

# The Grange School

18 - 21 Church Gate, Thatcham RG19 3PN

**Inspection date**

4 July 2023

**Overall outcome**

**The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1)–2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h)–2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(d)–2(a)(2)*

- The proposed school's curriculum is based on the national curriculum. Leaders have updated the curriculum policy and other documentation since the application to register the school was originally made. Appropriate schemes of work and curriculum plans are in place.
- Leaders propose to implement four curriculum pathways. Each pathway is designed to consider the age, aptitude and needs of each pupil. This will be a small school with a high staff-to-pupil ratio. All pupils who attend the school will have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). The intention is to have a bespoke curriculum offer for each individual pupil.
- Most subject schemes of work are based on commercially available programmes. This includes those for mathematics and phonics. Leaders are aware of the need to adapt schemes of work and curriculum plans to meet the needs of pupils. This work has started. Additional reviews and refinement will be made once pupils join the school and individual needs are known.
- The school's English scheme of work has been designed with a strong focus on promoting communication and reading. A 'reading map' is in place, linked to each of the school's curriculum pathways. This will enable pupils to access a wide range of genres and high-quality reading material matched to their individual aptitudes and interests.
- Teaching staff who are already employed have been trained to use the resources and planning linked to different aspects of the curriculum. This includes for subjects such as computing, mathematics, phonics and early reading. New staff will receive similar training on joining the school to ensure continuity of approach across all classrooms.
- A suitable programme to develop pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is in place. This includes appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE). Leaders have thought carefully about how this aspect of the curriculum will be delivered. The school has a suitable policy for RSE which includes the statutory requirement to consult with parents and carers.

### *Paragraphs 3–4*

- Some teaching and support staff are already employed. These staff, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), have been heavily involved in further reviewing and refining the curriculum. This includes aspects such as how assessments of pupils' progress will be made.
- The curriculum allows for pupils to make progress according to their own interests and ability. It has been designed to build self-esteem and foster a love of learning. Leaders intend to use the school's outside spaces to support learning, especially linked to the environment and sustainability.
- Leaders have a clear framework to ensure that their intended curriculum is implemented successfully in classrooms. Much of this is formalised and will be overseen by officers employed by the proprietor company. This will ensure that pupils benefit from well-planned lessons and that leaders within the school have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas to develop relating to the quality of education the school will provide.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant independent school standards (the standards) in part 1 are likely to be met.

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

### *Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)*

- The curriculum provides ample opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although a commercial scheme of work is available for PSHE, much has been done to ensure that this strand of the school's work is relevant and meaningful, as well as introducing pupils to different cultures and concepts such as respect and tolerance.
- This is a school for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders and staff are very mindful of the additional needs that pupils who attend the school will have. Promoting an understanding of British values and preparing pupils for their next steps after leaving this school will have a high priority.
- The school day has been designed to support this aspect of the school's work. Assemblies, tutor time, circle time and 'celebration of me' events will support this. Leaders have already made tentative arrangements for outside professionals to visit the school as part of the school's enrichment programme. Educational visits outside of school will promote pupils' understanding of different faiths and beliefs.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in part 2 are likely to be met.

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

### *Paragraphs 7–7(b), 9–16(b)*

- The school's policies, written guidance and procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are sound. The safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is published on the school's website.
- Leaders talk with clarity about the school's procedures to keep pupils safe. An external safeguarding audit facilitated by the proprietor has already taken place. Key leaders are in place and have attended safeguarding training at a level appropriate to their responsibilities. Other staff have completed, or are in the process of completing, the

safeguarding training and updates they will need before the school opens.

- Induction procedures for new staff are sound. These include ensuring that staff understand policies and systems to keep pupils safe. Training linked to the use of physical restraint, aspects of contextual safeguarding and the school's online platform to record and report concerns is ongoing.
- Suitable behaviour and anti-bullying policies are in place. Ratios of staff to pupils are high. Leaders are aware of the potential additional challenges that pupils with SEND may bring. Staff have already attended a wide range of training linked to understanding pupils' specific needs. More training is available and planned as new staff join the school.
- The proprietor has made sure that all of the policies required by part 3 are suitable. Most of these are based on policies already in place in the proprietor's other schools. Despite this, a high degree of individuality is evident in policies to ensure that they meet the needs of this specific school.
- External experts support leaders' work to ensure that health and safety has a high profile and that the appropriate checks and processes are carried out in a timely manner. Leaders maintain an up-to-date overview of statutory training for all staff.
- Key requirements such as risk assessments, including an external fire risk assessment, are in place. First-aid and fire marshal training for key staff has already happened.
- Leaders are fully aware of the need to maintain admissions and attendance registers. They understand the link between attendance and keeping pupils safe. Good systems are already in place to ensure that leaders have close oversight of attendance so that they can act when there are any concerns.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 3 are likely to be met.

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

*Paragraphs 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6)–21(3)(b), 21(6)*

- The school's single central record meets statutory requirements. Leaders understand the checks that need to be made on adults at the school. The record includes checks made on members of the proprietor's board of directors.
- Leaders, including officers who work for the proprietor company, have attended appropriate training linked to the safer recruitment of staff.
- Procedures to recruit new staff are sound. Some of this work is facilitated by specialist staff employed by the proprietor. Additionally, leaders at the school know what checks need to be made and why. This includes checking references and the employment histories of adults applying to work at the school. It also includes working closely with officers from the local authority when additional information is required.
- The school does not intend to use employment agency staff.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 4 are likely to be met.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The proposed school is situated close to the centre of Thatcham. The premises were thought to be part of a farm at one time. Recently, they have been used as a nursery

and a well-being centre.

- The proprietor has completed considerable renovation work since obtaining the property. The current accommodation is the first phase of three that the proprietor has planned. The proposed school sits in its own footprint, alongside two other buildings that constitute phases two and three. The proprietor intends to submit material change applications over time linked to phases two and three, assuming this pre-registration inspection is successful.
- The accommodation is ready in all respects. There are five well-equipped classrooms, communal spaces, a therapy room, a kitchen, a dedicated medical room and other areas to use as breakout spaces. All have been decorated and furnished to a high standard.
- The school has adequate outside space for pupils to play and take part in some aspects of the school's physical education (PE) curriculum. Pupils will also use local facilities for PE and sports.
- Toilet facilities for pupils and staff are appropriate and incorporate temperature-controlled hot water. Lighting and acoustics within the accommodation are suitable for their intended use. External lighting is available when needed. Newly installed drinking-water fountains are available for pupils and staff.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 5 are likely to be met.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1)–32(1)(d), 32(1)(f)–32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(d)–32(3)(f), 32(4)–32(4)(c)*

- Leaders understand the requirements linked to part 6, including when pupils are funded or partly funded by a local authority. They also know that they need to have certain reports and other information as necessary available on request, particularly information required by parents, carers or local authorities.
- The school's current website contains appropriate information. An updated version of the website is ready should the proprietor's proposal to register the school be approved.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant standards in part 6 are likely to be met.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33–33(k)*

- Leaders are aware of the requirements of part 7. The school has a suitable complaints policy. It meets the requirements of part 7 and is available on the school's website. Leaders fully understand the complaints policy. They understand their duties to keep records of complaints confidential unless required by the Secretary of State or as part of an inspection process.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in part 7 are likely to be met.

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

*Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)*

- Leaders show a clear understanding of the standards. The proprietor and officers who work on behalf of the board of directors are experienced and knowledgeable. They

have appropriate experience in running independent special schools.

- The proprietor has already appointed key staff, including the headteacher, her deputy, and the SENCo. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, and it is clear that the vision is already shared by staff.
- Members of teaching and support staff in addition to the senior leadership team have also been appointed. It is clear from evidence collected during this pre-registration inspection that the staff team is mostly in place and is already working as a collegiate team to prepare the school for opening.
- Directors and those working in positions of governance understand their roles and their statutory responsibilities. In particular, arrangements for the clear oversight of safeguarding are in place.
- Arrangements to hold leaders to account for running the school are sound. These include provision of a wide range of professional development for staff and expertise for leaders to call on from within the proprietor group. One officer described how reflective practice and 'cross-pollination' from other schools owned by the proprietor will both challenge and support leaders at the proposed school in equal measures. The inspector has no reason to doubt this based on the evidence presented at this inspection.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in part 8 are likely to be met.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- A suitable accessibility plan in place. Leaders intend to update the plan at appropriate intervals and dependent on the needs of pupils and staff once the school opens. The school is likely to meet paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **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.

## Proposed school details

Unique reference number	149637
DfE registration number	869/6022
Inspection number	10283784

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Phoenix Learning & Care Limited
Chair	Jonathan Pain
Headteacher	Rebecca Shaw
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,311
Telephone number	07483 977 173
Website	<a href="http://phoenixschools.org.uk/grange/">phoenixschools.org.uk/grange/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:rshaw@phoenixschools.org.uk">rshaw@phoenixschools.org.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	7 to 11	7 to 11
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	Up to 20	Up to 20

## Pupils

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

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

### Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5	8
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0

### Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is situated in a residential area close to the centre of Thatcham, West Berkshire. The school will primarily provide for pupils with autism and associated needs.
- All pupils will have an EHC plan. Pupils are likely to be placed at the school by local authorities.
- Governance of the school will be provided by a small group of officers that are employed by the proprietor and who answer to the board of directors.
- It is not intended that the school will use alternative provision.



## Information about this inspection

- This was the first pre-registration inspection of the proposed school. The purpose of the inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Schools must comply with the standards to be registered.
- The inspection focused on compliance with the regulatory requirements of the standards, safeguarding procedures and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
- The inspector toured the school building and outside areas. During the tour of the school, the inspector briefly met with members of teaching and support staff already employed by the proprietor. He reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the single central record, risk assessments, policies and curriculum information.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the proprietor's operations director for education. The inspector also held an online meeting with the chair of the proprietor's board of directors.

## Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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