

# Inspection of Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning CIC

Westland Farm, Lordshill Common, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0TL

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Inspection dates: 10 to 12 October 2023

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## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Elysian provides a unique farming environment where pupils can learn and pursue their passion for working with animals. Each pupil has their own personalised curriculum which includes vital therapy to support their mental health and well-being. Step by step, the school builds pupils' resilience and self-belief. This is particularly important as many pupils have been out of school for a significant amount of time.

Pupils feel at ease amidst the school's acres of land. They speak avidly about life on the farm and how they care for horses, alpacas, goats and many more. Educationally, the school is ambitious and sets out a clear plan to meet pupils' longer-term career goals and pinpoints the qualifications pupils will need.

Staff are highly alert to pupils' emotional needs. They read situations skilfully which can pre-empt any undesired behaviour. On the whole, pupils behave well and benefit from the school's tight systems and routines. Where pupils' behaviour falls short of the school's expectations, staff seek to explore what root causes there may be. Any bullying worries raised by pupils are swiftly followed up.

Pupils value the off-site visits which develop their independence and social confidence in speaking to other people. Pupils visit charity shops, garden centres, museums and learn how to travel on a bus.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

A united team at Elysian has moved this school significantly forward since its first inspection. Excellent communication between staff means everyone is clear about the school's vision and purpose. The school is wholly committed to providing a bespoke educational package to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

A careful balance is struck between pupils' academic education and their work with animals. Each pupil has a personalised curriculum pathway that is built from the key outcomes of their education, health and care plan (EHC plan). This enables staff to closely meet pupils' needs. The whole staff team meet twice daily to discuss safeguarding and pupils' learning and behaviour. Checks of pupils' engagement with the curriculum and any subsequent changes that are made are shared so that there is a universal understanding of the support in place.

The school's curriculum is much improved in the academic subjects. Established end points provide a clear steer of each pupil's learning journey. Within a subject, knowledge is identified and sequenced so that pupils build on what they know before. Staff bring different specialisms which really help in planning ambitious units of work and projects.

Pupils learn the curriculum through real-life contexts and practical means. Naturally, the farm provides much scope to teach pupils key content. Staff break down explanations clearly and plan tasks that do not overwhelm pupils. Repeated opportunities happen for pupils to apply and reinforce what they know. The school has thought carefully about different ways for pupils to record their work and how best for teachers to check pupils' understanding. However, staff can gather a wealth of information that does not always identify how well pupils are knowing more and remembering more. Sometimes, staff's assessments are more about pupils' dispositions, such as resilience, instead of whether pupils have successfully learned the academic curriculum.

More pupils are reading widely and they enjoy accessing books from a local library. The school has also purchased high-quality fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils are realising the benefits of reading for pleasure, but the school knows there is more to do. Staff make good use of reading across the curriculum to build pupils' confidence in reading aloud in front of others. When pupils arrive, staff screen their reading skills to check for decoding gaps. A phonics programme is in place if needed, and the school is currently evaluating the impact of the programme and resources in helping pupils become fluent readers.

The settling in time which begins each day works successfully. Adults check in with each pupil as everyone carries out farming duties. This provides a calm start and helps pupils get in the right frame of mind to learn. Although the school adopts consistent behaviour strategies, some adults do not always effectively challenge pupils if inappropriate language is used in front of others. This detracts from the school's strong work in supporting pupils to regulate their behaviour.

School improvement priorities are rightly focusing on improving pupils' attendance. There are robust procedures when a pupil does not appear in school first thing. Staff work hard to remove barriers that pupils and their families may face. Despite this, there remain some pupils who are not in school enough. This is preventing these pupils from accessing the important educational work the school does.

The wider development of pupils is deep-rooted in the school's provision. Careers education planning and work experience are well considered. There are many interesting opportunities for pupils to engage with professionals such as vets, tree surgeons, grooms and baristas. Support for pupils' mental health is threaded carefully throughout the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils learn not just about themselves, but also about spotting signs of distress in animals too.

The proprietor body's advisory board fulfils its governance role well. The committee contains skilled professionals who help support and challenge the school's performance. Strong auditing systems ensure effective oversight of the independent schools standards (the standards) throughout the academic year. The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the school need to do to improve?**

#### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The school's approach to the assessment of pupils' academic learning can be overly complex. This means that sometimes teachers do not have a clear overview of how well pupils are learning and remembering knowledge in some subjects. The school should ensure that all staff follow the agreed processes to check on how securely pupils are learning the curriculum over time.
- Some pupils do not attend regularly. This means they miss out on learning and the professional help available in school. Leaders should continue to work with parents, local authorities and other agencies to secure high attendance for pupils so they benefit from the impact of the school's curriculum.

### **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147789
<b>DfE registration number</b>	936/6043
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	10286140
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent day school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	15
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning
<b>Chair</b>	Charlotte Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Nunn
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£48,886.50
<b>Telephone number</b>	07944 875 155
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.elysianuk.org">www.elysianuk.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@elysianuk.org">admin@elysianuk.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 February 2023

## **Information about this school**

- Elysian provides for pupils with an EHC plan, identifying social, emotional and mental health needs. The proprietor body opened a second independent special school of the same designation in Hampshire in July 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the proprietor body, the headteacher and other staff. The lead inspector met with one member of the school's advisory board. He also spoke with a senior officer for SEND in the local authority.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: English, mathematics, creative art and PSHE. To do this, they met with the curriculum leader, looked at curriculum planning, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- Inspectors talk to pupils about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions, Ofsted's online surveys and the school's internal processes for gathering parent feedback.
- The lead inspector toured the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies. These included governance board minutes, behaviour records, pupil profiles and EHC plans.

## **The school's proposed change to the age range of pupils and the maximum number of pupils**

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- The inspector's recommendation for the age range of pupils is 11 to 17. The recommendation for the maximum number of pupils of compulsory school age is 50.
- The proprietor body has a clear rationale for increasing the maximum age to 17 years old. It expects the change to be of great benefit to pupils' education and mental health. Planned staffing numbers are well considered and the school's recruitment process for selecting staff with the right skillset is strong. The school will admit both full-time and part-time pupils with an EHC plan.
- The school's leadership team has extensive experience and expertise in working with pupils with SEND. They lead with moral purpose and conviction. The school communicates highly effectively with local authorities who commission places at Elysian for pupils with an EHC plan.
- The school is situated within over 100 acres of land. The existing building and environment are already well equipped to increase the proposed pupil numbers to 50. The facilities are suitable for admitting more pupils.
- The school's health and safety policy outlines clear guidance and practices. There are thorough risk assessments which include working with animals and farming equipment.
- Increasing the maximum age to 17 will enable some pupils to have more time to gain relevant qualifications for the next stage of their education or employment. Furthermore, this will support pupils who may not join the school until key stage 4.

### **Information about this material change inspection**

- During the inspection, there were more pupils on site than are currently registered to attend the school.

### **Inspection team**

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Vicky Matthews

Ofsted Inspector

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