

Mountfield Heath School

John's Cross Road, John's Cross, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5FA

Inspection date

20 March 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
Part 6 Provision of information

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

- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in Part 3 checked on this inspection are likely to be met if the material change is agreed. The plan is to increase capacity by six pupils. This is in response to an increase in demand for places from the main admitting local authority (LA). This means current policies and procedures are already in place and will only need minor amendment to facilitate the planned growth.
- Leaders are highly knowledgeable about all aspects of safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) team have completed suitable training that equips them well for their roles. The school developed robust systems and processes that allow staff to report concerns easily. These processes are well established, and staff follow them consistently. As such, the safeguarding policy and processes are well set to cope should the material change be granted.
- The school has a comprehensive and compliant safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website. The policy is underpinned by the latest statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024. The policy identifies clearly the key personnel and their contacts, so that staff and parents know who to go to if they have concerns. The policy also makes clear what is expected of staff should they have concerns about pupils' safety or well-being. The proprietor ensures the policy is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the ongoing needs of pupils at the school.

Paragraphs 11 and 16

- The proprietor has in place a comprehensive health and safety policy. This policy is written and implemented by the group's property team. It provides clear guidance to leaders to ensure compliance. Staff work collaboratively and diligently to ensure the policy is implemented in full. This includes undertaking regular and ongoing checks on the site, fire safety and the condition of the buildings. The proprietor also collects near

miss and accident data to identify risks and plan measures to reduce potential dangers to pupils and staff.

- The school's risk assessments are comprehensive. These identify potential risks and the appropriate measures to manage these. Staff continually review and update assessments to evaluate and mitigate potential hazards. This includes the assessment of safety for the school site, off-site trips and outdoor learning activities. Pupils benefit from highly personalised individual risk assessments that are routinely reviewed and updated to ensure pupils' safety.

Paragraph 12

- There are suitable fire safety arrangements in place that have been extended to the school's newly built facilities. The school buildings comply fully with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Fire signs, exits and extinguishers are clearly indicated and suitably located throughout the school's buildings and outdoor learning spaces. A comprehensive schedule of checks and tests, including for fire alarms and emergency lighting, is rigorously maintained. Fire drills are completed termly to ensure everyone is familiar with procedures. The fire evacuation policies and procedures are well placed to adapt should the material change be granted.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils are properly supervised at all times. Ratios of staff to pupils are high to reflect the complexity of pupils' needs. Those in leadership positions provide ongoing supervision and support when needed.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how they will increase the number of staff in line with the possible increase in the number of pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were more pupils on site than are currently registered to attend the school. This is because four additional pupils have been placed at the school by the LA under section 41. As such, leaders have already worked out precisely the number of staff needed to maintain supervision levels if the material change is agreed.
- The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards (the standards) checked in this part if the material change is implemented.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 21(3)(b), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(4), 21(5) to 21(6), 21(7)(a) to 21(7)(b)

- The school's single central record is complete and up to date. All the appropriate checks have been completed on adults connected to the school. The proprietor has reliable arrangements in place to ensure that this continues to be the case.
- The school benefits from effective safer recruitment practices. The proprietor has an established recruitment team. They ensure appropriate checks are made on all new staff and these checks are recorded on a single central register. Leaders intend to use the same robust systems to check the suitability of staff appointed as the school grows.

- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The school benefits from a large site which is well maintained. The school site has eight dedicated classrooms and number of therapy rooms, a large hall for physical education and dining and a dedicated library space. The site has suitable toilet and washing facilities for the sole use of pupils. No water presents a scalding risk. The site has its own medical room, which includes a shower, sink and a toilet. All buildings are appropriately maintained by the properties team from the proprietor group.
- The school has already prepared for the group they are planning to establish in the new classroom. The new building has been completed to a high standard, as is the case for all the buildings in the school. Across the site, each class has the same purpose-built facilities to allow for the organisation of provision in small groups of up to eight pupils. Classrooms are light, airy and have appropriate acoustic conditions. The school uses air conditioning in each class to maintain a steady room temperature.
- The school's settings benefit from extensive outdoor areas, which are appropriately fenced and managed. The school's external learning spaces are well maintained. These provide plenty of space for pupils to learn and play. This includes a large forest school area, an adventure play area, outdoor sensory garden and an artificially grassed games area.
- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34 to 34(1)(c)

- Leaders have a deep understanding of pupils' specific needs and how to meet them successfully. The proprietor has developed a robust framework of checks, balances and accountability measures, including clear reporting systems. They have high expectations of themselves, their staff and pupils.
- The proprietor's rationale for the material change is based on meeting the increased local demand on places for pupils who have additional needs. They are working in collaboration with the main admitting LA. Leaders have plans to manage the increased capacity of the school site and mitigate against any risk of negative impact on current provision.
- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the material change is implemented.

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	145980
DfE registration number	845/6065
Inspection number	10376429

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	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Lyndsey Jeffries (executive headteacher) Natalie Stevens (head of school)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,775 - £89,775
Telephone number	01323914600
Website	www.mountfieldheathschool.co.uk
Email address	Office@Mountfieldheathschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	20 to 22 February 2024

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 11	5 to 11	5 to 11
Number of pupils on the school roll	44	46	46

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	44	46
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	44	46
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	44	46
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	44	46

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	27	28
Number of part-time teaching staff	4	4
Number of staff in the welfare provision	7	7

Information about this school

- Mountfield Heath School is an independent special school. The school's address is John's Cross Road, John's Cross, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5FA.
- All pupils attending the school have SEND. Most have a primary diagnosis of autism. Many pupils also have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school's previous standard inspection was on 20 to 22 February 2024.
- The school caters for pupils aged between five and 11 years of age. It is registered for 40 pupils. There are currently 44 pupils on roll. This means that the school is exceeding the maximum number of pupils on roll that it is currently registered to admit.
- All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan. They have often experienced a disrupted education prior to joining the school. Most pupils have been out of formal education for an extended period.

- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor has applied to make changes to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to increase the number of pupils permitted to be on roll.
- This was the first inspection regarding this particular material change.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and had brief discussions with staff as she toured the school. She also met with the representative of the proprietor.
- The inspector toured the school site.
- The inspector met with leaders to discuss a range of the school's work, particularly with a focus on increasing the number of pupils who attend the school.
- The inspector checked a wide range of policies, records and documentation in relation to the specific independent school standards that were checked at this inspection.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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