Wessex Lodge School

Nunney Road, Frome, Somerset, Frome, Somerset BA11 4LA

Inspection dates	15 July 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 1, 2(1) – 2(2)(d)(i)

- The intended curriculum for the age range that the school wishes to admit takes account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils. The intended curriculum is broad, offering sufficient experience of all of the aspects of education required by the independent school standards.

Paragraph 2 (2)(h) –(i), 3 and 4

- The intended curriculum is designed so that all pupils will have the opportunity to learn and to be well prepared for their next stages in education. The knowledge that pupils are expected to acquire had been identified. It is intended that pupils will learn this knowledge at the right time for their stage of learning. There is a framework in place for assessing pupils' performance and for sharing this with parents and the local authorities who commission places at the school.
- Staff who will teach the curriculum have strong subject knowledge and experience of teaching the age range that the school wishes to admit. All staff have expertise in working with pupils with the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that the school caters for. Consequently, staff are likely to be able to utilise the most appropriate teaching methods and activities to support pupils to learn the intended curriculum.

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

Paragraph 5 (a) – 5 (d) (iii)

- The school has a particularly strong focus on the social development of pupils. Both the curriculum and the approaches taken by the school to matters such as behaviour, intend to develop self-esteem and confidence, encourage respect for others and for pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7 (a) & (b)

- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the website. It pays due regard to the latest statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- There is an effective culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff receive comprehensive training which enables them to understand how to identify and report safeguarding concerns. Record-keeping on the school's electronic system shows that leaders work swiftly with other agencies and with parents and carers to safeguard the welfare of pupils.
- A designated safeguarding team meet regularly to monitor ongoing concerns. They understand the vulnerabilities of pupils at the school and adapt the range of support provided accordingly. Leaders have robust procedures in place to deal with the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

Paragraph 11

- Premises staff ensure that the schedule of maintenance checks complies with the health and safety policy and address any issues promptly. These high standards are already evident at the newly refurbished site which will be used if the request for increased pupil numbers is approved.

Paragraph 12

- The proposed site meets the conditions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Fire signs, exits and extinguishers are suitably located around the newly refurbished building. A suitable fire assembly point has been identified and is clearly marked. The school's fire safety arrangements are checked regularly by suitably qualified staff or contractors.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils are well supervised, including during unstructured social times. There are high staff-to-pupil ratios. The proposals for staff deployment and supervision are likely to be appropriate should the material change be approved. Many of the staff who would be located at the proposed site already work at the school and have experience of working with pupils with similar needs to those the school is seeking to admit.

Paragraph 16

- The risk assessment policy is appropriate. It provides clear guidance for staff on how to evaluate potential hazards. Risk assessments already in place for the new site have accurately identified potential hazards and put suitable mitigations in place.
- The independent school standards relating to Part 3 that were checked on this inspection are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

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

Paragraph 18 (1) – 18 (2)(e), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)-21(3)(b), 21(5)-21(6)

- Safer recruitment processes are followed diligently. All required checks are conducted on staff and governors to ensure that they are suitable for their roles. These checks

are recorded on the single central register, which is accurately maintained. The proprietor ensures that staff have appropriate qualifications for the roles that they hold.

- The school does not employ supply staff. Leaders are aware of the checks that would be necessary were they to employ supply staff in the future.
- The standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 22, 23(1)(a)-23(1b), 24(2), 25, 26, 27(a)-27(b), 28(1)-28(2)(b), 29(1)-29(2), 31(a)-31(c)

- The new site has been refurbished so that it can facilitate the delivery of the intended curriculum. There are several small classrooms, a large indoor space for mealtimes and assemblies and some smaller rooms, including a sensory room and immersive room.
- The proprietor has ensured that the site meets health and safety requirements, including those relating to fire safety. Rigorous processes are in place to check and maintain the buildings to the required standard.
- The proposed new site is located in a village setting. The site was previously a primary school. The site benefits from a large outdoor area where pupils can socialise and play. The intention is to use a local leisure facility for physical education lessons.
- There is a car park at the front of the proposed school building, with sufficient space for pupils to be dropped off and collected from school safely.
- All outdoor spaces have appropriate outdoor, including emergency, lighting. All internal spaces have non-flicker lighting.
- All rooms, except the immersive room, are light and airy with plenty of windows. The acoustics are appropriate for the intended use of each space.
- There are sufficient toilets for the proposed number of pupils, including a disabled toilet. There are separate staff toilet facilities. All toilets have individual hand washing facilities with access to hot water which does not pose a scalding risk.
- The medical room will be solely used for first aid, medical examination and for the short-term care of ill or injured pupils. The room is located near toilets. The school has ensured suitable facilities to store medication, utilising the same system they have in place on their other two sites.
- The proprietor's maintenance of two other sites for this school that have consistently met the independent school standards in Part 5 means it is likely that the standards will remain met if the material change is granted.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The school works closely and collaboratively with several local authorities to ensure

provision helps meet local need. The rationale for the material change is well considered and is designed to meet increasing local needs for a younger age range. The proposed new site has been well designed to suit the curriculum offer and developmental stages of the younger age range the school wishes to admit. The school has carefully considered the transition of some current staff and pupils to the new site so that well-pupil being is protected. Leaders have convincing plans to ensure that the quality of provision currently on offer is maintained across all school sites. There is strong evidence that the proprietor will ensure that Part 8 of the independent school standards will remain met if the material change is granted.

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	133522
DfE registration number	933/6210
Inspection number	10343618

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	Ms Kate Stradling
Annual fees (day pupils)	£62,500 to £84,000
Telephone number	01373 453414
Website	www.wessexlodgesschool.co.uk
Email address	officewessexlodge@enhancedchildrensservices.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	8 to 10 March 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	8 to 18	5 to 18	5 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	55	90	90

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	55	90
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	55	90
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	55	90
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	55	90

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	20	20
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	9	14

Information about this school

- Wessex Lodge School offers specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional, mental health and behavioural needs.
- The school is located over three sites: Wessex Lodge School in Frome, Newmead Farm in Maiden Bradley and a proposed new site at Wessex Lodge Primary in Kilmington.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are placed at the school by their representative local authorities.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- A full standard inspection took place in March 2022, when the school was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education commissioned the inspection in response to the proprietor's request to increase the maximum pupil capacity from 60 to 90.
- This is the third material change to the school's registration since its opening in 2005.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the site manager and other school staff. The inspector held a meeting with a representative from the proprietor body.
- The inspector toured the proposed new site with leaders to check the suitability and safety of the premises for increased pupil numbers and the relevant standards.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including risk assessments, policies, the single central record and safeguarding information.
- The inspector spoke to some pupils on the Newmead Farm site. A member of staff was present during this conversation.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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