

Great Oaks Small School

Jutes Lane, Minster, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5FH

Inspection date

27 October 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), 32(1) and 32(1)(c)

- Safeguarding is given the highest priority at this school. Trustees and leaders understand very clearly the additional vulnerabilities that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) face. This includes in and outside of school.
- The school's safeguarding policy takes into account current guidance and is published on the school's website. Staff training is up to date. Designated safeguarding leads have completed appropriate training, including for the safe recruitment of staff.
- Staff understand what to do if they have concerns. Leaders are also well informed about their responsibilities in respect to protecting and promoting the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff. Records of concern and documentation regarding contact with parents and referrals to outside agencies are maintained well.
- Trustees have good oversight of safeguarding. They understand the importance of giving leaders capacity to deal with safeguarding concerns. This includes ensuring that each of the two school sites has enough suitably trained safeguarding leads.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14 and 16–16(b)

- Leaders take health and safety seriously. They have ensured that the school's policies linked to health and safety and risk assessments are fit for purpose. This work is ongoing. Key policies have been reviewed and updated since the school's last standard inspection in March 2022.
- The school employs an independent specialist company to monitor and report on all aspects of health and safety. This encompasses annual health and safety audits and annual fire risk assessments for both sites of the school.
- The school also works closely with the landlord of the school's second site to ensure that all aspects of health and safety, including fire risks assessments, are given the highest priority.

- A school leader with suitable experience and seniority further coordinates day-to-day aspects of health and safety. This includes ensuring that aspects such as Legionella testing and annual checks on portable electrical equipment are carried out.
- Suitably qualified external experts maintain the school's fire detection and alarm system. Staff have undertaken fire marshal training. Fire extinguishers are also serviced at appropriate intervals by suitably qualified specialists.
- The risk assessment policy underpins the rationale for risk assessments and reducing risk to pupils, staff and visitors to the school alike. School leaders are also proactive in ensuring that staff complete risk assessments in a timely manner.
- Each pupil has an individual risk assessment that is reviewed at appropriate intervals. A range of more generic risk assessments are used to support staff in assessing potential hazards for activities on and off site. These include for using the school's own transport or for educational visits in the local community.
- Leaders are able to explain with clarity how additional pupils will be supervised and supported if the material change is granted. They have also thought carefully about how pupils currently attending the school will be affected by the proposed increase in numbers.
- Leaders intend to increase pupil numbers very gradually and most likely over a matter of years if the material change is granted. Staff-to-pupil ratios were appropriate across both sites of the school during the last standard inspection in March 2022. There is no reason to doubt that arrangements to supervise pupils safely will be adversely affected if the material change is implemented.
- School leaders have ensured that the relevant standards in part 3 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

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), 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(6), 21(7)(a) and 21(7)(b)

- Leaders understand the checks that need to be made to ensure that staff, supply agency staff, trustees and other adults in the school are suitable to work with pupils.
- Key leaders have undertaken safer recruitment training. They are also aware of the latest requirements regarding the recruitment of staff because they make it their business to attend appropriate update training.
- The single central record of checks on adults is compliant with current guidelines. The record is maintained well and is subject to spot checks by leaders and trustees at regular intervals.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 4 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22–24(1)(b), 24(2), 25–29(1)(b)

- The school had its last standard inspection in March 2022, when all relevant aspects of part 5 were found to be met. The last standard inspection was led by the inspector

conducting this material change inspection. No significant changes have occurred since this time. This includes on the school's second site.

- The school's premises on both sites are maintained well and are fit for the purpose. The school's second site is particularly well suited to the needs of older pupils, set in a relatively modern business park at the heart of what used to be an international pharmaceutical company's major site in Europe. The accommodation available is impressive in scale and in its location. The pupils themselves relish coming to school here.
- Both sites have a dedicated medical room. Appropriate toilet facilities are available for pupils and for staff. Aspects such as running hot and cold water, drinking water, acoustics and lighting all meet the requirements of part 5.
- Both sites provide suitable spaces for pupils to play and take their breaks. The school uses a mix of local off-site sports facilities for most of the school's physical education programme.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how the accommodation will meet the needs of the additional pupils should the material change be granted. It is clear that the accommodation would quite easily be suitable for more than the maximum number of pupils requested, even when their complex needs are taken into account.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 5 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(2)

- Trustees and school leaders have a clear rationale for their material change request. Plans have been carefully made to ensure that the proposed changes do not have an adverse effect on the quality of education the school currently provides.
- Leadership of the school is stable. Trustees understand their role well. Senior leaders, including those with specific responsibility for safeguarding, carry out their roles with integrity. This is also the case when considering the expansion of the school and the implications for pupils and staff should the material change be granted.
- Leaders continue to demonstrate that they promote the well-being of pupils actively and successfully. They are effective in ensuring that the school meets the independent school standards consistently over time.
- Trustees and senior leaders have ensured that all relevant independent school standards considered as part of this inspection, including those in part 8, are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

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	133539
DfE registration number	886/6093
Inspection number	10254191

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	Trustees of Great Oaks Small School
Chair	Clive Best
Headteacher	Julie-Anne Kelly
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,000
Telephone number	01843 822 022
Website	www.greatoakssmallschool.co.uk
Email address	office@greatoakssmallschool.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	8 to 10 March 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 19	Not applicable	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	37	60	60

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	37	Up to 60
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	37	Up to 60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	37	Up to 60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	37	Up to 60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	19	25
Number of part-time teaching staff	14	17

Information about this school

- Great Oaks Small School provides education for pupils who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or social communication disorders. All pupils currently attending the school have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils are placed and funded at the school by a local authority.
- The Board of Trustees of Great Oaks Small School is registered as the proprietor of the school. The board of trustees also provides governance for the school.
- The school rents a suite of rooms at Discovery Park Business Centre, The Gateway, Sandwich CT13 9FF, where sixth-form students and some pupils in Year 11 study.

- The school's last standard inspection took place in March 2022, when the overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good and all relevant independent school standards were found to be met.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education in response to the school's request to increase the number of pupils on roll from 40 to 60. This was the first material change inspection in respect of this proposed material change.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, the headteacher's personal assistant, other school leaders, the business manager and the chair of trustees. The inspector also reviewed the school's website, toured both sites of the school, and considered a wide range of policies and documents related to the request for a material change. This included checking the school's single central record.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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