

Athena School

Inspection date

25 October 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

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(i)

- Leaders have addressed the issues in the proposed curriculum highlighted in the previous pre-registration inspection report.
- The written curriculum policy outlines clearly how the school's curriculum will work. The policy articulates effectively how the proposed curriculum intends to build pupils' knowledge around their disrupted prior experiences and pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.
- The curriculum policy is supported by a range of helpful curriculum plans and schemes of work that intend to support the gaps in pupils' learning prior to joining the school and to build pupils' confidence and ability by helping pupils work towards appropriate qualifications.
- In contrast to the previous inspection, leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge they want pupils to learn and have created knowledge progression maps to show how pupils' learning builds over time.
- Plans cover a range of different subjects, similar to the national curriculum, with a particular focus on supporting pupils' behaviour, literacy and numeracy skills. The plans for supporting pupils' reading knowledge, for example, show how leaders have considered the most effective ways of supporting pupils to catch up to be confident, fluent readers given their prior experiences and gaps in knowledge.
- The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) plans are detailed and thorough. The PSHE curriculum plan links to relationships and sex education (RSE). Leaders have thought carefully about how these areas will be taught in an age-appropriate way and how lessons will be delivered in a sensitive and contextualised manner given some pupils' potential prior adverse childhood experiences. The plans for RSE will be shared with parents and the appropriate authorities as new pupils are admitted to the school.
- Careers advice and guidance forms part of the intended PSHE programme for all pupils, including those who access secondary-phase education.

- These independent school standards (the standards) are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 3 to 3(j)

- Leaders have thought carefully about how they will implement their curriculum, bearing in mind pupils' needs and how some may have been out of education for long periods of time.
- The lead teacher has a range of experience working in similar settings. The lead teacher has secure knowledge of the whole curriculum and has particular expertise in teaching and engaging pupils who have been out of education. It is intended that any new members of staff will have support and training to understand how to help and engage pupils with SEMH needs.
- Curriculum documentation appears helpful in supporting teaching staff to select activities that support learning. The lesson planning template appears to enable staff to consider carefully how their lessons are adapted around pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lessons intend to be closely matched to information in the education, health and care plans (EHC plan) of pupils, with the regular day-to-day progress of pupils shared via the school's proposed assessment systems.
- Proposed assessment systems have already been trialled in the proprietor's other settings. Lessons intend to be adapted around SEMH and behaviour needs. Leaders can show appropriate examples of how they have done this successfully in similar circumstances. Examples show how regular assessment checks pupils' learning and how learning is broken down into small achievable chunks for pupils to promote success and confidence.
- These standards are likely to be met.

Paragraph 4

- Pupils' progress will be assessed by ongoing assessment linked to the knowledge taught. Where appropriate, some pupils may access nationally recognised qualifications that intend to give pupils the 'step-up' to mainstream education and possible further study.
- This standard and, therefore, all the standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The PSHE and RSE curriculum, coupled with the strong focus on safeguarding and behaviour, suggests the school is likely to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully.
- The curriculum is designed to carefully support pupils' SEMH needs and self-esteem in returning to study full-time education. Leaders are ambitious for pupils, and much of the curriculum intends to support pupils to make positive choices, build life skills and be well prepared for adulthood and their next steps.
- A clear curriculum focus on positive behaviour strategies, plus the proposed 'behaviour curriculum', is likely to support pupils to celebrate positive behaviour and recognise when things do not go to plan.

- The PSHE curriculum promotes opportunities for discussion and debate, including a focus on difference, diversity and protected characteristics. Leaders intend to support the PSHE curriculum through enrichment and wider trips to places such as the Houses of Parliament, The Royal Courts of Justice and places of worship.
- Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to prevent pupils from being exposed to partisan or extremist views.
- These standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- An up-to-date safeguarding policy is in place and available for parents and relevant agencies on request.
- Safeguarding leaders are clear about their duty to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding is a core thread that runs through the school's documents and into the proposed curriculum. Leaders have a good understanding of the additional risks of pupils with severe SEMH needs. This is because the training around safeguarding is already in place for existing leaders and will be shared with new members of staff as they are employed by the school.
- The school already has established relationships with external agencies that support pupils. As a result, effective systems are already in place to ensure prompt referrals when pupils may be at risk of harm.
- The school has planned appropriate systems for recording and monitoring any concerns about adults. Leaders are experienced in working closely with the local authority designated safeguarding officer.
- This part of the standard is likely to be met

Paragraphs 9 to 10

- Leaders have a detailed understanding of the complex behaviours pupils could exhibit. The behaviour policy outlines leaders' approaches in dealing with tricky behaviour or promoting positive outcomes for pupils. This includes appropriate use of physical intervention if necessary.
- The school's curriculum plans show how leaders intend to teach and support pro-social behaviours through the PSHE curriculum and wider curriculum opportunities.
- Leaders' intended systems for monitoring behaviour appear to be well considered. These systems should pick up behaviour patterns and help leaders identify where more intervention may be required or which pupils are on track with their behaviour and making improvement.
- An anti-bullying policy is in place. It outlines clearly how any incidents of bullying will be tracked, monitored and dealt with.
- As a result of leaders' actions, the standards in this paragraph are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 11 to 13

- All required health and safety policies are in place. This includes fire safety and evacuation procedures.

- The building is well maintained with regular checks on the premises by competent and trained professionals. This includes regular checks on the fire systems, extinguishers, water quality and electrical safety.
- All staff are fire marshal trained. Further training is available for new staff when they join the school. The building has clear exit routes and signage to support pupils and staff to evacuate safely if necessary.
- There is a suitable first-aid policy. Staff are trained to administer first aid. A well-stocked first-aid box is accessible. Appropriate tracking and recording systems for accidents and incidents should support leaders to spot patterns and reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.
- The standards in this paragraph are likely to be met.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders' in-depth knowledge of pupils' SEMH needs ensures that there will be high levels of supervision for pupils, both in and out of the classroom. Supervision will be linked to risk assessment and based on pupils' individual needs and backgrounds.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 15

- Leaders' proposed systems to monitor and track attendance are modelled on successful practice in their other provisions. Registers meet statutory guidance. Leaders already have systems to monitor and track attendance at the school effectively. Leaders articulate clearly procedures and processes for supporting pupils to improve their attendance when many potential pupils have not attended well prior to joining the school.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 16

- Leaders have written a range of appropriate risk assessments, aligned to the school's risk assessment policy. Risk assessments appropriately consider the risks of the site to pupils, including the site's location near to a busy road and a beach. Pupils' individual risk assessments link closely to supervision ratios and demonstrate clearly the actions leaders take to mitigate any harm coming to pupils or staff. For example, the use of window restrictors to prevent pupil egress.
- Suitable risk assessments are also in place for off-site activity and proposed visits and experiences.
- Leaders have ensured the standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(3)

- Leaders implement necessary recruitment checks on staff prior to staff joining the school. This includes, for instance, background checks on identity and medical fitness.

Paragraphs 19(2) to 19(3)

- The school does not intend to use supply and agency staff. Nevertheless, leaders know the potential checks and processes needed if they choose to use these staff in

the future.

Paragraphs 20(6) to 20(6)(c)

- Appropriate checks have been carried out on members of the proprietor body and the proposed governing body.

Paragraphs 21(1) to 21(7)(b)

- The single central record of pre-employment checks on existing staff is already in place and meets requirements.
- As a result of leaders' actions, all standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22 to 31

- The proposed school building is shared with another provider run by the proprietor. Access to the school is through this building and is secure.
- The school consists of several education rooms that are bright, airy and well maintained. Each room is well lit, with good acoustics and colourful displays. The spaces are suitable in size for the proposed number of pupils and supporting supervisory adults. Externally, the building has appropriate lighting and access.
- Pupils can access lockable unisex toilets with washing facilities and adequate water supply. Hot water is not a scalding risk and drinking-water is clearly labelled. Water temperature and quality are checked regularly by the premises team.
- Separate changing facilities and individual showers are available for pupils; the number of which is sufficient for the number of pupils proposed. A well-resourced medical room is available and close to toileting facilities.
- Pupils can, appropriately supervised, access outside areas for physical recreation and make use of a local gym or the facilities immediately off site, for example the park, grounds and local beach.
- The building is appropriately maintained, both inside and outside. The entrance to the school is welcoming. Leaders ensure that the premises are suitable for the educational, health, safety and welfare needs of pupils.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met should the school be permitted to open.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(4)(c)

- The school does not have a website. Leaders have clear plans in place for how they will share the necessary information with parents and appropriate external agencies.
- Leaders plan to share their assessment information regularly with parents and responsible authorities. This includes sharing regular reviews of pupils' EHC plans and other important behaviour and safeguarding information.
- All pupils attending the school are funded by the local authority. Leaders know their responsibility to share information regarding the income and expenditure they receive.
- As a result, the standards in this paragraph are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- There is a clear complaints policy in place that outlines how complaints will be handled by the school. Leaders plan to ensure pupils have many informal ways of sharing their experiences with staff, such as the 'grumble book', prior to raising concerns formally.
- The policy outlines clear steps for how to raise concerns, the expected timelines and what to do if concerns are not addressed. This includes the provision for a panel to hear the complaint which features a person independent of the school management. Systems are in place for recording all complaints and the associated follow-up actions.
- The standards outlined in this paragraph are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- Leaders have addressed the key issues outlined in the previous pre-registration report. Experienced staff were put in place to review and improve the proposed curriculum offer to ensure that it is suitable for pupils with SEMH needs. The proprietor has brought in staff who have had success in similar provisions. Consequently, staff have the expertise and knowledge to adapt the curriculum around the complex needs and varying starting points of the proposed pupils.
- Subject plans are now well thought out. The curriculum prioritises the most important knowledge these pupils need, for example in managing their own behaviour, learning to reading or building mathematics knowledge. The standards in part 1 that were not likely to be met before are now likely to be met.
- The proprietor body has planned a provision that prioritises pupils' welfare, education, health and safety. Suitable training and support are in place for staff to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to support pupils appropriately with their behaviour or learning. Leaders have strong connections to external agencies, including social services, the local authority and the virtual school.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the standards. As a result, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders pay close regard to the Equality Act 2010. An appropriate accessibility plan outlines how pupils will access the curriculum and premises. The PSHE curriculum supports pupils' knowledge of the protected characteristics.
- All requirements are likely to be met.

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	150238
DfE registration number	881/6096
Inspection number	10309468

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 day school
Proprietor	Oak House Children's Home Ltd
Chair	Saheena Saeed
Headteacher	Fatima Patel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,800
Telephone number	01268 479155
Website	None
Email address	saheena@careoffice.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	8 to 17	8 to 17
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	6	6

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	6

Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	0	6
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	0	6
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	0	6

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	0	1
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	1
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	12

Information about this proposed school

- The proprietor, Oak House Children’s Home Limited, seeks registration with the Department for Education (DfE) as an independent special school to admit up to six pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities between the ages of eight and 17.
- Leaders propose to admit pupils with SEMH needs. All pupils likely to attend the proposed school will have an EHC plan.
- Pupils will likely to have experienced disruption to their education prior to starting at the proposed school and may have significant gaps in their learning.
- Pupils will often have been permanently excluded from mainstream education and other SEMH settings.
- The proprietor does not intend to use supply staff.
- The proprietor runs two similar schools located in London and in Essex.

Information about this inspection

- Ofsted carried out this inspection at the DfE's request to consider whether the proposed school is likely to meet the standards if the DfE gives permission for it to open.
- This was the second pre-registration inspection of the proposed school. The previous pre-registration inspection was in April 2022. At the previous pre-registration inspection, it was concluded that the school was not likely to meet the standards if it were to open.
- The inspector only inspected the education provision at this school.
- The inspector met, and held meetings with, a member of the proprietor board, the proposed headteacher and the children's home manager.
- The inspector toured the premises and scrutinised the single central record and other safeguarding and behaviour systems.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including curriculum plans, proposed assessment, attendance and behaviour information and risk assessments (including fire safety)

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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