

Heath Farm School

Egerton Road, Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AX

Inspection date

26 July 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(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- Leaders talk credibly about their work to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff. Safeguarding is a high priority. Knowing and understanding pupils' backgrounds and the challenges each individual faces sits at the heart of the school's work to keep its pupils safe.
- Basic aspects such as statutory and ongoing safeguarding training and procedures to follow when staff have concerns are well established. Records are detailed. The school's work to safeguard pupils never stops, including during holiday periods. Leaders are proactive in their efforts to keep pupils safe. Their work with other agencies is key in ensuring that pupils and their families receive the timely support required.
- Procedures to recruit staff are sound. The oversight of the proprietor in ensuring that safeguarding has the highest priority is effective.
- The school's policies linked to keeping pupils safe are appropriate. These include the safeguarding policy which meets current guidelines and is published on the website.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14, 16–16(b)

- The proprietor has effective systems in place to ensure that the requirements of part 3 of the independent school standards (the standards) are met. Statutory policies are in place, understood and applied. Staff with specific responsibilities linked to health and safety are experienced and understand their roles.
- Routine checks on aspects such as fire alarms and emergency lighting are fully in place. Some servicing of equipment is carried out by external expert consultants. Other aspects are covered by specialist staff employed by the proprietor.
- Risk assessments, including fire risk assessments for both sites of the school, are in place and fit for purpose. Site staff see their work as 'never ending' and 'ongoing'. Key processes such as testing water temperatures or ensuring that portable electrical equipment is safe are well documented.

- Leaders have considered carefully how additional pupils will impact those already at the school. Ratios of staff to pupils are high. Well-established routines and policies to ensure that pupils are adequately supervised are in place. The proprietor has ensured that there are enough teaching and support staff available to provide a safe environment should the material change be approved.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards checked in part 3 are likely 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(6)

- The school's single central record is fit for purpose. It contains all of the checks required on staff, supply agency staff and those in positions of governance, including members of the proprietor body.
- Pre-employment procedures are sound. Key staff have attended appropriate training to help them understand the statutory requirements and potential pitfalls linked to the recruitment of staff.
- Specialist staff employed by the proprietor oversee much of the work when recruiting staff. However, the school's headteacher is the final 'gatekeeper' to this important aspect of the school's work.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the 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 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2), 25–29(1)(b)

- The school's current sites are suited well to their present purpose. The main site will easily provide for the additional number of pupils the proprietor has applied for in this material change.
- The original material change application included a new 'college' site for post-16 students. This site is not yet ready. The proprietor changed the application with the agreement of the Department for Education as this inspection was announced. However, the school's current premises already have the capacity to provide the extra accommodation required should the material change be approved.
- All aspects of the requirements of part 5 are adequately covered in the present accommodation. Classrooms are large, bright and welcoming. A number of 'pod' buildings provide modern facilities set in extensive landscaped grounds. Additional spaces to support pupils' well-being, therapy services, dining, the science curriculum and outdoor learning are also available.
- Appropriate toilet facilities with hot and cold running water, a dedicated medical room and ample space for pupils to play and engage in parts of the school's physical education curriculum are all provided.
- Leaders have ensured that the relevant standards contained 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 34–34(1)(c)

- The proprietor has a clear rationale for the material change applied for. Leaders at the school and those in positions of governance have fully considered the impact of the additional numbers asked for.
- Leaders have a clear strategy for growing the school further over time. The present application is part of a gradual expansion, including developing and improving the school's post-16 provision.
- Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the requirements of the standards. The proprietor company has appropriate systems in place to maintain a strategic overview of the school. Aspects such as oversight and monitoring of safeguarding and the quality of education the school provides are covered adequately and consistently over time.
- Governance is provided by an officer employed by the proprietor acting as chair of the board and headteachers from other schools owned by the proprietor. Other officers employed by the proprietor provide a degree of independent oversight to ensure that the school is run effectively.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the 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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 119009 |
| DfE registration number | 886/6060 |
| Inspection number | 10297570 |

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 special school |
| Proprietor | Acorn Care and Education Limited |
| Chair | Richard Power |
| Headteacher | Jason Pearn |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £47,360 to £83,070 |
| Telephone number | 01233 712 030 |
| Website | www.heathfarmschool.org |
| Email address | jcromwell@heathfarmschool.org |
| Date of previous standard inspection | 3 to 5 March 2020 |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal | Inspector's recommendation |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 19 | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | Up to 106 | Up to 121 | Up to 121 |

Pupils

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

| | | |
|--|-----|-----------|
| Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age | 105 | Up to 121 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 | 0 |
| Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities | 105 | Up to 121 |
| Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan | 105 | Up to 121 |
| Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan | 105 | Up to 121 |

Staff

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | 24 | 24 |
| Number of part-time teaching staff | 3 | 3 |

Information about this school

- Heath Farm School is an independent special school set in a rural location near Ashford, Kent. The school caters primarily for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have additional needs associated with autism. Pupils have often experienced disruption to their education prior to joining the school. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's last standard inspection took place on 3 to 5 March 2020 when the overall outcome was judged to be good and all relevant standards were met.
- The school runs a post-16 provision at 17 Hardinge Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8HB.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision, MXCP (Motorcross Challenge Project), The Yard, Abbey Manor, Abbey Road, Dover, CT15 7DQ.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor has applied to make a change 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 other leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, the curriculum and post-16 provision. The inspector met with the school's site manager. He also met with the proprietor's regional director, who is also the chair of the governing board.
- The inspector toured the main site of the school, visiting classrooms and communal areas.
- The inspector considered a wide range of policies, records and documentation in relation to the specific standards that were checked at this inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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