

Doucecroft School

Abbotts Lane, Eight Ash Green, Colchester, Essex CO6 3QL

Inspection dates

5 September 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

Paragraph 7

- The school's designated safeguarding leads are well trained and have the knowledge and expertise required to fulfil their role effectively.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training. This helps them to be alert to the potential risks pupils may face. Staff know and understand the process for raising safeguarding concerns. They raise concerns quickly and consistently following the agreed procedures.
- Designated leads take swift action in response to concerns raised by staff. These leads work effectively as a team to ensure that the decisions each other takes are quality assured and challenged, so that they make the right decisions in the best interests of pupils.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

Paragraph 11

- There are relevant health and safety policies in place. Leaders provide staff with training and guidance, so that staff understand how to implement these policies effectively.
- Leaders have developed robust systems to ensure that relevant health and safety checks are completed at the appropriate intervals.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

Paragraph 12

- There are appropriate fire risk assessments in place. Actions arising from risk assessments are swiftly addressed by the site team.

- Leaders ensure that suitable checks are carried out at regular intervals to assure themselves that the site is safe. Leaders have commissioned services into fire alarms, fire extinguishers and emergency lighting since the previous inspection.
- Regular fire drills are undertaken and procedures for evacuating the building are in place.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils are taught in classes that vary in size depending on individual pupils' needs. Staff are attentive and understand the needs of pupils well.
- Leaders have clear and sensible plans to manage the material change. They have a realistic understanding of when they will need to add additional staff. They intend to initially increase the number of pupils in existing class bases where there capacity within current staffing levels.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

Paragraph 16

- There are appropriate risk assessments in place to ensure the safety of pupils. For example, individual pupil risk assessments accurately identify potential triggers and strategies to reduce risk.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

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

Paragraph 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21

- Leaders have developed robust approaches towards the safer recruitment of staff.
- Staff responsible for ensuring the appropriate pre-employment checks are completed and recorded accurately have the knowledge required to do this.
- Leaders ensure there are systems in place to quality assure the school's register of background checks on adults. The register is well maintained and includes the required information for staff, members of the proprietor body and any other relevant adults at the school.
- Leaders seek assurances from external agencies that they have completed all required checks on agency staff prior to them starting work at the school.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29

- The school site is suitable with existing unused classrooms available should the material change be granted. The site team maintains the school effectively.

- Some current class bases have space for additional pupils and leaders intend to admit pupils to these classes in the first instance.
- There is plenty of outside space for pupils to take part in timetabled lessons, including physical education, and for free time.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32 (1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy reflects current statutory guidance and is available on its website.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain met if the material change is approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- Leaders have the required knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards appropriate to their roles.
- Leaders have developed robust systems to assure themselves that the school consistently meets the independent school standards.
- The well-being of pupils is a shared priority across the staff team.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that any increase in pupil numbers does not impact negatively on the quality of education current pupils receive.
- This standard was met at the previous inspection and is likely to remain 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	115426
DfE registration number	881/6032
Inspection number	10306929

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	Autism Anglia
Chair	Andrew Beevers
Headteacher	Mrs Louise Parkinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,905 to £85,180
Telephone number	01206771234
Website	doucecroft.org.uk
Email address	dbell@autism-anglia.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	21 to 23 June 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	3 to 19	3 to 19	3 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	63	100	100

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	63	100
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	63	100
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	63	100
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	63	100

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	27	42
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	2
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	Not applicable

Information about this school

- Doucecroft School is an independent special school operated by Autism Anglia. The school provides education for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- All school placements are funded by local authorities and admission is through local authority referral. Currently, pupils who attend the school are funded by Essex and Suffolk local authorities.
- Although the school is registered to have children from the age of three years old, there are currently no pupils accessing Nursery provision.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was in June 2022. All independent school standards were met and the school was judged to be good overall.

- Prior to that inspection, the school received a standard inspection in February 2019. At this time, the school was judged as inadequate. There were unmet standards and the school was served with a notice by the Department for Education (DfE), which required an action plan to be drawn up. This action plan was assessed and found to be acceptable with modifications in June 2019. A progress monitoring inspection took place in November 2019 where the school did not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked at that time.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) in response to a request from the proprietor for a material change to be considered.
- The school is currently registered for up to 64 pupils. The proprietor has requested that the DfE increase its capacity to 100 pupils. This is the first time that the proprietor has requested this change.
- The inspector observed pupils arriving at school in the morning.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, representatives of the proprietor body, senior leaders and members of staff. The inspector checked the school's register of background checks for adults working at the school. The inspector toured the school site with leaders and visited lessons. A range of documents relating to safeguarding, health and safety and fire safety were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Michael Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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