

Park House School

277 Cheddon Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7AX

Inspection date

10 October 2024

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 to 7(b)

- There is a suitable safeguarding and child protection policy. It takes account of the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It is published on the school's website. The policy is implemented effectively.
- Leaders are knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe from harm. They consider the increased vulnerability of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) when making safeguarding decisions. They check that staff apply their safeguarding training effectively. Record-keeping is detailed. Staff take appropriate action when pupils may be at risk of harm. They work with external agencies as necessary. Staff receive regular update training, for example on child exploitation and harmful sexual behaviours.
- Directors from Five Rivers Childcare Limited (Ltd) have appropriate systems and processes in place to ensure and assure themselves of an open culture of safeguarding. There is an induction programme, which incorporates safeguarding and health and safety training for all new staff when they join the school.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14, 16 to 16(b)

- The proprietor has ensured that the health and safety policy is implemented effectively. There are appropriate checks on the premises and equipment to comply with requirements. Directors in the group have regular oversight of the health and safety checks that the school completes.
- The proprietor has ensured compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 at the main premises and at an additional premises known as 'The Cabin'. For example, checks on fire doors and fire extinguishers are up to date. Since the previous standard inspection in March 2023, two learning pods have been installed in the garden. The pods have fire extinguishers fitted. Learning pods are subject to appropriate fire safety checks.

- The school has sufficient staff in place to ensure that pupils are well supervised at all times. Procedures for effective supervision are well established across both sites. The proprietor intends to sustain a high ratio of staff to pupils if the material change is approved.
- There is a suitable risk assessment policy. The proprietor has ensured that the school has compiled detailed risk assessments of the school buildings and activities that pupils complete, to mitigate pupils' risk of harm.
- There are bespoke individual plans and risk assessments in place for every pupil. The school reviews pupils' risk assessments regularly and in line with its policies. Directors from Five Rivers Childcare Ltd have appropriate systems in place to check that pupils' risk assessments are adhered to and are updated as necessary.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to continue to be met by the school if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c), 21(6)

- The proprietor ensures that necessary vetting checks are carried out as part of the process of appointing new staff. The school does not use supply staff. However, staff responsible for recruitment understand the checks that they would need to apply if supply staff were used.
- There is a digital single central record (SCR) in place. It is well maintained and meets statutory requirements.
- The proprietor undertakes the required vetting checks, for example the section 128 check for managers of independent schools.
- The proprietor ensures that directors at Five Rivers Childcare Ltd have regular oversight of the SCR. For example, directors undertake regular safeguarding reviews, including monitoring the SCR to check that it continues to be up to date.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards in this part are likely to continue to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(2), 24(1) to 24(2), 25, 26, 27 to 27(b), 28(1) to 28(2)(b), 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- There are three main classrooms, a kitchen area, an open plan teaching area next to the kitchen and two new learning pods in the school garden. In addition, the school has a classroom at a second site called 'The Cabin'. Accommodation on the main site and at 'The Cabin' are maintained to a high standard. Learning spaces are in good decorative order. Acoustics and lighting are suitable.

- Learning spaces are well resourced. For example, classrooms have interactive whiteboards and new furniture.
- The outdoor space is large enough to allow pupils to socialise outside. It is well organised with areas for recreation, growing vegetables and small outdoor games. It is well maintained. Physical education is undertaken off-site. However, there is suitable changing accommodation and a shower for pupils' use.
- There are suitable toilet facilities available for the sole use of pupils that are lockable from the inside. There is an adequate supply of water for drinking and washing. Temperature checks are routinely taken to ensure that hot water does not pose a scalding risk.
- There is a medical room. It has a sink with running water and a toilet close by.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards in this part are likely to continue to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor holds a strong vision and purpose for the school. School leaders are knowledgeable and experienced leaders of SEND. They set high expectations for pupils.
- The proprietor and the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently. For example, since the school registered in February 2018, Ofsted has judged that it meets the standards in full at each subsequent inspection.
- Five Rivers Childcare Ltd has a detailed leadership structure in place to support the school. There are well-defined accountability systems to ensure that the proprietor maintains oversight and monitors the school's work effectively.
- The proprietor has ensured that there are effective arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the well-being of pupils. The welfare of pupils is given the highest priority. The proprietor provides ongoing safeguarding training for all staff to ensure that they meet the requirements set out in current legislation and there is a positive and open culture of safeguarding.
- The proprietor requires all staff to complete a detailed induction training programme before staff work with pupils who attend the school.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards in this part are likely to continue to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- There is an accessibility plan. It is fit for purpose. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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	145308
DfE registration number	933/6009
Inspection number	10365060

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	Five Rivers Childcare Limited
Chair	David Howard
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Pitkin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£74,880 to £120,250
Telephone number	01823 282668
Website	five-rivers.org/education/schools/park-house/
Email address	Sally.Pitkin@five-rivers.org
Dates of previous standard inspection	1 to 3 March 2023

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	8 to 19	8 to 19	8 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	20	30	26

The size of the classrooms on the main site and 'The Cabin' will allow for additional pupils. However, taking into account the school's necessary teaching and supervision ratios, the school is not big enough for the school's proposal of 10 extra pupils. Typically, two adults support each pupil and there would not be sufficient space in the classrooms for a total of 10 pupils and the adults teaching and supervising the pupils.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	20	30
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	20	30
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	20	30
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	20	30

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	12	15
Number of part-time teaching staff	3	3
Number of staff in the welfare provision	19	22

Information about this school

- The school's most recent standard inspection took place in March 2023, when the independent school standards were met and Ofsted judged the school to be good. In February 2021, there was a material change to the provision following an inspection, in which the school was permitted to increase pupil numbers from 14 to 20.
- Park House School is a specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have education, health and care plans. Their placements are funded by several different local authorities.

- The school operates on one main site: 277 Cheddon Road, Taunton TA2 7AX. The school has an additional classroom known as 'The Cabin' at an alternative provider site: Conquest Centre, Conquest Farm, Norton Fitzwarren TA2 6PN.
- The school uses a Forest school site for regular off-site education for a small number of pupils. In addition, the school makes use of learning bases in pupils' local communities. This is also part of the social enterprise focus of the company that runs the school, Five Rivers Childcare Ltd.
- The school uses 13 unregistered settings as alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department of Education (DfE) to consider the school's request for a material change. The proprietor would like to increase the school's capacity from 20 to 30 pupils.
- This is the proprietor's first request for a material change since its previous standard inspection in March 2023.
- The inspection was conducted on site. Inspectors reviewed the suitability of the main premises and the classroom at 'The Cabin' to check that they were compliant with the independent school standards and the premises were suitable and safe. An inspector also checked supervision arrangements for off-site activities.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other staff and five members of the central team from Five Rivers Childcare Ltd. The lead inspector held an online meeting with the proprietor and company founder.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Wendy D'Arcy

His Majesty's Inspector

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