The Sage School

19c Longhill Road, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 0BL

Unique reference number (URN): 152383

Pre-registration inspection report:	1 April 2026

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered

The purpose of this inspection was to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the proposed school's likely compliance with the independent school standards and associated requirements that are required for registration as an independent school.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out pre-registration inspections of proposed independent schools, we report on the provider's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards (the standards) consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

The proprietor body and the proposed school leaders are knowledgeable and experienced. They understand the needs of the proposed cohort well. They have designed the school's learning environments, curriculum and therapeutic offer with pupils' needs at the centre.

Pupil wellbeing is central to the proprietor's rationale for establishing the school. Their intention is driven by a moral commitment to ensuring that pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs feel a sense of belonging and are able to thrive.

The proprietor has a secure understanding of the standards and of their statutory responsibilities. They recognise the importance of ensuring that new leaders have up-to-date knowledge. A robust induction programme is in place to support this.

A governing body is ready to be established. This includes a chair with extensive experience in compliance and health and safety. The governance structure is suitably rigorous and is likely to enable governors and the proprietor to ensure that statutory duties are met.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

There is an appropriate and ambitious curriculum in place. It is broad and designed specifically to meet the needs of the pupils likely to attend the proposed school. The curriculum policy clearly outlines provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL).

The curriculum enables pupils to access a wide range of accreditations and qualifications. All pupils will have a provision plan that aligns closely with their education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Leaders have prioritised ensuring that pupils secure foundational knowledge in literacy and numeracy. Leaders expect that most pupils will already be accurate and fluent readers. Where pupils have gaps in phonics knowledge, additional support is planned to ensure all pupils learn to read well.

The proprietor has a secure understanding of the needs of the proposed cohort. The school's therapeutic approach, including its focus on attachment and trauma, has been carefully considered. Policies appropriately reflect this ethos. Leaders have clear plans for staff training so they can meet pupils' SEMH needs effectively.

There is a well-considered personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum in place. This includes careers learning for all pupils and age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) for those of secondary age. The curriculum content aligns with the school's RSE policy.

Assessment

On entry, the proposed school will complete checks with pupils, designed to identify gaps in knowledge. Leaders intend for teachers to use this information to inform curriculum planning and personalise pupils' curriculum offer.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

Leaders are committed to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. They have a clear and coherent plan for promoting fundamental British values and wider social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The PSHE curriculum and enrichment offer deepen pupils' understanding of difference, including knowledge of protected characteristics. Pupils will learn about different faiths and world views, democracy and the rule of law, as well as key institutions and public services in British society.

Leaders intend to provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to prepare for their next steps and adulthood. This includes purposeful trips and visits to support pupils to engage with the wider community and develop essential social skills. Life skills learning, such as planning meals, purchasing ingredients, travel training and independent living, is central to the school's offer.

The proprietor is clear about the need to ensure pupils receive balanced and unbiased information about a range of societal and political views. Staff will be trained to manage discussions appropriately so that pupils learn to understand and respect differing viewpoints.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

Leaders, including the proprietor, have extensive understanding of safeguarding. They are clear about the processes that will operate within the school to keep pupils and their families safe. There is a clear system for recording safeguarding concerns. Leaders are clear about the robust training staff will receive to recognise and refer concerns about pupils' safety and well-being. This includes identifying low-level concerns relating to both pupils and adults.

The PSHE and RSE curriculum will provide appropriate safeguarding education. Pupils will be taught about consent, healthy and unhealthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe both online and in the community.

Both the proprietor and the chair of the governing body will oversee safeguarding practice. This will include regular discussion of safeguarding in governance

meetings, monitoring the single central record (SCR) and talking to staff and pupils when making visits to the proposed school.

Behaviour and supervision of pupils

There is a clear behaviour policy based on the school's therapeutic approach. The policy outlines how staff will support pupils effectively to manage their behaviour. It also sets out appropriate potential consequences for challenging behaviour.

The proprietor intends to provide detailed training for all staff in how to implement the school's approach consistently, including training in de-escalation and restorative practices. Training will also focus on supporting pupils with trauma and attachment-related needs and experiences.

The proposed staffing ratios are appropriate to ensure safe supervision. Leaders have considered the needs of the cohort carefully in determining these ratios.

Anti-bullying

There is a proposed anti-bullying policy in place. This will be published on the school's website when it is live. It clearly sets out the actions and proposed consequences that will be implemented to address any allegations and instances of bullying.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The proprietor has appropriate first-aid and health and safety policies. These documents define responsibilities, including governance oversight. Expectations around health and safety practices are clearly established.

The proprietor has ensured that the building complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. A fire risk assessment has been completed and the required actions have been addressed. Personal emergency evacuation plans will be created as needed and reviewed following scheduled fire drills.

Leaders have established a comprehensive schedule of daily, weekly, monthly and annual health and safety checks. These include checks on water quality, internal and external lighting, fire safety systems and the general condition of the premises. Records demonstrate these checks have been carried out.

Admissions and attendance

A clear admissions and registration system is in place. Leaders have identified how attendance will be recorded and monitored. A pastoral support team will work with families to remove barriers to attendance.

Risk assessment

The risk assessment policy clearly outlines expectations for identifying and mitigating risks. Leaders have already used this policy effectively to produce a range of accurate and appropriate assessments, including individual pupil risk assessments and those relating to the premises and off-site activities.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

Recruitment checks made on staff, supply staff and the proprietor, and the single central record of these recruitment checks

The proprietor understands the required checks for all staff, including agency staff and contractors. These checks are carried out robustly and regularly.

Designated staff are trained in safer recruitment and oversee the recruitment process. At least one trained member of staff will sit on every interview panel. All interviews include safeguarding-related questions to assess candidates' suitability.

All required checks have been completed on members of the proprietor body. An electronic SCR is in place and includes checks on staff currently working within the proprietor's alternative provision setting. These will be transferred to the proposed school. The SCR contains all required information relating to staff and proprietors. The proprietor intends to monitor the SCR regularly. The governing body will also maintain oversight of the SCR.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities, water supply, changing accommodation and showers

There are sufficient toilets and washing facilities for the number of pupils expected to attend. These facilities provide suitable hot and cold water for washing and drinking.

There is adequate space for pupils to change for physical education. A fully functioning shower is available for pupil use.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

The medical room is appropriately equipped, including a sink, a facility for pupils to lie down and access to a nearby toilet.

Medical administration and accident records are stored electronically. There is secure storage for controlled medication.

There are several spaces across the school for therapeutic intervention and support. There are also calm spaces where pupils can go when dysregulated and in need of a quiet environment.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

A clear risk assessment policy outlines the required process. Existing risk assessments adhere well to this policy and include detailed identification of risks and appropriate mitigation strategies.

The site is designed to keep pupils safe. Security measures include locked gates and perimeter fencing. External doors are locked to maintain safety. There is a safe exit into an enclosed outdoor recreation area.

Clear roles and responsibilities for health and safety have been established. The behaviour policy clearly sets out the school's expectations for supporting pupils' conduct and engagement. All staff will receive training in therapeutic and attachment-informed approaches.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

Classrooms are naturally lit through secure, large windows that provide a suitable environment for learning.

Acoustics across the school are effective. The building is well insulated, and despite being located on an industrial estate, little external noise is audible.

Outdoor space

There is sufficient outdoor space for recreation, play and physical activity. Physical education will be individualised and focused on fitness and wellbeing. For specific sports, leaders intend to use external venues such as parks or leisure centres.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 6. Provision of information

A school website is under construction and will be made live if the school is approved to open.

Leaders understand the information required to be published on the website and have considered how they will make this information available to parents before the website goes live.

This includes a well-written safeguarding policy. It is compliant with current legislation. It also takes account of pupils' contextual needs, as well as behaviour and anti-bullying policies that set out the school's approaches and consequences clearly.

Leaders are clear about their responsibilities for working with local authorities, including in reviewing and planning pupils' EHC plans. A template is ready to report pupils' progress and outcomes to parents and other stakeholders.

Policies clearly set out provision for pupils with SEND and EAL. These reflect the needs of pupils likely to attend. Leaders are clear about how they will work with external professionals to meet pupils' needs effectively.

The proprietor understands the requirement to publish academic outcomes from the previous year and the number of complaints once the website is live. These sections are planned into the website's design.

A detailed complaints policy clarifies the processes and channels available to parents and stakeholders.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

A well-structured complaints policy and process is in place. It is available to parents and will be published on the school's website when it goes live.

The policy clearly defines the stages of the school's complaints process, including timescales, staff responsibilities and the support available to complainants. It sets out potential outcomes clearly, including the right to independent support in meetings.

Leaders intend to keep an electronic record of all complaints. The governing body will oversee these records to ensure compliance with the policy.

The standard in this part is likely to be met if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

The school's accessibility plan

The school has an appropriately written accessibility plan that demonstrates how pupils with a range of needs will access the curriculum, facilities and wider opportunities. The plan aligns with the Equality Act 2010.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. Inspectors checked the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The proprietor for this school is Sage Education Ltd. The proprietor does not currently have any other registered independent schools.

The Sage School is located at the following address: 19c Longhill Road, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 0BL.

Pupils who will attend the proposed school will have SEMH needs. Some pupils will have autism. They are likely to have missed significant periods of time at school prior to arriving here. All pupils will have an EHC plan.

The inspectors spoke to the headteacher, who is also the chair of the proprietor body. They also spoke with another school leader.

The proprietor does not intend to use any alternative provision.

Lead inspector	
Nina Marabese	His Majesty's Inspector
Team inspector	
Nathan Lowe	His Majesty's Inspector

About this proposed school	
Proprietor	Sage Education Provision Ltd
Headteacher	Gemma Fulcher
Type of school	Other independent special school
Capacity	28
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	**Provider's proposal:** 28
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	**Provider's proposal:** 0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll	**Provider's proposal:** 28
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	**Provider's proposal:** 28
Age range of pupils	**Provider's proposal:** 11-18
Gender of pupils	**Provider's proposal:** Mixed
Total hours operating as a school per week	**Provider's proposal:** 32.5
Total hours of teaching provided per week	**Provider's proposal:** 25
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	**Provider's proposal:** 9
Number of part-time teaching staff	**Provider's proposal:** 0
Annual fees for day pupils	£50,000
Email address	gfulcher@thesageschool.co.uk

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