a material change to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to extend the upper end of the age range from 13 to 14 to include Year 9 pupils.
- The DfE asked Ofsted to check with the proprietor whether the requested change would involve an increase in the school's capacity and to also consider this if so. The proprietor confirmed the wish to extend the school's capacity by an additional six pupils.
- This was the school's first inspection in relation to these proposed changes.
- The inspection took place at the Sandmartin Campus where the key stage 3 pupils are based, and the additional six pupils will be accommodated.
- The inspector discussed the proposed changes with the proprietor, who is also the executive headteacher, and other senior leaders. He reviewed a range of supporting documents and plans. He considered the findings of the school's recent full standard inspection.
- The inspector had a tour of the premises and visited key stage 3 lessons. While visiting lessons, he reviewed work in pupils' books and spoke with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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