

Heather Bridge School

Pine Tree Lodge, Dousland, Devon PL20 6NN

Inspection date

31 August 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

Paragraph 2(1)–2(2)(i), 2A(1)–2A(2)

- It is intended that Heather Bridge School will cater for pupils with autism and/or social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). All pupils will have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders expect to provide specialist places funded by local authorities in Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth.
- Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum. They anticipate that many pupils, including students of sixth-form age, will achieve level 2 or level 3 qualifications. The curriculum provides for pupils who have fallen behind with their education and need to catch up. For example, there is an appropriate phonics curriculum in place for pupils at the early stages of reading.
- The school's curriculum policy sets out the scope of pupils' learning and how this will be organised. This is underpinned by schemes of learning which anticipate a range of needs. The curriculum design is likely to enable all pupils to make progress.
- Leaders intend to admit pupils who may have been absent from education for extended or repeated periods. They have designed a curriculum which supports pupils to overcome any barriers to engagement. Pupils will acquire knowledge through a mix of direct teaching and project-based learning. Teachers will adapt the curriculum for each pupil, considering their needs and aspirations.
- The planned curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education covers a broad range of issues. This is likely to help pupils to keep themselves safe and well as they prepare for adulthood. Leaders recognise that they may need to take an individualised approach to PSHE with some pupils to ensure that key messages are fully understood.
- Leaders have published a written statement on their approach to relationships and sex education and health education. This recognises the role of parents, including their right to consultation on the curriculum content.
- A programme of careers education has been integrated into the PSHE programme, with a notable emphasis on encounters with people who hold jobs in a range of industries.

Paragraph 3–3(j)

- Leaders have strong plans in place for teacher induction and continuing professional development. If these plans are implemented well, teachers will have the knowledge to be able to deliver the intended curriculum effectively.
- Leaders show a strong understanding of both formative and summative assessment. They rightly emphasise the importance of formative assessment and intend that a range of staff will contribute to building a picture of what pupils know and can do. In addition, leaders identify a range of summative assessment tools they will use to ensure that internal assessments are accurate and prepare pupils for accreditation.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how they will foster self-motivation towards intellectual effort among pupils. For example, there are compelling plans to support the development of a positive reading culture in the school.
- There are well-considered policies and plans in place to support staff with the teaching of good behaviour.

Paragraph 4

- It is intended that when pupils first join the school, they will undergo baseline assessments during a four-week transition period. This will include a check to identify any gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. A curriculum bespoke to each pupil will be developed in light of early assessments. Throughout their time at Heather Bridge, pupils' performance will be reviewed regularly and this will inform EHC plans.
- Overall, the independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)

- There is considerable opportunity through the planned project-based learning approaches for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The intended curriculum for creative and aesthetic learning and physical education is particularly broad and rich. If implemented successfully, this is likely to provide pupils with a wide range of enriching experiences.
- Leaders' thinking in relation to fundamental British values is well developed. It is clear that leaders intend to promote values such as democracy and tolerance actively. Leaders have considered how they will teach pupils about the Equalities Act 2010, including the rights of people with protected characteristics. This is reflected in their curriculum plans.
- Leaders recognise the importance of protecting pupils from exposure to imbalanced or partisan views, both in school and when engaged in extra-curricular activities. Scrutiny of curriculum plans shows that there is balance built into the curriculum and that resources will be drawn from reputable sources.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- Leaders have developed a comprehensive safeguarding policy which is published on

the school website. They have due regard for Department for Education guidance.

- An experienced designated safeguarding lead has been appointed. She will be supported by the headteacher who will also hold a deputy safeguarding lead role. The proprietor provides support for school leaders on safeguarding through a regional lead and a group-wide leader of curriculum and safeguarding. There are opportunities to network with and learn from safeguarding teams from other Spaghetti Bridge schools.
- Leaders have considered contextual safeguarding across the three local authorities they intend to serve.
- There is a clear programme of staff training in safeguarding planned. Processes and systems for recording and acting on safeguarding concerns have been carefully designed and tested in other schools. The single central record is in place and provides evidence that the appropriate vetting checks have been undertaken on staff appointed thus far.

Paragraphs 9, 10

- A clear policy is in place which describes the school's intended approach to promoting good behaviour. Each pupil will have a relational support plan which will set out possible risks, each pupil's needs and strategies to use in the event of heightened behaviour.
- Leaders have published an anti-bullying strategy on the school's website. This is aligned with national guidance, such as that from the Department for Education. The policy sets out a wide range of actions which are likely to create a culture in which bullying is minimised, particularly discriminatory forms of bullying. For example, leaders identify what pupils will learn about bullying through the PSHE curriculum.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13

- An appropriate health and safety policy is in place, covering legal requirements. Where necessary, assessments and checks have been made by qualified professionals, for example on the risk of legionella.
- Leaders have clear regard for fire safety regulations. Fire extinguishers have recently been fitted throughout the school. Specialist spaces such as food preparation rooms have additional safety measures such as fire blankets. A fire risk assessment has been completed and leaders have acted to address all recommendations.
- Leaders intend that all staff will be trained in first aid. They have produced an appropriate first-aid policy which sets out arrangements and responsibilities.

Paragraph 14

- The planned arrangements for supervising pupils are clear. Pupils will arrive by taxi each morning. Their arrival will be coordinated and supervised by staff. Pupils will be organised into small 'base' groups. A class team of teaching and support staff will be attached to each base group and will supervise those pupils throughout the day.

Paragraph 15

- The school has registers in place for the recording of pupil admissions and attendance. These systems have been tested in other schools and are fit for purpose. The school intends to take a morning and afternoon register and will use the attendance codes assigned by the Department for Education.

Paragraph 16

- Leaders have produced an appropriate risk assessment policy which sets out the approach to identification and mitigation of risk. Individual risk assessments are in place, covering the building and site.
- The assessment of risk at pupil level will be communicated to staff in the relational support plan. In addition, leaders have designed a system for capturing welfare concerns about pupils. This will inform safeguarding activity as well as the way that the behaviour of individual pupils is supported, helping to reduce any risks associated with pupils' behaviour.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2)–19(3)

- Leaders have high standards when recruiting staff. They do this safely and are knowledgeable about the required vetting checks. Where members of staff have already been recruited, leaders can demonstrate that all appropriate safeguards are in place.
- The school does not intend to use supply staff. However, there are arrangements in place defining the checks that would be made by the school and the assurances that would be required by the agency.

Paragraph 20(1)–20(6)(c)

- The Department for Education has vetted the chair of the proprietor board and is satisfied that they are suitable for the role.

Paragraph 21(1)–21(7)(b)

- Leaders have in place a single central record of adults working in the school. This provides an accurate record of the vetting checks carried out.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)(c), 25–27 (b), 29(1)–31(c)

- The proprietor has converted a former care home for educational purposes. The interiors are newly decorated using pale colours and artwork specially selected to create a calm, yet aspirational setting for pupils.
- Leaders intend to admit pupils in phases. They have identified two classrooms which will initially accommodate one to two small 'base groups'. These classrooms are fully developed teaching spaces. Further classrooms are available for the accommodation of up to 60 pupils. All classrooms have appropriate lighting and acoustics. Leaders have carefully considered pupils' needs when furnishing and resourcing these spaces.
- There is ample space for pupils to play outside. Leaders intend that the school site will play host to only parts of the physical education (PE) curriculum. Leaders plan to make use of local facilities which are also part of the Spaghetti Bridge estate, as well as neighbouring Dartmoor for adventurous activities. These areas were not visited as part of this inspection.

- Leaders have not yet installed changing rooms or showers. They intend to do so in a limited way. The large majority of the PE curriculum will be taught off site, at venues where there are such facilities.
- A significant proportion of the outdoor space will not be available for immediate use by pupils. This includes a large paddock and two substantial glass greenhouses. Leaders have plans to make these areas safe as part of a second phase of site development. In principle, leaders hold that they intend to develop the site gradually, involving pupils in the process, in line with the aims of their curriculum.
- There is very little evidence of wear and tear around the school site. Leaders intend to recruit a site team as the school population grows.

Paragraphs 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 24, 28

- There are ample toilets for the use of pupils and staff. These are all individual rooms supplied with hot and cold running water.
- Drinking-water is readily available and clearly labelled as such.
- There is a dedicated space for the medical examination and treatment of pupils. The space affords privacy and is appropriately resourced. The same room will be used for the accommodation of sick or injured pupils. A toilet and wash facility is situated in an adjoining room.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)–32(4)(c)

- The proprietor has published a website for the prospective school. This includes some of the information that is specified in the standards. Leaders have developed a prospectus and a letterhead for correspondence with parents. They intend that these, combined with the website, will provide parents with all the information they require.
- Leaders understand their responsibilities in relation to the provision of information and accounting to local authorities where pupils are looked after or have EHC plans.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33–33(k)

- The complaints procedure is clear and published on the school's website. It provides for the informal consideration of complaints in the first instance. In the event that a complaint is formalised, there are supportive provisions in place for the complainant such as the right to be accompanied by a third party and the right to a panel hearing.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has considerable experience in opening and leading specialist educational provision for pupils with needs associated with autism and/or SEMH. They have assembled a capable executive team that provides invaluable support for school-

based leaders. There is a striking, shared understanding across leaders about the vision and ethos for this school.

- The arrangements for governance are well designed. The headteacher will report to a regional leader, who, in turn, will report to the executive team. There are clear, tested systems in place for checking that the school will meet the standards consistently.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- A comprehensive accessibility audit has been undertaken. Leaders are using this to increase access to the physical site for disabled pupils. In addition, an accessibility plan has been published on the school's website. This considers how the school can maximise access to the curriculum and school-related information.

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	149595
DfE registration number	878/6089
Inspection number	10278848

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 special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Spaghetti Bridge Ltd
Chair	Stephen Bradshaw
Headteacher	Kasim Langmead
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,950
Telephone number	07964955090
Website	www.heatherbridgeschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@heatherbridgeschool.co.uk
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	6 to 18	6 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

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	60

Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	2	20
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	20

Information about this proposed school

- The proprietor body, Spaghetti Bridge, runs four other schools in the south west. The group has three directors, including the chief executive officer, a chairperson and a director of new developments. Further governance is provided by an executive team of seven leaders.
- A headteacher and a curriculum coordinator have been appointed to lead the school.
- The proposed school is located close to Yelverton, a town on the edge of Dartmoor in Devon. The school is based in a former care home. The building has been newly refurbished and resourced for educational purpose. The school is adjacent to farmland and a small cluster of residential properties.
- The school intends to provide specialist education for pupils with autism and/or SEMH.
- The proprietor intends to admit pupils in small numbers to begin with. Initially, it is not intended that pupils will access all of the site. A paddock and two substantial glass greenhouses will not be made available for immediate use. Pupils will gain access to these facilities as part of a second phase of development.
- Leaders intend for pupils to go off site for PE lessons. They plan for many of these to take place on the site of another proposed school, Chapel Bridge, in Plymouth.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. At the time of this inspection, the school was not operating.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the curriculum coordinator, several executive leaders and one of the directors from the board of proprietors.
- The inspector toured the site, including all of the outdoor areas that will be available to pupils from the outset.
- The inspector reviewed documents provided by leaders in advance of and on the day of the inspection. These included curriculum plans and assessment information, policies and templates for record-keeping such as the admissions and attendance registers and the single central record.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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