

Little Acorns School

London Beach Farm, Ashford Road, St Michael's, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6SR

Inspection date

22 September 2022

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7–7(b), 11–12, 14, 16–16(b)

- The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. Leaders continue to update it promptly in line with the most recent guidance. The policy is well grounded in the school's specific context and pays close attention to the additional vulnerabilities its pupils may have or face.
- From induction onwards, leaders prioritise ensuring that staff are suitably trained in safeguarding. This important training is regularly revisited and refreshed. Leaders ensure that staff know, understand and remember important messages. Safeguarding records show that staff are vigilant and act promptly on concerns, in line with the school's policies and procedures. Leaders work proactively with outside agencies in the best interests of pupils and advocate strongly for them.
- The designated safeguarding lead's confident navigation of the well-organised safeguarding records means that different threads can be easily pulled together. This supports leaders to build a picture of all the things that may affect pupils' safety, welfare or well-being. Mechanisms are in place to regularly review case files and ensure that nothing is missed.
- The health and safety policy has been further updated since the previous inspection. Arrangements for health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment are well established. They are likely to continue to be suitable and effective if the proposed expansion goes ahead. Records of routine checks and any necessary action are kept on file. External specialists advise on the fire safety risk assessment.
- Current and proposed levels of supervision are likely to be sufficient to enable the safe delivery of the school's curriculum. Leaders are clear that the individual needs of future pupils may mean staffing levels need to be kept under review and increased, and they are committed to doing this. The plan is to recruit at least one additional member of support staff if the proposed change is approved.
- All paragraphs that were checked in this part are likely to continue to be met.

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

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

- Leaders diligently continue to complete all the required checks of new staff. The single central record shows all of the required checks of staff, supply staff and contractors. It also contains other pertinent information relevant to safer recruitment and safeguarding. The school does not make use of volunteers, but advisory board members have been subject to the relevant screening.
- All the independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to continue to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The school is set in generous and attractive grounds. The premises consist of a range of mobile classrooms and free-standing buildings. There is ample space for an increased number of pupils to play outdoors and take part in physical education.
- The proprietor has ensured adequate provision of suitable indoor space in anticipation of the school's ongoing growth. An additional six pupils can be comfortably accommodated across the existing four classrooms. There are also surplus rooms for therapy and group work, allowing for additional flexibility. A new entrance, school reception and meeting rooms are nearly finished.
- A high-quality new medical room has been appointed. An adjacent toilet is currently being installed. This will be a further improvement against the standards, as currently, the nearest toilet is a short walk away.
- All other provisions in this part are likely to continue to be sufficient for an increased number of pupils. For example, arrangements for toilets, drinking water, light and sound are likely to meet requirements.
- All the standards in this part are likely to continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- In recent times, the school has had a good track record of meeting the standards. Leaders have strengthened governance arrangements for the school and continue to build on this work. A scheme of delegation is in place. Audits and visits carried out by the chair of the advisory board demonstrate support and challenge for school leaders.
- The proprietor maintains close strategic oversight of the existing school and its journey towards achieving his vision. Leaders at all levels are keen to learn and get it right for pupils.
- The headteacher has thought carefully about how the school can expand to cater for additional pupils. If approved, this change is likely to be achieved without compromising the quality of education and experience for pupils. The individual needs of pupils are at the forefront of leaders' decisions and proposed staffing is likely to meet those needs.
- The standard in this part is likely to continue to be met.

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	131810
DfE registration number	886/6085
Inspection number	10250078

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	Jawad Sheikh
Headteacher	Alison Neal
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,234
Telephone number	01233 850 422
Website	www.littleacornsschool.co.uk
Email address	alison.neal@choicelifestyles.net
Date of previous standard inspection	6 to 8 November 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 14	Not applicable	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	13	20	20

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Not applicable
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	13	20

Number of part-time pupils	0	Not applicable
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	13	20
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	13	20
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	13	20

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5	5
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	Not applicable

Information about this school

- Little Acorns School is a mixed independent special school offering education for pupils aged four to 15 years old.
- The school specialises in working with pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school is currently registered for 14 pupils, but at the time of the inspection had 13 pupils on roll.
- School staff take pupils off site and to other facilities for parts of the curriculum, but the school does not currently make use of alternative provision.
- The school's last full inspection was carried out in November 2018. Another successful material change inspection has already been conducted since then to consider a previous increase in the school's capacity.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to consider the proprietor's request for a material change to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 14 to 20.
- This was the school's first inspection in relation to this proposed change.
- The inspector discussed the proposed changes with the headteacher and a member of the advisory board who acts as the proprietor's representative on site. He also spoke with the proprietor on the telephone.
- The inspector toured the premises during lessons and breaktime, meeting staff and pupils informally along the way. He reviewed a range of records and documents related to the safety and welfare of pupils to consider the school's capacity for the proposed expansion.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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