

The Damara School

30 Bridge Street, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3AG

Inspection dates

14 February 2024

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 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- The school has appropriate policies and practice around safeguarding. Staff receive regular training and updates. The trustees regularly review the quality of safeguarding practice. There is a culture of safeguarding with daily briefings including relevant safeguarding discussions.

Paragraph 11

- The health and safety policy is detailed. Staff have comprehensively risk assessed the new site and made adaptations where needed. The new site has appropriate signage and storage of hazardous materials.

Paragraph 12

- The fire safety policy is appropriate. Emergency escapes from the new building are well signed.

Paragraph 14

- The school has carefully considered how it will grow pupil numbers to reach the proposed 32 pupils. This will be done gradually over time, ensuring that new staff are well trained before new pupils start.

Paragraph 16

- Detailed risk assessments are in place, both for the new site 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 pre-employment checks are made on staff and members of the proprietorial 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) and 31

- The proposed site is a converted warehouse, previously used as a training centre and offices. The school has successfully gained planning permission to make some internal alterations; work on this starts imminently and will be completed before the pupils are on site. The building work will improve facilities; however, the site is already fit enough for use.
- There is a large, airy atrium that will be used as a space for meals, communal gatherings and working with individual pupils. There is a large hall for physical education and play.
- There are currently five classrooms. One is very large and is to be sub-divided into two classrooms as part of the internal changes. This will provide four classrooms with room for six pupils in each, one further large classroom with greater capacity, and one smaller classroom for up to three pupils. This comfortably provides enough space for the proposed 32 pupils. One classroom currently has less natural light than others. A large window is being installed to improve this.
- There are also rooms for food technology and computing. There are office spaces for administration, school leadership and therapy sessions. Additional spaces for administration and site management are being added as part of the internal alterations.
- The medical room includes a bed, access to running water, and is next to a toilet.
- Toilet and washing facilities are appropriate.
- Suitable drinking water facilities are provided.
- The external space includes both grassed and hard surface areas for pupils to play on. This is currently fenced with a temporary fence; this will be replaced as part of the building works before the pupils move in. The school will continue to use other local specialist facilities for outside physical education lessons.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policies are readily available on the school website.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(2)

- Leaders and trustees know the independent school standards well and have ensured that the proposed site is of high enough quality.
- The school has made detailed plans about how it will grow pupil numbers over time. These are not rushed and will ensure that staff are well trained before admitting new

pupils. The appropriate curriculums for pupils throughout the registered age range are already in place.

- 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	148395
DfE registration number	926/6032
Inspection number	10321166

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	The Lotus Academy Trust
Chair	Cathleen Catt
Headteacher	Sandra Govender
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,000 to £60,000
Telephone number	01842 773673
Website	www.lotustrust.org.uk
Email address	office@lotustrust.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	22 to 24 November 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 12	5 to 16	5 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	14	32	32

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	14	32
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	14	32
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	14	32
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	14	32

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	9	17
Number of part-time teaching staff	2	2
Number of staff in the welfare provision	3	6

Information about this school

- The school is already registered to take up to 14 pupils from age 7 to 16. It is proposing to expand to take up to 32 pupils.
- To enable this expansion, the school is proposing to move to a new site at The Maltings, Raymond St, Thetford IP24 2EA.
- The school provides specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils are funded by their local authorities.
- The Lotus Academy Trust is the school's proprietorial body.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and has 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 change of site were accepted.
- The inspector spoke to the chief executive officer (who is also the headteacher), trustees and administrative staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the single central register.
- The inspector toured the proposed site and scrutinised a range of documents related to it.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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