

# Acorn Cottage

**Inspection date**

7 July 2022

**Overall outcome**

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

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

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

- The standards in these paragraphs were met at the standard inspection in June 2019 and remained met at the progress monitoring inspections in December 2019 and October 2021.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils continue to be effective. Pupils feel, and are, safe.
- Leaders make sure that staff are alert to their duties relating to safeguarding and are well trained. As staff join the school, they receive a programme of induction training that includes appropriate safeguarding information. This information is specific to the context of the school and its pupils. Leaders make sure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding updates.
- As was the case at each of the previous progress monitoring inspections, leaders ensure that records of safeguarding incidents are appropriately recorded.
- The necessary policies are available on the Care Focus Ltd website, or on request.
- Leaders have ensured that the paragraphs included in this independent school standard continue to be met.

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

*Paragraph 18(1), 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)*

- These standards were met at the June 2019 inspection and at the progress monitoring inspections in December 2019 and October 2021.
- Leaders are trained in safer recruitment. They ensure that the necessary checks on the suitability of new staff employed at the school are carried out. The single central record of pre-employment checks includes the required information.
- The school does not use supply staff.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards included in these paragraphs continue to be met.

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

### *Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)*

- At the time of the standard inspection in June 2019, the proprietor body was not ensuring that leaders and managers were fulfilling their roles in meeting the independent school standards. This remained the case in both subsequent progress monitoring inspections. Leaders' ongoing capacity to maintain the independent school standards consistently was not evident. This standard was unmet.
- Since the previous progress monitoring inspection, the head of education and head of quality assurance have taken appropriate steps to gain a secure understanding of the independent school standards. They use this improved knowledge to make sure that other leaders and staff are suitably informed about the independent school standards.
- Leaders have consolidated and developed their structures for leading and reviewing school improvement activities. They have applied their improved knowledge of the independent school standards in doing so. Leaders keep online records of the conclusions they draw from their regular checks on the quality of education and care that pupils receive at the school.
- Leaders have made suitable adaptations to their school development plan. They set out improvement priorities that are informed by the findings from their reviews of each aspect of provision at the school. This plan is better aligned to the independent school standards.
- Leaders report frequently and regularly to the proprietor body and directors on whether the independent school standards continue to be met. Leaders' reporting includes feedback and scrutiny from external agencies. The head of quality assurance and a director, representing the proprietor body, carry out scheduled visits to the school to assure themselves that the independent school standards continue to be met.
- Leaders have ensured that these independent school standards are now met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

### **The school now meets the following independent school standards**

#### **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.

## School details

Unique reference number	130854
DfE registration number	935/6084
Inspection number	10246774

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	2
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor body	Care Focus Ltd
Chair	Timothy Leigh
Headteacher	Karen Randall
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,424
Telephone number	01473 657030
Website	<a href="http://www.carefocus.co.uk">www.carefocus.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@carefocus.co.uk">admin@carefocus.co.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

## Information about this school

- Acorn Cottage is a small independent special school owned by Care Focus Ltd. The school opened in 2005. The school acquired a second site in 2013.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to admit eight girls.
- The two proprietors of Care Focus Ltd, alongside one appointed director, are responsible for governance at the school.
- Most pupils who attend the school over time have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some have education, health and care plans.

- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- Leaders do not use supply staff.
- The head of education joined the school in April 2021 and is also the head of education at the other school owned by the same proprietor body, Gable End.
- The head of quality assurance works across both schools owned by the proprietor body.
- Inspection history:
  - Ofsted conducted a standard inspection in February 2009. The school was judged to be good. One independent school standard was not met.
  - Ofsted conducted a standard inspection in June 2012. The school was judged to be good. All the independent school standards were met.
  - Ofsted conducted a standard inspection in July 2017. The school was judged as requires improvement. All the independent school standards were met.
  - At the school's most recent standard inspection in June 2019, it was judged as requires improvement. Not all the independent school standards were met.
  - Following the June 2019 inspection, the school submitted an action plan to the DfE in September 2019. This was judged to be unacceptable.
  - A progress monitoring inspection was carried out in December 2019. Some previously unmet standards noted at the time of the previous inspection in June 2019 were met. The school did not meet three of the independent school standards.
  - Following the first progress monitoring inspection in December 2019, the school submitted another action plan to the DfE in March 2020. This was judged unacceptable.
  - A progress monitoring inspection was carried out in October 2021. Most previously unmet standards were met. The school did not meet three independent school standards relating to the quality of leadership in and management of schools.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the third progress monitoring visit since the standard inspection in June 2019.
- The inspector visited the Acorn Cottage site. The other site, The Lodge, was closed at the time of the inspection. The inspector also visited the Care Focus Ltd central offices.
- The inspector met with the head of education and spoke with school staff. The inspector met with all pupils.
- The inspector met with the head of quality assurance and a member of the Care Focus Ltd central administrative team.
- The inspector also met with a director, who is a representative of the proprietor body. This meeting took place remotely.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff, school policies, the school development plan, records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of education, the school's safeguarding policy and records of pupils' attendance.

## Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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