

Bluebell School Ltd

Gloucester Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke on Trent ST7 1EH

Inspection date

19 June 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 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1) to 2(2), 2(2)(b) to 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(h) to 2(2)(i)

- The school intends to expand the age range of pupils so that children from the age of three years old can attend the school. The school anticipates that the children joining will have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It is likely the new children will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school has designed an ambitious curriculum for the early years foundation stage, which outlines what they want children to know and remember across the seven areas of learning.
- Central to the curriculum is language and communication. Staff working closely with the school have expertise in this area and the school are providing ongoing training to existing staff to further develop their expertise.
- Suitable plans are in place to ensure that children's personal, social and emotional development are also a prime focus. The use of diverse stories and additional experiences will encourage the children to have respect for others, including those with protected characteristics.
- A systematic synthetic phonics programme is already in place for pupils in key stage 1. The school has the resources ready to deliver the programme, making appropriate adaptations, for the younger children.
- The school has experienced and knowledgeable staff in place who are able to deliver the curriculum for children in the early years. They have the expertise required to adapt the curriculum to meet a range of SEND needs.

Paragraphs 3 to 4

- Staff at the school have a proven track record of effective teaching, which supports pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress.

- Continuous professional development is sharply focused on developing the relevant expertise further. Staff have planned visits to a school already delivering the curriculum in the early years foundation stage.
- Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of how children in the early years learn. Their practice with pupils in key stage 1, is well suited to how younger children learn.
- There are high-quality learning environments already in place to facilitate the curriculum for the younger children. These include both indoor and outdoor spaces.
- The school has appointed a new foundation stage lead. She has extensive relevant experience and demonstrates a sound understanding of the assessment processes linked to the foundation stage profile. The school has invested in a suitable assessment package to enable staff to use information from assessments to inform their teaching.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards (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)

- The school has ensured that there is an appropriate focus on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the planned curriculum. This is supplemented by a calendar of events.
- Children will develop their understanding of right and wrong through the behaviour curriculum, which includes clear rules and boundaries. Through a focus on topics such as people who help us, they will acquire a knowledge and respect for public institutions and services. This includes visits from firefighters and police.
- Children will start to develop their understanding of different cultures and beliefs through story and the exploration of different religious festivals.
- Children will start to develop their understanding of democracy through opportunities to contribute their views and ideas to the school council.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b) and 32(1)(c)

- There is a written safeguarding policy, which reflects the most recent statutory guidance. It is published on the school website and is available on request.
- Leaders have extensive experience and knowledge related to safeguarding and have established a vigilant safeguarding culture. They demonstrate a secure understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm. They have ensured that all staff currently employed have been suitably trained to recognise any signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Rigorous systems and processes are in place for staff to report any concerns they have about a pupil's or student's welfare.
- Leaders recognise the potential vulnerability of younger children and additional training to support staff communicate effectively with young children is ongoing.

Paragraphs 11, 12

- The health and safety policy covers all aspects required and is fit for purpose.
- There are thorough systems in place for ensuring that the weekly and monthly checks required are carried out.
- External competent persons carry out the required audits and risk assessments related to asbestos and legionella. There are recent certificates to show that checks on electrical installation and firefighting equipment have taken place in the additional premises.
- The proprietor body have clear oversight of health and safety through quality assurance. This thorough and organised approach ensures that the premises are maintained to a high standard.
- There is a recent and comprehensive fire risk assessment in place with all recommended actions now completed and signed off.

Paragraph 14

- The school has an existing high ratio of staff to pupils. The school knows this ratio needs to be maintained if the numbers and age range increases. Additional staff have been employed in preparation for the material change. This high level of staffing will enable the current appropriate levels of supervision to continue.

Paragraph 16 to 16(b)

- There is a clear and suitable risk assessment policy in place. It outlines how risks will be assessed and managed.
- There are risk assessments for all areas and pre-planned activities already in use that identify appropriate measures to be put in place to reduce risks.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(1) to 18(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(6)

- Leaders have a thorough approach to the recruitment of staff and ensure that all of the appropriate pre-employment checks are undertaken. These checks all take place before a member of staff starts working at the school.
- The single central record contains the information required.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 29(1)(b)

- The proprietor body has secured ownership of an additional building for the proposed increase in capacity at the school. The additional building has been refurbished to a very high standard and will be used to accommodate the key stage 4 pupils.
- The additional building has three classrooms, offices, a medical room which doubles as a therapy room, a kitchen, separate toilets with showers, some retreat spaces and an outdoor playground.

- There are two individual toilet facilities for the sole use of pupils, which also have a shower. Both have suitable washing facilities, and the temperature of the water does not pose a risk of scalding. There is an additional toilet with disabled access that is also available to staff and visitors.
- The medical room, which also serves as a therapy room, has a bed and washing facilities in it. It is located close to a toilet.
- The classrooms all have suitable natural daylight as well as adequate artificial lighting. The acoustics throughout the additional building are suitable.
- There are several cold-water supplies, suitable for drinking. They are clearly marked and are available throughout the day.
- There is a large tarmac area suitable for pupils to socialise and have outdoor physical education sessions.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor body wants to increase the capacity and extend the age range at this school to meet an identified need in the local area.
- Leaders have a secure understanding of the implications of having younger children at the school and are well placed to meet the needs of any younger pupils admitted.
- The additional building available is suited to the needs of the pupils it is intended to be used for. It offers a high-quality learning environment suited to the needs of the pupils.
- The proprietor body and school leaders have a secure understanding of the independent school standards and have systems in place to ensure that they would be consistently met if the material change requested is granted.
- Leaders have a range of experience in teaching and leadership to meet the needs of the intended new children.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor body has ensured that they have a suitable accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- The school has a good understanding of the learning and development requirements. The school has created an appropriate curriculum with a clear focus on language and communication. The school has planned a suitable curriculum for the seven areas of learning.
- The school has a good understanding of the assessment requirements. They have a suitable system ready to implement.
- The school has an equally good understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements. Existing safeguarding procedures are robust and the school are aware

of the additional requirements for children in the foundation stage. Appropriately trained staff with the required ratios are ready to start. Systems in the existing school are robust. There are high quality facilities ready to use that meet the welfare requirements.

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	143932
DfE registration number	860/6045
Inspection number	10325189

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 school
Proprietor	Hopedale Children and Family Services Ltd
Chair	Sarah Deaville
Headteacher	Mrs Kay Banks
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,025 - £79,490
Telephone number	01782987012
Website	www.bluebellschool.co.uk
Email address	office@bluebellschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	29 November to 1 December 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 19	3 to 19	3 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	115	140	140

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	115	140
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	115	140
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	115	140
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	115	140

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	23	To meet pupils' needs
Number of part-time teaching staff	1	To meet pupils' needs
Number of staff in the welfare provision	73	To meet pupils' needs

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with special educational needs linked to autism spectrum disorder, learning difficulties or social, emotional mental health. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- A range of local authorities place pupils in the school.
- The school had a full standard inspection in November 2022. An emergency inspection took place on 19 March 2024.
- The school proposes to use a separate premises for key stage 4 pupils if the material change is approved. This is located in The Galley Building, Whitehall Avenue, Kidsgrove, Stoke On Trent ST7 1EW.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE to establish if the school would be likely to meet all of the relevant independent school standards if the proposed material change, to increase the number of pupils in the school to 140 and to extend the age range from 5 to 19 to 3 to 19, is implemented. This is the school's third material change inspection.
- The inspection focused on the standards in Part 1 and 2 of the independent school standards that are relevant to children aged three to five. It also focused on some of the welfare, health and safety standards in Part 3, including the safeguarding and welfare requirements, compliance with the health and safety laws and fire regulatory order, the supervision of pupils and appropriate deployment of staff; all of the standards in Part 4 about the suitability of staff; all of the standards in Part 5, premises and accommodation and the standards in Part 8, quality of leadership and management of schools.
- The inspector met with the head of school, the executive headteacher, the early years leader, two directors of education, the school business manager, the group safeguarding lead, and three members of the critical friends. The inspector also spoke to the chair of the proprietor body.
- The inspector toured the new accommodation and looked at health and safety documentation related to the new site.
- The inspector also spoke to pupils about their well-being and safety.

Inspection team

Helen Forrest, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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