

Copper Fields School

Delaware Road, Drake Walls, Gunnislake, Cornwall PL18 9EH

Inspection date

11 December 2024

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(i), 2A(1) to 2A(3), 3 to 3(j), 4

- The school has developed a coherent curriculum policy. The policy is underpinned by detailed planning. Pupils will learn within one of three pathways. The formal curriculum pathway will allow pupils to learn the full scope, depth and breadth of the national curriculum, or within the early years foundation stage. Subject-specific planning within this pathway is ambitious, sequenced well and provides for pupils to gain qualifications, when possible. The informal curriculum pathway is driven more with pupils' needs and preparation for adulthood in mind. However, planning for this pathway also allows for pupils to learn the full breadth of subjects.
- The semi-formal curriculum is planned to allow for a balance between both. Plans are adequately adapted to allow bespoke pathways that meet pupils' age and aptitudes, including if there are pupils in the early years. Therefore, the curriculum will meet the minimum standards of the independent school standards in breadth, depth and intended learning.
- The school plans to prioritise language acquisition and reading appropriately. There is an agreed whole-school approach planned to teach early reading, using a nationally published scheme. Staff will have appropriate training to deliver this scheme. Similarly, the school plans to employ its own speech and language therapist to allow for personalised planning of therapy input for pupils in the early stages of verbal communication.
- The proprietor's plans for pupil assessment link carefully to the proposed curriculum and the needs of the pupils the school intends to admit. The school will assess pupils on arrival. These assessments will look at pupils' academic performance, information from previous reports linked to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans and their wider social and emotional development. The school will assess pupils' progress towards meeting intended milestones at the end of each term using the school's assessment trackers and against pupils' EHC plan outcomes.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the school be opened.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The school is likely to meet all standards in Part 2. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) planning is detailed and well considered. Leaders come with relevant and useful experience of running specialist provision. As a result, they are aware the PSHE curriculum will run through everything the school does. For example, the school will benefit from its own centrally located dining hall, where freshly made food will be served. Curriculum planning around pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been carefully considered. This will enable the school to fulfil its intention to focus on preparing pupils for adulthood, including giving timely access to careers advice and work experience.
- Curriculum plans, including for PSHE, assemblies and events, exemplify a commitment to promote fundamental British values and equality. The school has mapped out the intended annual calendar for the school. This includes details about how assemblies will be used to bring calendar events to life. It is intended that pupils will debate and consider key moral questions, when appropriate. Pupils will learn about relationships and sex education in ways that are appropriate to their age, aptitudes and needs.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6 to 7(b)

- The proprietor body has clear policies and processes to establish a strong safeguarding culture at the school. The school has amended the proprietor body's group safeguarding policy to match the local context well. Those who will lead safeguarding are already appointed and identified within this policy. Relevant training has been completed to ensure they meet the most recent statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2024). Leaders have relevant and recent experience of leading safeguarding in specialist provision, as well as working within the group. Staff will receive targeted training in safeguarding procedures for the school on induction. This will include how to use the electronic system for recording concerns.
- The proprietor body has central staff who hold a dedicated overview of safeguarding in all schools. This supplements the localised governance arrangements that will be led by the regional director, who will also chair the governing board. As a result, safeguarding arrangements will be governed appropriately.

Paragraphs 9 and 10

- The school's behaviour policy is likely to meet requirements. The policy reflects trauma-informed practice and how to support the type of needs the school intends to provide for. There is guidance in relation to how incidents of misbehaviour and bullying will be dealt with. There is the facility for the recording of serious incidents, but the ethos of leaders is they don't expect to use it.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is sound. It covers all types of bullying. It gives appropriate guidance to staff on how to respond to concerns and disclosures, as well as the expectations around working with children and their families.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16 to 16(b)

- The school's health and safety and risk assessment policies are designed to meet the required aspects of health and safety in reducing identified risks. Leaders have undertaken appropriate assessments of the safety of the site. They have also developed processes through which they will assess risks for each pupil. Health and safety is prioritised appropriately, and is reflected in the consideration given to the design and safety of the buildings. For example, external fencing around the school site is newly appointed and in very good condition. Similarly, there are well-considered processes through which the site will be maintained. The school is ably supported by central teams with responsibility for health and safety and the conditions of the buildings. As a result, the school is ready to be opened as a safe place for its pupils.
- The school is likely to be compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. All aspects of fire safety, including emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, smoke detection and fire alarms, have been newly installed and checked. The proprietor has ensured there are clear policies and processes through which fire risk is assessed on an ongoing basis. Clear procedures have been designed to routinely check the upkeep and functioning of fire safety equipment, as well as to practise the evacuation of the buildings in the case of an emergency.
- Arrangements for the provision of first aid are suitable. The proprietor has established a clear first-aid policy. This includes details of who will receive different levels of first-aid training. There are appropriately stocked first-aid kits accessible across the proposed school site, including in the purpose-built medical room. Proposed processes for managing and recording accidents and the provision of first aid are likely to be fit for purpose.

Paragraph 14

- The proprietor has calculated staff ratios carefully. This includes consideration of the likely needs of pupils to be admitted at the school. Typically, staff from individual classes will also have responsibility for supervising pupils during informal times of the school day. The approach has been suitably risk assessed. As a result, pupils will be supervised by suitably qualified staff throughout their time in the school.

Paragraph 15

- The school has an electronic admissions register ready to go. The register includes a facility to record key information when pupils are admitted, as well as being underpinned by a secure and tried process established by the group. Similarly, the school intends to use an electronic system to record pupils' attendance. This means the school's planned approach to keeping admission and attendance registers is likely to meet requirements.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(1) to 18(2)(e), 18(3) to 18(4)(c), 19(1) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3) to 19(4)(c), 20(1) to 21(8)

- Safer recruitment checks are robust. The proprietor insists that the school prioritises safer recruitment processes. The group has established processes to check the suitability of staff. The systems for making checks on new staff and governors are widely understood and applied appropriately. This includes the statutory safeguarding

checks, checks on medical fitness and candidates' appropriateness to work with vulnerable children and young adults. The group's established single central register is used to record when checks were completed and who completed those checks.

- Safer recruitment processes are already managed through robust policies and procedures. Leaders follow clear procedures when checking the suitability of staff. This includes making requests for references from previous employers. Leaders who undertake interviews have had safer recruitment training. There are robust governance systems for ensuring that checks are undertaken and meet the policy requirements as set by the proprietor body. They ensure that newly opened schools are assessed by external consultants to ensure the school's work is robust and seen by an external eye.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(2), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25 to 29(1)(b), 31 to 31(c)

- The proprietor has ensured the proposed school site is adapted for pupils with autism and associated needs. The proposed school site is a former primary school, most recently used as an outdoor education centre. This means it has useful indoor spaces, playgrounds, grassed areas and the potential for further development in the future. The main school building is the former primary school, with a useful mix of large and smaller rooms. The proprietor has already refurbished all rooms to a very high standard. As a result, classroom spaces are already designed for lessons, appropriately lit and with good acoustics. There is a purpose-built immersion room and plentiful spaces outside for pupils to enjoy recreational activity at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Collectively, this means the school is well set to deliver the intended curriculum, which will be broad and balanced.
- The school site benefits from a centrally located hall, with a newly refurbished kitchen. There are dedicated toilets for pupils and staff and a staff shower, and a separate shower for pupils. Toilets are all single cubicles with their own sinks. Water does not present a scalding risk. All buildings have brand new fire-extinguishers, new electrical wiring, new fire alarms, emergency lighting and external lighting.
- Adjacent to the newly developed library and disabled toilets is a medical room, which has its own sink and lockable cupboard. It sits close to the school's main administrative office, which is to the side of the building and would allow pupils easy exit if a family member were to pick them up.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1) to 32(5)

- The school is looking to promote an open, outward-looking culture. They are already considering how they will communicate effectively with families. There is a carefully designed school website that is ready to go live, as soon as the school receives its registration status. The website includes key information, such as the ethos of the school, links to key policies and external audits of the school's work, including by Ofsted.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- The school has used a standard complaints policy developed by the group. The school is eager to promote an open and transparent culture. The policy includes the opportunity to raise a complaint informally, as well as steps to take if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome. Each stage has clear time frames and outcomes. Processes for recording and responding to formal complaints are detailed in the policy.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(2)

- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are likely to be met. Those responsible for leadership, management or governance have relevant and recent experience. There is a strong moral purpose to provide pupils with a transformational experience of education and to succeed. The group also has ongoing experience of opening and running successful schools for pupils with autism and other associated needs.
- Governance arrangements are established and have a proven track record for opening new schools successfully, including ensuring the independent school standards are met. As a result, the group has useful and relevant experience to ensure the school's opening will be smooth and effective. There are sensible plans to ensure that the school grows at an appropriate pace.
- The standards in part 8 are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an up-to-date accessibility plan. This is published on the proposed school's website, ready for when it goes live. As a result, the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the equality act 2010.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- The school has ensured that curriculum planning and thinking meets the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage. Specific classrooms have been refurbished to allow for the delivery of the early years curriculum. Suitable outdoor spaces are ready to give children the opportunity to learn outside, as well as in the classroom. Adaptable technology will allow pupils full access to interactive approaches to support their speech and language. Appropriate staffing ratios will ensure safeguarding and welfare requirements will 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.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	151205
DfE registration number	908/6014
Inspection number	10357489

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	P Bloom Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Chris Clements
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,890 to £97,890
Telephone number	01822 660 342
Website	www.copperfieldsschool.co.uk
Email address	infocopperfieldsschool@ofgl.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	4 to 16	4 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	24	24

Pupils

	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	24

Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	24
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	24
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	24

Staff

	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	8
Number of part-time teaching staff	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	8

Information about this proposed school

- The proprietor intends to register Copper Fields as an independent special day school in Cornwall, close to the border with Devon. Leaders intend to admit pupils from Cornwall, Devon and Plymouth.
- The site is near the town of Gunnislake. The buildings are made up of Victorian school buildings and an adjacent residential area, which has been converted into offices. The site was formerly used as an outdoor education centre. It benefits from useful outdoor learning spaces and has the capacity for the school to be extended in the future.
- The proposed school will cater for pupils with autism and similar conditions. All pupils will have an EHC plan and will be funded by the placing authority.
- The school does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.
- This inspection took place on 11 December 2024. The inspection took place on site.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including policies for the proposed school, schemes of work and information on the school's website, which will go live when the school is registered. He met with the headteacher, the proprietor body's regional director (who will also be the chair of governors), the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the administrator to discuss plans for opening the school and how leaders intend to meet the range of needs of pupils they are planning to admit.
- The inspector reviewed evidence against the independent school standards, including looking at the appropriateness of the planned curriculum, the quality of the proposed school site, policies and processes relating to safeguarding and health and safety, and the strength of leaders' plans to ensure the opening of the school is likely to be effective.
- This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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