

# The Secret Garden School

Shustoke Hall, Moat House Lane, Shustoke B46 2RJ

**Inspection date**

6 October 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

*Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i), 2A(1), 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(b), 2(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g), 2A(2)*

- Leaders have developed curriculum plans and schemes of work to meet the needs of pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 3, and students in key stage 5. The plans are broad, and based on the requirements for the age groups. Leaders have also integrated the school's wider curriculum offer into the plans, offering flexibility to meet the specific needs of pupils admitted to the school. This ensures effective links with the next stages of pupils' education.
- Curriculum planning is detailed. The plans show the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. Leaders have sequenced the learning over time, so that pupils build on what they have learned before.
- The curriculum is suitably adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It pays due regard to the protected characteristics and is likely to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The school actively promotes fundamental British values. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum helps pupils develop an understanding of respect and tolerance, as well as how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are encouraged to fulfil their potential and to make informed choices about careers.
- After having consulted with parents and carers, the proprietor ensures that all pupils are provided with an age-appropriate relationships education.
- The school is likely to meet these standards if the material changes are implemented.

*Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j), 4*

- Focused teaching is offered to pupils based on their assessed learning needs. Teachers spend time developing positive working relationships with pupils. These

relationships help to engage pupils in their learning. The school aims to extend this practice to meet the needs of additional pupils. It enables teachers to understand pupils' specific needs and aptitudes, so that they can adapt planning to meet those needs.

- Leaders demonstrate their knowledge of, and expertise in, how to support both younger and older pupils to be admitted to the school. An ongoing programme of professional development is provided for all staff. It includes the understanding of a wide range of special educational needs and the development needs of pupils in key stage 1, key stage 3 and post-16 provision. Leaders intend to sustain a nurturing environment, underpinned by high aspirations, as appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities.
- The school uses a comprehensive assessment system, tailored to the needs of pupils. It enables teachers to assess pupils who may be working below their chronological age. Leaders are confident that it will help teachers working with additional pupils to identify gaps in what pupils know, understand and can do.
- Leaders are in the process of appointing additional teachers in the expectation that the additional age groups will be admitted, and the number on roll will increase. They intend to appoint staff, both teaching and non-teaching, with experience and expertise in the proposed new areas.
- The school is likely to meet these standards if the material changes are implemented.

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

*Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)*

- Leaders recognise that many pupils have missed periods of schooling and have gaps in their learning. They have ensured that there is a suitable spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy and programme of work in place, helping pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils, including the youngest, are encouraged to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. They are taught to recognise their responsibilities to the school community. Pupils learn the difference between right and wrong, and their curriculum actively promotes British values.
- Leaders monitor pupils' social and emotional development in addition to their academic progress and achievements. They encourage pupils to reflect on the impact of their actions on themselves and others. The school recognises that the extended age range and increase in the number of pupils on roll will provide additional opportunities for pupils to socialise and improve their communication skills.
- The school precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject and during extra-curricular activities. Pupils are encouraged to understand and respect different cultures.
- The school is likely to meet these standards if the material changes are implemented.

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

*Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), and 32(1), 32(1)(c) of part 6*

- The school has a well-informed safeguarding and child-protection policy in place. The policy is in line with current statutory guidance, including acknowledgment of 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2022). It is published on the school's website and available to parents in hard copy should they request it.
- The proprietor has ensured that leaders are trained as qualified designated safeguarding leads. The deputy headteacher currently undertakes the role of designated safeguarding lead, with two other senior members of staff also trained to carry out the role. All staff are trained to safeguard pupils and understand the process of referring any concerns. Curriculum plans show that pupils learn about possible risks to themselves and others, and how to keep themselves safe.
- Safeguarding concerns are dealt with promptly. Leaders work actively with external agencies when necessary to support pupils and their families. Any incidents are recorded securely and acted on appropriately.

*Paragraphs 11, 12, 14, 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- The arrangements for health and safety are fit for purpose. The written policy is up to date and complies with all relevant laws. Leaders have ensured that staff know what they should do to keep themselves and others safe.
- The proprietor has ensured compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Four identified staff have received training and act as fire wardens. Scrutinised records indicate that fire evacuation drills are carried out regularly. A fire safety audit has been carried out by an external consultant and leaders have successfully actioned all the recommendations made.
- Information related to the deployment of staff and the supervision of pupils is in place and readily available to all staff. Teachers and teaching assistants are allocated to small groups of pupils to ensure that learning and development needs are met. Supervision ratios are likely to be maintained at this high level should there be an increase in the number of pupils on roll, including younger and older pupils.
- The proprietor is in the process of appointing additional staff, with plans to recruit further staff as the capacity of the school grows.
- A wide range of appropriate risk assessments is in place. Leaders have rigorously considered possible risks to individual pupils throughout the premises and accommodation. Leaders have also considered those risks associated with activities outside the school, for example horse riding and rock-climbing activities, as well as trips in the school's two minibuses. Risk assessment records detail control measures and appropriate contingency plans.
- The school is likely to meet these standards if the material changes are implemented.

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

*Paragraphs 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), 20(6)(c), 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(6)*

- Leaders have a thorough and detailed approach to the recruitment of staff to ensure that all appropriate checks are undertaken. All interview panels have a member who has completed safer recruitment training. Detailed pre-employment checks and thorough checks of written references are undertaken before staff can begin working in the school.
- Because of the complex learning and development needs of pupils, leaders do not engage supply staff. However, leaders understand the appropriate checks to be undertaken, including checks on the information gathered and supplied by supply staff agencies, should they do so.
- The single central record contains all the required information about staff working at the school. This includes, where necessary, checks relevant to members of staff who may have worked in other countries and those who hold management positions. The inspector confirmed details recorded related to the proprietor. These meet requirements.
- The proprietor ensures that all confidential information about staff is stored securely.
- The school is likely to meet these standards if the material changes are implemented.

## Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(1)(c), 24(2)*

- The premises provide accommodation in eight classroom areas, several smaller break-out rooms, two sensory rooms, kitchens and dining area, a barn area accommodating small animals and a 'fix-it' area, an additional small animal and reptile area, medical room, office, toilet areas (including a designated toilet for pupils with disabilities), appropriate washing facilities and an extensive (eight-acre) outdoor area. Additional pupils will have access to all the existing facilities of the school.
- There are separate individual toilets and suitable washing facilities for pupils. The number of toilets is likely to meet the needs of the proposed age ranges and additional pupils. The toilet and washing area provided for pupils with disabilities can also be accessed by other pupils and staff.
- The medical room is well equipped and spacious, with easy access to a nearby toilet and washing area. It contains a bed, seating and first-aid kits. Four members of staff are trained first aiders.

*Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)*

- The proprietor has ensured that the premises are well decorated, furnished and maintained. Resources are of good quality and appropriate to the learning needs of pupils. All the classrooms benefit from natural light through windows. There is adequate classroom space to cater for pupils of differing ages and to cater for a

capacity of 40 pupils. It is evident that pupils' welfare, health and safety are likely to be maintained if the material changes are implemented.

- Leaders have ensured that lighting, heating and acoustics are suitable for all the activities that are likely to take place in all the spaces throughout the school.

*Paragraphs 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)*

- The proprietor has ensured that pupils have access to drinking water. Signs clearly indicate where water is safe to drink. In addition, pupils are provided with individual water bottles that can be refilled throughout the day. There are regular checks on the quality and safety of the water supply. There is safe access to warm water for pupils with no risk of scalding.

*Paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)*

- Existing outdoor areas, including a large, grassed paddock and a designated outdoor gym, are well maintained. These areas offer opportunities for physical education and enable pupils to play together during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- There are stables housing two donkeys and three ponies in the barn area. The animals are well cared for and provide opportunities for relaxation and therapy for pupils. Existing pupils benefit from opportunities for horse riding off site, animal husbandry and a relaxing and soothing small animal and reptile room, for quiet reflection.
- The school is likely to meet these standards if the material change is implemented.

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

*Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)*

- The leaders and proprietor are knowledgeable and committed to providing the best possible education for pupils admitted to the school. In planning and preparing to accommodate pupils of different ages from the current intake, and in seeking to offer more places, they have demonstrated strong attention to detail. They have worked closely with other agencies, including educational psychology, speech therapy and occupational therapy services, to ensure that needs are met. Leaders consistently meet the independent school standards.
- The school has a carefully defined management structure with well-defined roles that help support rigorous and robust quality assurance. A recently appointed advisory board aims to contribute to the ongoing process of challenge and further improvement. Leaders' checking of the independent school standards is part of their regular monitoring, evaluation and review cycle.
- Leaders put pupils' welfare, health and safety first and demonstrate a strong commitment to helping pupils achieve as well as they possibly can. The proprietor has a strong record in meeting the needs of pupils in the school and this is likely to be the case should additional pupils of different ages be admitted to the school.
- The school is likely to meet these standards if the material changes are implemented.

## Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an accessibility plan in place. It takes account of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It identifies actions to ensure that the school's physical environment, curriculum and written information continue to be as accessible as possible. It is reviewed and updated regularly.

## **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	148243
DfE registration number	937/6033
Inspection number	10250263

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 school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	The Secret Garden School Limited
Principal	Mrs Annette Gadd
Annual fees (day pupils)	£43,950 to £88,590
Telephone number	01675 488825
Website	<a href="http://www.thesecretgarden.org.uk">www.thesecretgarden.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:agadd@thesecretgarden.org.uk">agadd@thesecretgarden.org.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	15 to 17 March 2022

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 14	6 to 19	6 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	24	40	40

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	24	40



Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	24	40
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	24	40
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	24	40

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	10	12
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	9	11

## Information about this school

- The Secret Garden is an independent day school located on the outskirts of Birmingham. It offers places to pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Most pupils who are admitted have experienced trauma and/or interruptions to their previous education. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school opened in April 2021.
- The school is housed in refurbished former farm buildings. The premises consist of several buildings with well-appointed classrooms, several break-out rooms, two sensory rooms, a kitchen area, a small animal/reptile room, a medical room and toilets. There are extensive grounds, including an animal husbandry area and large outdoor play facilities.
- Places are commissioned by local authorities, including Birmingham, Solihull and Warwickshire.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision. Pupils do, however, engage in horse riding and rock-climbing at local venues.

- The school most recent full inspection was in March 2022, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) in response to an application by the school for an increase in the number of pupils the school can admit, from 32 to 40, and a change in the age range, from 7–14 years to 6–19 years. The inspection focused on whether the school's capacity would be likely to meet some of the welfare, health and safety standards in part 3 of the independent school standards (the standards) and the standards in part 5 on the premises and accommodation at the school.
- The inspection also focused on whether the school's proposed education for pupils in key stage 1, older pupils in key stage 3 and post-16 students would be likely to meet the standards in part 1 (on the quality of education provided), in part 2 (on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils), in part 4 (on the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors), and the standards in part 5.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, who is also the principal, along with the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. A tour of the premises and accommodation was conducted with the principal.
- The inspector examined a range of documents, including the school's safeguarding policy and documents, and policies relating to fire safety, supervision, health and safety and risk assessments. In addition to existing curriculum plans, the inspector reviewed the school's schemes of work and plans for pupils to be admitted to key stage 1, key stage 3 and post-16 provision.
- The inspector examined the school's record of safeguarding checks made on staff, and pupils' safeguarding records.

## Inspection team

Mike Onyon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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