

The Shires

Shires Lane, Stretton, Rutland LE15 7GT

Inspection date

2 February 2023

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(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The school has a safeguarding policy that reflects the latest guidance provided by the Secretary of State. The policy, which is implemented effectively, is supported by additional safeguarding advice.
- Staff receive regular training and understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Leaders know pupils and their backgrounds very well. They work with external agencies to provide additional support when needed. Safeguarding records are appropriate.
- Pupils learn how to be safe in different situations, for example when in the community. Leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

Paragraph 11

- The school has an appropriate health and safety policy. This is published on the school's website.
- Leaders ensure that safety checks take place regularly. For example, the school's records show that managers regularly undertake premises checks. Health and safety audits have been undertaken for the school, including for the premises that are subject to the material changes. Leaders have responded to recommendations from these audits and completed the necessary actions in a timely manner. Leaders respond promptly to identified issues to meet health and safety requirements. Such measures ensure pupils' safety and welfare.

Paragraph 12

- The school complies with the relevant fire safety regulations. Leaders ensure that checks on fire safety equipment, such as fire doors and firefighting equipment, take place regularly. Fire drills happen regularly and there is clear fire exit signage. External fire audits have been undertaken for the school, including for the premises subject to

the material change inspection. Leaders responded promptly to the audit recommendations.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders have ensured that there are appropriate levels of staff supervision in place. They have clear plans in place to increase teaching, welfare, support and therapeutic staff as numbers of pupils increases, subject to approval of the material change.

Paragraph 16

- The school has an appropriate risk-assessment policy. The school has a range of written risk assessments. Each risk assessment includes an evaluation of potential risks with control measures identified to reduce the risks.
- Pupils have individual, detailed risk assessments. Leaders regularly review these to ensure that they are up to date, and identify all known risks.
- Risk assessments are written for a range of educational visits and trips.
- Leaders make sure that staff read and understand risk assessments that are relevant to their work.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(6)

- Leaders and the proprietor have experience and a secure understanding of safer recruitment procedures. The school has undertaken all the necessary pre-employment checks on members of the proprietor body, senior leaders and staff.
- The school does not employ supply teachers.
- The school has a single central record that includes the full range of checks required before an individual starts working with pupils. This is regularly checked and monitored.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material changes.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 25, 28(1) to 28(2)(b)

- The proposed premises are adjacent to the main school building. The accommodation is secure and appropriate for the needs and age ranges of the pupils.
- The school accommodation across the site is well maintained. Leaders make sure that facilities are safe for pupils. For example, leaders conduct regular checks on water supplies across the school to ensure that supplies are appropriate. They also carry out regular water temperature checks to make sure that there is no risk of scalding. Drinking water is clearly labelled.
- The school provides suitable toilet and washing facilities for pupils. There are purpose-built disabled toilet facilities. Pupils have access to appropriate changing and showering facilities for their physical education.

- Classrooms are clean and tidy. The accommodation includes rooms for therapy, library, independent learning and a multi-sensory room. Regular premises checks identify potential hazards and steps are taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety.

Paragraph 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- The school has a suitable medical room with appropriate facilities for the short-term care of pupils who are unwell or injured. First-aid equipment is stored safely and is easily accessible. The medical room has a bed, with washing facilities and toilets nearby.

Paragraphs 26 to 27(b)

- Classrooms and social spaces are well lit. The acoustics in classrooms are suitable to enable effective learning. External lighting is in place.

Paragraph 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- The school has sufficient space for pupils to play outside. The outdoor perimeters are secure. The school has wooded, garden and outdoor play areas.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material changes.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- Leaders have given careful thought to the proposed changes to increase pupil numbers and the use of additional accommodation. The proprietor and leaders are committed to the school's purpose and vision to provide high-quality education for each pupil. They are mindful that any changes should not have an adverse impact on pupils currently at the school. They actively promote pupils' well-being. They plan to increase the number of pupils on roll gradually.
- Directors and leaders have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. They fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that the independent school standards, relevant to the proposed changes, are met consistently.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards in this part if it receives approval for the implementation of the material changes.

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	131018
DfE registration number	857/6004
Inspection number	10271616

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 school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Jamie Hill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£76,500
Telephone number	01780 411944
Website	www.theshires.org.uk
Email address	info@theshires.org.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	2 to 4 July 2019

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 19	11 to 19	11 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	21	32	32

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	21	32
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	21	32
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	21	32
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	21	32

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	8	11
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	12	24

Information about this school

- The Shires is registered to provide full-time education for up to 20 pupils aged 11 to 19 years. There are currently 21 pupils on roll. This exceeds the maximum number of pupils for which the school is currently registered to provide education.
- Leaders have reconfigured the use of the school's premises since the previous inspection. They have also refurbished an additional building.
- The proprietor body is composed of four directors, two of whom have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2020. Since then, the leadership team has been restructured. Leaders have appointed additional teaching and support staff.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans relating to the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and severe learning difficulties.
- The school does not use the services of an alternative provider.
- The school's previous standards inspection took place in July 2019.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned this material change inspection in response to the school's request to increase the number of approved pupil places to 32.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and senior leaders. He met with safeguarding leaders, the health and safety officer and the school manager. He spoke with the chair of the proprietor body by telephone.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including policies relating to risk assessments, safeguarding, health and safety, and the single central record.
- The inspector met with leaders to discuss the material change requests and had a tour of the additional premises as well as the whole school site.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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