

Heath Farm School

Egerton Road, Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AX

Inspection dates

28 November 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(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- Leaders at all levels are knowledgeable about safeguarding, which is given the highest priority by the school. Staff know pupils well. They understand the barriers pupils and their families face and act when they need to.
- Aspects such as statutory and ongoing safeguarding training and procedures to follow when staff have concerns are well established. Records are detailed. Leaders are proactive in their efforts to keep pupils safe. Their work with other agencies is key in ensuring that pupils and their families receive the timely support required. Leaders are not afraid to escalate their concerns when they feel they need to.
- Procedures to recruit staff are sound. The oversight of the proprietor in ensuring that safeguarding has the highest priority is effective.
- The school's policies linked to keeping pupils safe are appropriate. These include the safeguarding policy which meets current guidelines and is published on the website.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14, 16–16(b)

- The proprietor has effective systems in place to ensure that the requirements of part 3 of the independent school standards (the standards) are met. Statutory policies are in place, updated when required, and understood and applied by staff. Leaders and managers with specific responsibilities linked to health and safety are experienced and understand their roles.
- Routine checks on aspects such as fire alarms and emergency lighting are fully in place. Some servicing of equipment is carried out by external expert consultants. Other aspects are covered by specialist staff employed by the proprietor.
- Risk assessments, including fire risk assessments for current and proposed sites of the school, are in place and fit for purpose. Site staff have a clear understanding of the various ongoing checks that need to be made. Key processes such as testing water temperatures or ensuring that electrical equipment is safe are well documented.

- Leaders have considered carefully how additional pupils will impact those already at the school. Ratios of staff to pupils are high. Well-established routines and policies to ensure that pupils are adequately supervised are in place.
- The proprietor has ensured that there are enough teaching and support staff available to provide a safe environment should the material change be approved. This includes enough staff to ensure that students at the proposed new site are adequately supervised.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards checked in part 3 are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

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

Paragraph 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(6)

- The school's single central record is fit for purpose. It contains all of the checks required on staff, supply agency staff and those in positions of governance, including members of the proprietor body.
- Pre-employment procedures are sound. Key staff have attended appropriate training to help them understand the statutory requirements and potential pitfalls linked to the recruitment of staff.
- Specialist staff employed by the proprietor oversee much of the work when recruiting staff. However, the school's executive headteacher continues to be the final 'gatekeeper' to this important aspect of the school's work.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the relevant standards in part 4 are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2), 25–29(1)(b)

- This is the first of two material change applications the proprietor intends to make linked to establishing a new site for the school's sixth form. Phase one refurbishment of the Garden Suite at the proposed new site at ME16 0ER is now complete. Phase two renovation of the Manor House on the same site is nearing completion but was not fully completed at the time of this material change inspection.
- The Garden Suite accommodation (for 15 additional pupils) meets the requirements of part 5. The proprietor will apply for phase two renovation of the Manor House (for 22 additional pupils) in a separate material change application once the second phase of the project is complete.
- The school's current sites at TN27 0AX and TN24 8HB continue to be suited well to their present purpose. The proprietor has plans to close the site at TN24 8HB in the near future, assuming this material change is approved.
- All aspects of the requirements of part 5 are adequately covered in the school's present accommodation. This is also true of phase one renovation of the Garden Suite at the new site. Classrooms are large, bright and welcoming. A number of 'pod' buildings provide modern facilities set in extensive landscaped grounds at the main site. Additional spaces to support pupils' well-being, therapy services, dining, the science curriculum and outdoor learning are also available across all sites of the

school. The new site also has a range of suitable accommodation, including a new medical room, classrooms, office space and communal areas.

- Appropriate toilet facilities with hot and cold running water as well as ample space for pupils to play and engage in parts of the school's physical education curriculum are available across all sites of the school, including the proposed new site.
- Leaders have ensured that the relevant standards contained in part 5 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(2)

- The proprietor has a clear rationale for the material change applied for. This latest application is part of a series of material changes the proprietor has either applied for recently or is proposing in the future. Leaders have a clear strategic plan to expand the school slowly over time.
- Leaders at the school and those in positions of governance have fully considered the impact of the additional numbers asked for on pupils already at the school. The proposed new site will provide new accommodation for the school's post-16 provision. Leaders have also thought carefully about where the new site is situated, linked to the breadth of the curriculum and aspects of students' personal development in preparing them for life after leaving the sixth form.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the requirements of the standards. They demonstrated integrity during this material change inspection in regard to the nuances around the two phases needed for opening the proposed new site. Phase one is complete. Phase two is not quite there yet. Leaders understand this.
- The proprietor company has appropriate systems in place to maintain a strategic overview of the school. Aspects such as oversight and monitoring of safeguarding and the quality of education the school provides are covered adequately and consistently over time.
- Governance is provided by an officer employed by the proprietor acting as chair of the board as well as headteachers from other schools owned by the proprietor. Other officers employed by the proprietor provide a degree of independent oversight to ensure that the school is run effectively.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the standards in part 8 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	119009
DfE registration number	886/6060
Inspection number	10318148

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 school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Jason Pearn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£53,670 to £84,865
Telephone number	01233 712 030
Website	www.heathfarmschool.org
Email address	enquiries@heathfarmschool.org
Date of previous standard inspection	3 to 5 March 2020

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 19	Not applicable	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	Up to 121	Up to 136	Up to 136

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	107	Up to 136
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	107	Up to 136
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	107	Up to 136
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	107	Up to 136

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	24	26
Number of part-time teaching staff	3	3

Information about this school

- Heath Farm School is an independent special school set in a rural location near Ashford, Kent. The school caters primarily for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have additional needs associated with autism. Pupils have often experienced disruption to their education prior to joining the school. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's last standard inspection took place on 3 to 5 March 2020 when the overall effectiveness was judged to be good, and all relevant standards were met.
- The school runs a post-16 provision at 17 Hardinge Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8HB.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision, MXCP (Motocross Challenge Project), The Yard, Abbey Manor, Abbey Road, Dover, CT15 7DQ.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor has applied to make a change to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to increase the number of pupils on roll and add an additional site to the school's registration. This was the first inspection regarding this particular material change.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher and other leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, the curriculum and post-16 provision. The inspector met with the school's site manager. He also met with the proprietor's regional director, who is also the chair of the governing board. The proprietor's regional director was accompanied by the previous chair of the governing board.
- The inspector met with a representative group of pupils to gather their views of the school.
- The inspector toured the main site of the school, visiting classrooms and communal areas. He also visited the proposed additional site at Heath Farm College, Queens Avenue, Ferndown, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0ER.
- The inspector considered a wide range of policies, records and documentation in relation to the specific standards that were checked at this inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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