

Acorn Park School

Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, Norfolk NR16 2HU

Inspection date

29 November 2023

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 1 to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(h), 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(1)(g)

- The school is proposing to extend its age range to include children in Reception (age 4 and above).
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate plans have been put in place to meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- These plans indicate that all areas of the early years framework will be taught.
- Learning will be based around core themes and high-quality books. Leaders have considered how what children learn in the Reception class will build into what they learn in Year 1.
- Staff are trained in the teaching of phonics and the approach chosen has specific units for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The plans indicate that children will be taught about age-appropriate relationships education.

Paragraphs 3 to 4

- The room proposed to be used as an early years classroom is well resourced with appropriate learning materials for younger children. There is a large outside area ready to be developed to extend learning further.
- Leaders have appointed appropriately trained and experienced staff to lead the early years provision.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- Opportunities for learning about the wider world and issues such as fairness and respect are both planned out in detail but will also be woven into the curriculum.
- The medium-term planning format used in the rest of the school will also be used in the Reception class and this ensures that staff consider this when planning teaching and learning activities.
- The policies, procedures and strategies for managing behaviour currently used in key stage 1 are appropriate for Reception children and will enable children to understand right from wrong. They are highly focused on the needs of children with autism or other neurodiverse conditions.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- The school has ensured that staff are well trained in safeguarding pupils. The safeguarding policy and guidance are detailed and comprehensive. Discussions with staff showed that there was a culture of safeguarding and checking on each other's actions.

Paragraph 11

- There is a detailed health and safety policy, the site is well maintained and it is clear that policies are followed.

Paragraph 12

- The site has appropriate fire safety measures in place, and the new classrooms are being renovated to ensure that they are to the same standard as other areas of the buildings.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders have appropriately considered the staffing for both the new Reception class and increasing numbers elsewhere in the school. New members of staff are being recruited appropriately. There is a comprehensive staff development programme to ensure that staff have the skills and expertise in place to teach young children.

Paragraph 16

- Appropriate risk assessments are in place for provision generally and for individual pupils.

The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 17 to 21(8)

- All appropriate checks are made on staff and members of the proprietor body.
- Leaders are appropriately trained in recruitment of new members of staff.

The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22 to 29(1)(b), 31

- The school is on a spacious site. Current expansion of classrooms is into spaces previously used as boarding provision. Classrooms already completed are airy and meet the needs of the pupils to a high standard. There are a range of break-out spaces to help pupils have space to work independently when needed. There are large spaces inside and out for play and physical education. The site is well maintained and facilities regularly updated.
- The medical room includes a bed and access to running water, and it is next to a toilet. Suitable drinking water facilities are provided.

The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(2)

- Leaders know the requirements of the early years foundation stage well and have put in place all appropriate systems needed.
- The proprietor makes regular checks, including by external experts, on the quality of provision in the school and compliance with the independent school standards.
- Both leaders and representatives of the proprietor body are clear that expansion is only possible with the right staffing in place. There has been appropriate investment in increasing facilities and classroom spaces.

The standards in this part 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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	135066
DfE registration number	926/6152
Inspection number	10316029

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	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Peter Marshall (head of service)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,264 to £85,131
Telephone number	01953 888656
Website	www.acornpark.org.uk
Email address	admin@acornpark.org.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	8 to 10 March 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 19	4 to 19	4 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	127	140	140

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	127	134
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	127	140
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	127	140
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	127	140

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	29	29
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	94	95

Information about this school

- This school provides places for pupils with autism. All have education, health and care plans. All places are funded by pupils' local authorities.
- The school's last standard inspection was in March 2022 and it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is seeking to extend its age range from 5 to 19, to 4 to 19.
- They are seeking to increase the number of pupils on roll to 140.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection was commissioned by the Department of Education to consider whether the independent school standards were likely to continue to be met if the proposed increase in pupil numbers and age range were accepted.
- The inspector spoke to the head of service, the headteacher and the early years teacher.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the single central register.
- The inspector undertook a site visit to see the proposed new areas of the school and those being repurposed to meet the needs of four year olds.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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