

Little Acorns School

London Beach Farm, Ashford Road, St Michael's, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6SR

Inspection date

21 October 2021

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7–7(b), 9–16(b) and 32(1)(c)

- Pupils are safe and their health and well-being are promoted very well. The website includes a child protection and safeguarding policy. The policy confirms the school's commitment to safeguarding. Leaders provide regular training to ensure that everyone keeps their knowledge up to date. They also complete e-learning courses, including online safety and child sexual exploitation.
- Leaders have a well written health and safety policy. The school maintains a safe and healthy environment with well-established working procedures. Health and safety training is provided regularly. The school has four trained first aiders and the rest are booked for courses with the St John Ambulance service. The school has two trained fire wardens who oversee fire safety and staff training.
- The health and safety policy also includes written statements on the school's approach to risk assessment. Risk assessments confirm that leaders have taken appropriate actions to minimise risks to pupils. The premises have regular fire safety checks. Fire safety checks for the new building are included in the most recent fire safety report.
- Pupils are well supervised at all times, including during breaktimes. The school's behaviour policy promotes good behaviour and lists approved sanctions. Incidents of necessary restraint are always recorded and monitored. The school uses a commercially available electronic system to record information about pupils. Information is analysed to identify recommendations for improvement.
- School leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to continue to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) approves the implementation of the material change requested.

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

Paragraphs 18(2)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(7)(b)

- The single central record is well presented and carefully completed. It covers all staff who work in the school, including teaching staff, support staff, proprietors and governors. The headteacher does not intend to use agency staff but the facility is there if needed at some time in the future. All documentation is cross referenced, up to date and in order.
- The headteacher has received suitable training in safer recruitment. Staff are thoroughly vetted during recruitment. The headteacher understands and follows statutory guidance. This includes obtaining references prior to interview and following up gaps in employment history. Personnel folders are well kept and organised.
- Leaders have ensured that the school is likely to continue to meet the requirements in Part 4 if the DfE approves the implementation of the material change requested.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2)–29(1)(b)

- The proprietor has converted an old office building to provide additional space for the increase in pupil numbers. It is intended that the building will be used for older pupils. The building has been refurbished, according to the relevant health and safety, building and fire regulations. The building is arranged to provide four small learning spaces and an outside space for use.
- The premises are decorated and finished to a very high standard. Furniture has been ordered and much of it has already arrived. The premises are suitable for teaching and other educational activities. All parts of the accommodation have appropriate acoustics, lighting and heating. Exterior and interior lighting are of an appropriate standard. School buildings and outside areas are well maintained.
- Leaders have ensured that there are sufficient toilets for the number of pupils proposed. There are separate boys' and girls' toilets as well as toilets for staff and visitors. Hot and cold water washing facilities are available. The temperature of the hot water does not pose a scalding risk. Drinking water is available and labelled.
- The school has ample space on site for physical education activities. Leaders ensure that pupils have appropriate access to changing and shower facilities. The medical room is self-contained with a portable bed, washing facilities and a toilet nearby. There is a suitably stocked first-aid box and lockable storage for any medication.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the DfE approve the implementation of the material changes.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- The proprietor and academic board have worked with commitment and resolve to plan for the proposed expansion of the school. This includes the refurbishment of previous office space to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers.
- Leaders demonstrate skills, knowledge and expertise appropriate to their role. This has enabled them to make sure that the independent school standards that were looked at as part of the inspection are likely to be met.

- Proprietors and leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met should the DfE approve the implementation of the material changes.

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	131810
DfE registration number	886/6085
Inspection number	10203965

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 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	Jawad Sheikh
Chair	Barbara Dansey
Headteacher	Alison Neal
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,234
Telephone number	01233 850 422
Website	www.littleacornsschool.co.uk
Email address	alison.neal@choicelifestyles.net
Dates of previous standard inspection	6 to 8 November 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 14	5 to 14	5 to 14
Number of pupils on the school roll	7	14	14

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	7	14
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	7	14
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	7	14
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	7	14

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	3	4
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	3	4

Information about this school

- Little Acorns School is a mixed independent special school offering education for pupils aged four to 15 years old. The school is adjacent to a children's home providing residential accommodation for pupils.
- The school specialises in working with pupils who have severe behavioural, emotional and mental health issues. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school is currently registered for eight pupils, but at the time of the inspection had seven pupils on roll.
- The school does make use of alternative provision at Mount Lodge Farm, which offers opportunities for fully supervised farming related activities.
- The school was last inspected in November 2018, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out at the request of the DfE. The school requested that their maximum permitted number be increased to eight to 14 pupils. This will allow the school to offer places to day pupils.
- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out this material change inspection. The commission included all the relevant regulations in Parts 3, 4, 5 and 8 of the independent school standards.
- The purpose of the inspection was to see whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the requested material change is approved and implemented.
- This inspection was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lead inspector conducted an on-site visit to meet leaders of the school. He also undertook a tour of the new building.
- The lead inspector reviewed documentation and actions taken to safeguard pupils and promote their health, safety and well-being. The review included school policies and leaders' risk assessments.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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