

The Serendipity School

399 Hinkler Road, Thornhill, Southampton, Hampshire SO19 6DS

Inspection date

7 December 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, 11, 12, 14 and 16

- Leaders are highly knowledgeable about all aspects of safeguarding. They are well trained. Some leaders have completed designated safeguarding lead training.
- Leaders have put in place an appropriate safeguarding policy that reflects statutory guidance. This is available on the school's website.
- Staff are trained so that they continuously develop their knowledge and understanding of the vulnerabilities and safeguarding risks of their pupils.
- Leaders have developed clear systems and processes that allow staff to report concerns easily. These processes are well established, and staff follow them consistently.
- Pupils are taught about the dangers of technology and how to keep themselves safe online. Their use of technology while in school is closely monitored by staff.
- The health and safety and risk assessment policies are suitable. Leaders have developed clear processes to identify, assess and reduce risks.
- Staff are trained in fire safety. All staff undertake additional training to become fire marshals.
- Pupils are properly supervised at all times. Leaders have plans in place to increase the number of staff in line with the possible increase in the number of pupils.
- The proprietor recently commissioned an audit of fire safety which was carried out by a fire safety specialist. This audit did not highlight any concerns. A fire risk assessment is in place and is fit for purpose. Fire equipment such as fire extinguishers and the fire alarm system undergo regular servicing by a suitably qualified professional at regular times.
- School leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 3 are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

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

Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21

- Robust recruitment practices have been established which ensure that new staff are suitable for the posts they will undertake. Safer recruitment practices are strong.
- The school's induction programme ensures that new staff understand the context in which they will be working. This programme includes extensive training.
- Leaders understand the statutory checks they need to carry out on staff and the proprietor. These checks are carried out correctly. This includes checks on supply staff.
- The single central record fully complies with statutory requirements.
- School leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 4 are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29

- The school comprises two buildings. The school buildings are equipped with suitable toilets and washing facilities for pupils and staff. Shower facilities are also available. There is a medical room available which is suitable.
- The inside and outside of the buildings are well maintained and well looked after.
- The school has ample space to accommodate the proposed increase in the number of pupils.
- There is drinking water available for pupils.
- Classrooms are suitably lit and well ventilated. They are well resourced.
- There is a spacious courtyard between the two school buildings that provides sufficient space for the proposed increase in the number of pupils.
- There is ample outdoor lighting located throughout the school site.
- Fire safety signage, lighting and fire extinguishers are all fit for purpose and are regularly checked.
- School leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 5 are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- Leaders have a successful track record of delivering high-quality education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities whose needs are complex.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance are highly ambitious for pupils. They have high expectations of themselves, their staff and pupils. They have a shared vision for what excellence looks like.
- Leaders have a deep understanding of pupils' specific needs and how they meet them successfully.
- Leaders have given careful thought to how they will ensure sufficient staffing for the

proposed increase in the number of pupils. Leaders plan to recruit one full-time teacher and one full-time learning support assistant. While this is appropriate for the additional proposed five pupils, leaders are clear that this increase will be gradual. This is because they are acutely aware of the impact of increasing the number of pupils. They have plans for how they will use the existing space across the school buildings. These plans have been well thought out.

- Those with responsibility for governance make regular visits to the school and have regular communication with school leaders to ensure that they have a clear oversight of the school's work. They provide an equal measure of challenge and support to school leaders. They ensure that the school meets its statutory duties.
- School leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 8 are likely 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.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 131556 |
| DfE registration number | 852/6009 |
| Inspection number | 10249541 |

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 | The Serendipity Centre Ltd |
| Chair | Sean Maguinness |
| Headteacher | Philippa Smith |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £69,000 |
| Telephone number | 02380 422255 |
| Website | www.serendipity-education.com |
| Email address | info@serendipity-education.com |
| Date of previous standard inspection | 13 to 15 July 2021 |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal | Inspector's recommendation |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Age range of pupils | 9 to 19 | 9 to 19 | 9 to 19 |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 19 | 25 | 25 |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Gender of pupils | Girls | Girls |

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age | 19 | 25 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 | 0 |
| Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities | 19 | 25 |
| Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan | 19 | 25 |
| Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan | 19 | 25 |

Staff

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | 7 | 8 |
| Number of part-time teaching staff | 2 | 2 |

Information about this school

- The Serendipity School was established 15 years ago to cater for girls with severe and complex emotional and mental health needs. Most girls at the school have experienced trauma and are considered likely to benefit from a girls-only environment.
- Pupils have typically been excluded from mainstream or other special schools and many have been out of education for some time. Nearly all pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), and many are looked after by their local authority. All pupils' fees are paid for by a local authority, whether they have an EHC plan or not.
- The previous full standard inspection on 13 to 15 July 2021 judged the school to be outstanding for the first time under the education inspection framework.
- The sole director of The Serendipity Centre Ltd, the school's proprietor body, has been in place since October 2019. He provides governance to the school. He is in close contact with the school's investors, who are not part of the proprietor body.
- The current headteacher has taken up her post since the last inspection. She was already a member of staff in the school. The school's staff team is made up of

teaching staff, teaching assistants and well-being professionals, including clinical psychologists and the therapy team.

- The school makes use of the following three registered providers as alternative part-time provision for pupils on roll: St Vincent College, Gosport; Totton College, Southampton; and Havant and South Downs College, Waterlooville. The school also makes use of the following four unregistered alternative providers: Woodmill Outdoor Activity Centre (Active Nation), Southampton; Bitterne Leisure Centre (Active Nation); Fort Purbrook Activity Centre; and Tender Loving Care (TLC), Sarisbury Green.
- At the time of the material change inspection, there were no pupils on roll in the 16 to 19 provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor has applied to make changes to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to increase the number of pupils on roll.
- This was the first inspection regarding this particular material change.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and had brief discussions with staff as he toured the school. He also met with the sole director of the proprietor body, The Serendipity Centre Ltd.
- The inspector toured the school site and accommodation.
- The inspector met with leaders to discuss a range of the school's work, particularly with a focus on increasing the number of pupils who attend the school.
- The inspector checked a wide range of policies, records and documentation in relation to the specific independent school standards that were checked at this inspection.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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