

The Stefan Taye School

18–20 Marina Drive, Minster-on-Sea, Sheerness, Kent ME12 2DP

Inspection date

6 July 2023

Overall outcome

The school is unlikely 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

Paragraph 2, 3 and 4

- At the previous material change inspection of March 2023, the inspector identified that certain schemes of work were incomplete. Consequently, there was a lack of assurance that teaching would secure pupils' good progress across the different subjects.
- The volunteer education consultant, identified as the interim headteacher at the previous inspection, has reviewed and strengthened curriculum plans. In particular, weaknesses in the English curriculum relating to reading have been addressed. Time is set aside for daily reading activities in each key stage. Consideration has been given to promoting a love of reading as well as to ensuring that pupils develop the skills to read confidently, fluently and with understanding. Plans exist for daily one-to-one support for any pupil who is behind in their reading. Pupils will each have a reading record diary in which to record information about the books that they read. The library is suitably resourced.
- The planned curriculum is broad and provides opportunities for pupils to learn across core subjects of English, mathematics, science, information communication technology and personal and social development. Pupils will also study a range of wider subjects, including humanities, modern foreign languages, art and design, religious education and relationships and sex education. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) has been thoughtfully considered and will have a high profile within the curriculum. Suitable plans exist across all of the intended subjects.
- The school is not yet open to pupils, and no teachers are employed. However, policies, curriculum plans, example timetables and lesson plans are all in place. Collectively, this indicates that structures are in place to ensure that pupils will have the opportunity to learn and make good progress across the curriculum.

- The carefully prepared classrooms with suitable resources, and range of policies to support teaching and learning, further indicate readiness to meet the needs of the groups of pupils the school proposes to admit.
- Suitable systems for assessing pupils' knowledge and tracking their progress have been considered and prepared.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards (the standards) if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraph 5—5 (d)(iii)

- The school has a suitable spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) policy combined with the PSHE policy. The policy effectively describes how SMSC and fundamental British values will be promoted.
- Extensive consideration has been given to pupils' participation in a range of different outings, events and celebrations intended to extend pupils' experiences and understanding of difference, tolerance and respect.
- Routine opportunities for discussion about local, national and global news, as well as to consider rights and responsibilities, will be offered through routine tutor time. Consideration has been given to providing pupils with opportunities to further their self-esteem and confidence. For example, pupils will take responsibility for tasks around school and in the wider community.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part if the DfE decides to approve the material change.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7—7(b), 11, 12, 14, 16

- The school has an appropriate written health and safety policy, which sets out the school's intention to ensure a culture of health, safety and welfare. This intention appears exemplified in the quality of the environment and in the range of risk assessments and considered mitigations. However, during the inspection, the inspector identified serious welfare concerns in relation to recruitment.
- A headteacher designate has been appointed to commence in post from September 2023. The role was advertised on the school's website and not more widely. There was only one applicant. No consideration was given to re-advertising or to advertising more broadly. The single applicant was an existing director.
- The volunteer consultant, and the director appointed as headteacher designate, both told the inspector that an interview for the role had taken place. Evidence provided to the inspector was inconclusive in this regard. For example, the only record of the interview was a single typed, undated and unsigned document. The document records that the candidate was interviewed by two former directors, with the volunteer consultant present as note taker. There was no evidence of any discussion or decision-making to appoint the candidate as advised in government guidance. In discussion with the inspector, neither the headteacher designate nor the volunteer

consultant identified a potential conflict of interest in the note-taker being the candidate's mother.

- Only one reference has been secured for the headteacher designate. This was from the chair of the proprietor body that was in place at the time of recruitment. The volunteer consultant and a governor leading on finance, her husband, both informed the inspector that two further references had been requested. However, by the end of the inspection, no evidence had been provided to the inspector to substantiate this.
- A detailed fire risk assessment has been completed by an external specialist. Checks have been carried out, including on alarms, extinguishers and emergency lighting. Fire doors and exit signage are appropriately installed.
- Although the school is not yet open, the volunteer adviser has considered carefully, how pupils will be supervised throughout the school day. Thought has been given to measures to ensure safety at arrival and departure times, as well as during breaktimes and lunchtimes. The planned ratio of staff to pupils is high and the school site is safe.
- Since the previous material change inspection, the volunteer consultant has developed an appropriate risk assessment policy. The policy outlines a clear procedure for risk assessment, including identifying hazards and risks, and for assessing the likelihood of harm occurring. The policy details processes for recording risk assessments and making consequent decisions.
- Leaders have not ensured that the standards are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraph 18(2)—18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)—19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a)(i)—20(6)(c), 21(1)—21(3)(b), 21(5)—21(6)

- At the time of the previous material change inspection, no single central record had been established. This has now been rectified. The volunteer consultant has identified, purchased and installed a suitable software package. The package provides helpful guidance on safer recruitment and on the management of the single central record. The software guides the user through processes and checks that need to be made.
- However, the inspector identified major concerns relating to safer recruitment and the completion of the single central record.
- Information has not been entered into the single central record system with sufficient accuracy. Directors and governors were identified as volunteers. Consequently, the software package did not alert the need for section 128 checks. Leaders were unaware of the need for additional checks for those in management positions. Immediate action was taken, during inspection, to rectify this.
- The volunteer consultant has carried out checks on directors and governors, including close relatives. The headteacher designate, a director, but not the chair of the proprietor body, has carried out checks on the volunteer consultant, his mother. During inspection, neither identified familial checking as potentially problematic or as

a conflict of interest. This indicates either a serious lack of understanding, or disregard for the standards and the ethos of safe recruitment.

- The chair of the proprietor body told the inspector that he has not seen the single central record and has played no part in making any checks as required by the standards. He was not aware that family members had made checks on one another.
- Leaders have not ensured that the standards are likely to be met by the school, if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1)—24(b), 24(2), 25—29(1)(b), 31(a), 31(b)

- The school buildings previously housed an independent school. They are fit for purpose in all regards.
- Classrooms are of a good size for the intended numbers of pupils. There is good natural light and acoustics are suitable. Rooms are well presented, with good-quality furnishings and resources.
- At the time of the previous inspection, drinking water was not labelled as such. Additionally, there was insufficient access to drinking water. This has been remedied. Drinking water is now readily available and labelled throughout the school.
- Toilet, shower and medical facilities are all suitable and in good working order. While physical education is likely to take place at the local sports centre, there is available space for pupils to change in school, should this be required.
- The outside space is of good size, and of high quality. There are different areas where pupils can play active games or can enjoy chatting or reading or other quiet pastimes. A sensory garden is in development.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)—34(2)

- The inspector identified serious concerns relating to the leadership and management of the school.
- To date, all work on the extensive material changes has been led and managed by an individual. This individual is not a director of the proprietor body, nor was she a director of the previous proprietor body. In conversation with the inspector, the chair of the proprietor body described her as the 'de facto leader'. No agreement for previous or current proprietors to delegate responsibility to this individual has been made.
- Since the previous material change inspection of March 2023, two of three directors, including the chair of the proprietor body, have resigned. A new proprietor body has been established and two new directors, including a chair, appointed.
- The two new directors bring a wealth of relevant experience and skill. One director is highly knowledgeable about children and young people's mental health, and about running community interest companies, including associated financial practices. The

other director, appointed as chair, has extensive expertise in aspects of safeguarding, teaching and governance. He has a strong understanding of accountability, but as yet has not started work to establish systems to ensure compliance or quality.

- There is confusion about leadership roles and responsibilities. The website indicates that the school is led by directors supported by professionals and volunteers. The website additionally references a 'dedicated management team'. When asked by the inspector about the structure of leadership and governance, and the make-up of the management team, responses from directors and the volunteer consultant varied.
- Most recent 'Directors Agenda/Minutes' record attendees by first name only. Two directors were present; the chair was absent. In addition, the volunteer consultant was present, with her role recorded as 'Member and Clerk', her husband was also present, with his role recorded as 'Finance', and one other person was in attendance, with her role recorded as 'Member'. This 'Member' is the wife of the headteacher designate. Therefore, four of the five attendees were connected through family relationships. While there is nothing to preclude this, the inspector was concerned about a lack of transparency and a potential conflict of interests.
- Through the course of the inspection, no evidence was seen of leaders being held objectively to account. Moreover, the chair of the proprietor body informed the inspector that he was not consulted about the meeting time and date. He stated that he requested that the meeting be held at another time in order that he could be present. The chair of the proprietor body said that this request was denied by the volunteer consultant.
- Both the headteacher designate and volunteer consultant told the inspector that no other members of staff had been recruited. However, the school development plan, signed and updated monthly by the volunteer consultant, identifies that the recruitment of a deputy headteacher for January 2024 is a completed action. Information provided to the inspector during inspection identified the potential deputy headteacher as the wife of the headteacher designate.
- During the course of inspection, neither the headteacher designate nor the volunteer adviser disclosed their family relationship to the inspector. The lack of transparency, coupled with inappropriate management of the single central record and contradictory evidence regarding the appointment of a deputy headteacher, gives cause for concern about leaders' integrity and the leadership practices at this school.
- Actions taken recently do not demonstrate a suitable understanding of effective leadership, or of the standards, particularly relating to welfare and safeguarding practices. The proprietor body does not have mechanisms in place to identify and address such weaknesses.
- Leaders do not fulfil their responsibilities or demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to ensure that the standards are consistently met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has a suitable accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely 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, as set out in the annex of this report.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 119005 |
| DfE registration number | 886/6057 |
| Inspection number | 10297141 |

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 | Elmley Dray CIC |
| Chair | Martin O'Neill |
| Headteacher | Not yet in post |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £47,000 |
| Telephone number | 01795 873 372 |
| Website | Elmleydrayschool.co.uk |
| Email address | info@elmleydrayschool.co.uk |
| Dates of previous standard inspection | 26 to 28 November 2019 |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal | Inspector's recommendation |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 | 9 to 19 | 9 to 19 |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 0 | 40 | 40 |

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 | 40 |
| Number of part-time pupils | Not applicable | 0 |
| Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities | Not applicable | 40 |
| Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan | Not applicable | 40 |
| Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan | Not applicable | 40 |

Staff

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | 1 | 7 |
| Number of part-time teaching staff | 0 | 0 |
| Number of staff in the welfare provision | Not applicable | Not applicable |

Information about this school

- The school has undergone significant change since the material change inspection of The Stefan Teye School in March 2023. The former proprietor body has disbanded, and a new proprietor body, comprising one former director and two new directors, has been established. The proprietor body is Elmley Dray CIC. The school is now known as The Elmley Dray School. The school continues to retain the DfE number of Elliott Park School, which occupied the same site before its closure.
- Applications are made to the DfE for a change in proprietor, a change in school name and school type, as well as a change in age range of prospective pupils. Details on the government's Get information about Schools (GIAS) website are incorrect. The school is listed as The Stefan Teye School, but details relate to the former school, Elliott Park School. The proprietor is listed as Thomas Allsworth.

- The Elmley Dray School is a special school for pupils who have a diagnosis of autism, or who have autistic traits coupled with high anxiety and/or mental health needs. The school is not yet in operation.
- The school intends to cater for boys and girls from Year 5 to Year 14.
- The school does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was the second material change inspection commissioned by the Department for Education to consider the school's application to become an independent special school, to change the age range of pupils on roll and to reduce the maximum numbers. The school has also applied to the DfE for a change in proprietor and to change the name of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the chair of the proprietor body on the telephone. The inspector had met this director in person at the previous material change inspection when he was a volunteer. The inspector met in person with the recently appointed director with expertise in mental health, finance and community interest companies.
- The inspector met with the headteacher designate, who is also a director of the school.
- The inspector met with the volunteer adviser, who, at the time of the previous inspection, described her role as volunteer interim headteacher.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised both remotely and on site. In particular, the inspector considered documents that have been produced or amended since the previous material change inspection. These included curriculum documentation and schemes of work, a risk assessment policy, the school development plan, the safeguarding and child protection policy, the staff code of conduct, the health, safety and welfare policy and a range of risk assessment documentation. The inspector also reviewed the information available on the school's website.
- The inspector considered the single central record of checks and the recruitment documentation available.
- The inspector conducted a full visit of the site, including classrooms, community areas and the outside environment.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

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

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(i) the person’s identity;
 - 18(2)(c)(ii) the person’s medical fitness;
 - 18(2)(c)(iii) the person’s right to work in the United Kingdom; and
 - 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person’s qualifications;
 - 18(2)(d) the proprietor ensures that, where relevant to any such person, an enhanced criminal record check is made in respect of that person and an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as practicable after that person’s appointment; and
 - 18(2)(e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person’s suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person’s appointment.
- 20(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if–
 - 20(6)(b) subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the Chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB–
 - 20(6)(b)(i) where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check;
 - 20(6)(b)(ii) checks confirming MB’s identity and MB’s right to work in the United Kingdom; and

- 20(6)(b)(iii) where, by reason of MB’s living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining an enhanced criminal record certificate is not sufficient to establish MB’s suitability to work in a school, such further checks as the Chair of the school considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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