

Lavender Lodge School

224 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HD

Inspection date

13 January 2025

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), 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy is appropriate. It reflects the latest safeguarding guidance and is published on the school's website.
- Staff understand how to identify and report any concerns about pupils' welfare. The school provides staff with regular safeguarding training and briefings to ensure that everyone knows the part that they play in keeping pupils safe.
- Staff teams meet regularly to discuss pupils' all-round circumstances. These meetings allow staff to share information not only about safeguarding but also to consider pupils' individual behaviour, attendance and learning needs. The pastoral and safeguarding teams use this information effectively in order to take appropriate action to keep pupils safe. The school's system for reporting and recording concerns about pupils' welfare is implemented consistently. Those responsible for safeguarding manage referrals effectively, including those which are escalated to the placing local authorities.
- The school keeps detailed and clear records for each pupil's behaviour, safety and welfare. These provide a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of any concerns and actions taken. The school works closely with a range of professionals, including therapists and social workers. The school's communications with external agencies, including 'team around the child' meetings, are recorded clearly and in appropriate detail.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements consider each pupil's communication methods. For example, the school ensures that pupils who use visual cues or pictures to communicate get the support that they need to share their feelings. Pupils' individual plans clearly indicate their communication methods, and the strategies that staff should use to keep pupils safe, including any physical intervention strategies.
- The school's procedure for the use of physical intervention is implemented and monitored appropriately. The school keeps detailed records of all incidents and how they are managed. Following incidents, including the use of physical intervention, staff

and pupils take part in 'debriefs' to ensure that everyone is safe and has the support they need. The school monitors and analyses incidents carefully to identify trends or patterns in pupils' behaviour.

- The school's curriculum, particularly personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, is tailored to pupils' needs. It puts personal safety and well-being at the centre and ensures that, in an age-appropriate way, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in different situations. The programme is designed to support pupils to understand how to keep safe in friendships and relationships.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14

- Class sizes are small with a maximum of eight pupils in any one classroom. Each class has a teacher and at least two members of support staff. Together with therapists, the pastoral team and senior leaders, these class teams ensure that pupils are well supported and supervised throughout the day, including at social times. The school has considered carefully the proposed increase to the number of pupils on roll. Leaders intend for this level of supervision to be in place for any new pupils who join the school. New staff have been appointed to cater for the additional eight pupils that the school will admit if the material change is approved.
- The school's health and safety procedures are implemented in line with its policy. Site staff ensure that all the required checks are undertaken appropriately and on time. Leaders and representatives of the proprietor oversee these checks.
- The premises are well maintained, clean and well resourced. The school ensures that fire safety equipment is checked routinely, fire alarms are tested and that evacuation procedures are suitable. The school's most recent external fire safety audit considered all parts of the premises, including the new building, which has been completed recently.
- The school's newest building, 'Platform 3', is situated on the same site and across the school's driveway. The school has put in place clear procedures to ensure pupils' safety. For example, additional safety measures have been designed to ensure that pupils can move from the new building to the other parts of the school safely. Arrangements are in place for visitors, deliveries and staff entering and leaving the school's site.
- The school has updated its existing health and safety checklists, documents and procedures to include the new building.

Paragraph 16 to 16(b)

- The school has a clear strategy for identifying and managing potential risks to the safety and well-being of staff, pupils and visitors. Risk assessments are in place for different parts of the school, such as classrooms, dining halls and playgrounds. The school intends for these to continue to be used for the new building. These are likely to continue to be suitable.
- Pupils' personalised plans identify any risks to pupils and set out strategies to use to meet their needs.
- If the material change is approved, the school intends to admit the additional eight pupils in a staggered approach so that pupils are supported to settle in safely and effectively. The school intends to use its well-established initial assessment

approaches to ensure that pupils' needs are understood and met. For example, in the initial stages, therapists and the pastoral team will work with other members of staff to establish the most appropriate ways to support pupils in the short- and long-term, including identifying the resources they will need.

- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met by the school if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve 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), 21(7) to 21(7)(b)

- The school's arrangements for checking the suitability of staff are robust. To accommodate the proposed increase to the number of pupils on roll, the school has already appointed additional staff, including teachers and support staff.
- The school ensures that all the required checks are undertaken to ensure the suitability of staff. These checks are recorded appropriately on the single central record.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The school's newest building comprises two classrooms, a dining hall, kitchen, toilets and changing facilities. It is bright, spacious and completed to a high standard. The classrooms are large and would safely accommodate the proposed number of pupils in each. Classrooms have 'break out' spaces, which are bright, safe and well furnished. The additional dining room also provides extra space for physical education (PE) lessons and assemblies.
- The new building and the rest of the school are maintained well. The premises are clean and safe. Lighting is appropriate, including for the use of emergency evacuation.
- The school's medical room continues to be appropriate as a space to treat sick or injured pupils. It is near to a toilet and hot and cold water facilities. Each building has cold water dispensers for staff and pupils to use. Drinking water is labelled appropriately.
- There are sufficient and suitable toilet facilities in each of the school's buildings. In the newest building, unisex toilets are in place as these pupils are likely to be in the early years or Years 1 and 2. These toilets are equipped with suitable changing facilities. The school's other toilets provide separate facilities for boys and girls. The school regulates the temperature of water from the taps to ensure that it is safe for pupils to use.
- The school's two large playgrounds provide sufficient space for pupils to use at breaktimes and for PE lessons. These areas are safe and well kept.

- Other facilities include therapy rooms, soft play areas and the school's library. These will also be used for any new pupils who join the school. There is sufficient space for therapies and other interventions to take place in each of the school's buildings.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The school has planned carefully and well for the proposed increase to the number of pupils on roll. It intends to admit any new pupils in a staggered way to ensure that pupils' needs are met and that the settling-in procedure is smooth for everyone involved.
- The building works are now complete. The proprietor has overseen this work to ensure it is finished to a high standard. The two new classrooms and other facilities in the new building are suitable and will accommodate safely the proposed increase to the number of pupils. The school also intends to move one of the other classes of pupils into the new building and there is sufficient space to do so. This too has been planned thoughtfully.
- With all changes that have been made, the school has ensured that pupils' safety and well-being remain at the centre of decision-making. New staff have been appointed to accommodate the proposed changes. The school's comprehensive training programme, including for safeguarding, ensures that staff, including those newly appointed, receive the information and support that they need.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (the standards) and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	134594
DfE registration number	315/6081
Inspection number	10371846

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 day school
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Richard Wilkins
Headteacher	Lorraine Titchener
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,098 to £109,401
Telephone number	020 8687 7050
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	lavender-lodge@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	5 to 7 December 2023

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	4 to 12	4 to 12	4 to 12
Number of pupils on the school roll	65	73	73

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	65	73
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	65	73
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	65	73
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	65	73

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	38	39
Number of part-time teaching staff	9	9
Number of staff in the welfare provision	21	22

Information about this school

- Lavender Lodge School caters for pupils with autism. All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school operates from 224 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HD. An additional new building has been completed on the school site recently. This will cater for two classes of up to eight pupils in each. It includes break-out rooms, a dining room and hall area, a kitchen and toilet facilities with changing rooms.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place in December 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The DfE commissioned this inspection because the school has applied to change its capacity from 65 pupils to 73 pupils. The DfE requested that the inspector consider whether particular independent school standards in Parts 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved. This was the school's first material change inspection.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the regional director as a representative of the proprietor. He held meetings with the pastoral manager and those responsible for safeguarding. The inspector held meetings with staff and pupils. He reviewed documentation related to safeguarding, health and safety and risk assessments. The inspector toured the school site to look at the space available for teaching and other activities.
- The inspector reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks. He looked at policies and procedures to check the school's likely continued compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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