

The Lowen School

Lower Dimson Farm, Gunnislake, Cornwall PL18 9NS

Inspection date

19 October 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(a), 7(b)

- The proprietor publishes a safeguarding policy on its website. This is reviewed annually to take account of the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State. For example, by considering guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education 2023', the school is strengthening its systems for internet safety. The policy is implemented effectively.
- The school impresses its motto 'safety is our foundation stone' upon staff. This principle underpins policy and practice. New staff complete induction training covering safe working practices and whistleblowing. All staff access ongoing safeguarding training, some of which is delivered by external providers. This promotes an open culture.
- There are appropriate systems for reporting concerns and keeping a record of actions. Staff are vigilant for signs of abuse or neglect. Leaders make timely referrals. This helps to ensure that families receive appropriate support. The school works closely with healthcare professionals to provide care and attend to the medical needs of pupils.
- The school duly refers allegations against staff to the local authority designated officer. The arrangements for whistleblowing are set out clearly in a policy. The school is alert to and acts upon any low-level concerns which could indicate that a member of staff may require support or may not be suitable for their role.

Paragraph 11

- An appropriate range of health and safety considerations are considered in the school's health and safety policy, for example accidents, infection control and hazardous substances. Regular health and safety walks are carried out as part of routine maintenance.

Paragraph 12

- The school's fire risk assessment was completed recently. This raised actions related

to fire doors. In response, the fire doors have been serviced and further maintenance work has been commissioned.

- Fire systems and equipment are checked at regular intervals. Due to their special education needs and/or disabilities, pupils have personal evacuation plans. The school uses fire drills to refine these plans based on pupils' individual and changing responses to emergency situations.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils are well supervised. They are taught in small groups with some one-to-one teaching or therapeutic support as appropriate. Groups are supervised by at least two members of staff. The proprietor intends to phase in an additional four pupils gradually if the material change is approved. These pupils will join existing groups.
- The proprietor already has the staffing in place to support the proposed material change. However, the proprietor also intends to recruit two members of staff, including one teacher. Further recruitment may be undertaken depending on the requirements set out in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

Paragraphs 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The risk assessment policy sets out the approach to assessing risks arising from the environment, on- and off-site activities and pupils' individual needs. There is a site-wide risk assessment which shows careful consideration of the premises. The school treats risk assessments as living documents which are regularly updated.
- The school manages considerable risk associated with pupils' medical conditions and personal care needs. Safety plans for individual pupils are informed by advice from medical professionals and produced in partnership with parents and carers.
- There are risks to pupils and staff associated with pupils' behaviour, as linked to their special educational needs and disabilities. The school carefully balances the risks to safety with the risk that pupils' liberty is unduly restricted.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

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

Paragraph 18

- Staff are appointed subject to satisfactory vetting checks.

Paragraph 19

- The school does not employ supply staff or make use of third-party employment agencies. Any staff absence is covered by existing employees.

Paragraph 20

- Members of the proprietor body undertake required vetting checks, for example the section 128 check for managers of independent schools.

Paragraph 21

- The school maintains a single central record which meets requirements. This is available in printed form for the purpose of inspection.

- School leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23, 24

- There are suitable toilet facilities for the proposed number of pupils. All toilets are for individual use. Appropriate shower and changing facilities are available for pupils participating in physical education and to support any pupil with intimate care needs.
- A large bathroom has been adapted for the administration of first aid or accommodation of sick pupils. This includes a washing facility.

Paragraph 25

- The proprietor employs maintenance staff and contractors to attend to the upkeep of the property and outdoor space. Any examples of disrepair are noted and addressed. Teaching spaces, including two teaching kitchens, are well resourced and attractively presented to create a home-from-home environment in which pupils can learn skills to prepare them for adulthood.
- At the time of the inspection, there was building work underway. The proprietor plans to relocate the school's reception office so that it is closer to the site entrance. The building site is fenced off safely.

Paragraphs 26, 27

- Classrooms benefit from appropriate lighting and acoustics.
- External lighting and clear signage are in place to ensure safe movement around the site in the dark.

Paragraph 28

- Drinking-water is supplied from clearly marked taps in the kitchens.
- Toilet facilities are supplied with cold and hot water. The water temperature is monitored to ensure that it does not present a scalding risk.

Paragraph 29

- The school has substantial grounds, including a field and wooded area. There is ample space for the playing of games. The wooded area is in use for forest school activities such as cooking and den-building. Since the last inspection, the proprietor has added a large cabin to this area, providing a comfortable teaching space during bad weather.
- The site includes two areas equipped for play and exploratory learning. This includes a trampoline to promote pupils' physical development, as well as equipment for water and sand play.
- School leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- Among leaders, there is a compelling vision for The Lowen School. Leaders act with integrity and in pupils' best interests. They are motivated to enable access to school

for pupils with significant and complex needs. Leaders have the necessary specialist knowledge and experience as befits the provision.

- Leaders actively promote pupils' well-being. They provide an education which is designed around the aims set out in pupils' EHC plans. The school prioritises communication and language skills, supporting pupils to develop their voice. Leaders arrange occupational and speech and language therapies where appropriate. There is significant emphasis on preparing pupils for adulthood by teaching independent living skills.
- Two of the three members of the proprietor body hold senior leadership positions in the school. The proprietor arranges for a governing body to provide oversight and scrutiny. The governing body is led by an experienced chair who has undertaken school improvement work for local authorities. The arrangements for governance have served the school well. Since the school opened in February 2021, it has consistently met the standards in full. At the time of the inspection, the governing body was in the process of appointing two new governors to support the work of the chair.
- School leaders have ensured that the standards in this part 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	148342
DfE registration number	908/6011
Inspection number	10304280

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 special school
Proprietor	South West Complex Care Services Ltd
Chair	Kerry Turner
Headteacher	Tyler Collins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,000 to £104,000
Telephone number	01822851761
Website	https://thelowenschool.org
Email address	admin@southwestcomplexcare.com
Date of previous standard inspection	1 to 3 February 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 18	5 to 18	5 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	12	16	16

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	12	16
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	12	16
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	12	16
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	12	16

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	17	18
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	2	3

Information about this school

- The Lowen School is an independent special school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have a diagnosis of autism. All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils' placements are funded by Plymouth, Cornwall and Devon local authorities.
- The school opened in February 2021 and received its first standard inspection in February 2022, when it was judged to be providing a good standard of education.
- This is the only school run by the proprietor, South West Complex Care Services.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education in response to the proprietor's request to increase pupil capacity from 12 to 16. This was the second material change to the school's registration agreement. At the first material change inspection in October 2022, it was recommended that the school be approved to extend the age range from seven to 18 to five to 18.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the chair for the proprietor and the chair of governors.
- The inspector toured the school site with leaders to check that the premises were suitable and safe for the accommodation of a further four pupils.
- The inspector met with the school's safeguarding team and reviewed documents and policies, including the safeguarding policy, a range of risk assessments and records related to the maintenance of health and safety standards across the site.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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