

The Gables Learning Centre

Inspection date

16 November 2022

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), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i), 2A(1), 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g), 2A(2), 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j) and 4

- The proprietor has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. The written curriculum policy is supported by detailed schemes of work across all subjects that reflect the aims and objectives of the National Curriculum. Leaders have thought carefully about how the knowledge they expect pupils to learn builds over time. They are clear about the precise things they want pupils to learn at any given point in their education.
- The proprietor has ensured that leaders and staff have access to a broad range of subject-specific training. Leaders have used these to good effect to enhance the knowledge and skills of their staff. For example, teaching staff have recently received bespoke training focused on subject knowledge enhancement for English, information technology and reading. Leaders have many more training sessions planned.
- Leaders are passionate about developing pupils' love of reading. They are committed to ensuring that pupils learn to read. They recognise that many of their pupils are likely to have large gaps in their reading skills and have detailed plans in place to help pupils catch up quickly to enable them to access the whole curriculum.
- Leaders place a great deal of importance on the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. They have developed a broad and well-considered PSHE curriculum that offers pupils a range of appropriate opportunities to learn about important issues such as consent, personal safety and mental health. Leaders intend to work alongside the clinical and therapeutic staff at the school to ensure this curriculum is delivered in an appropriate way, taking into account pupils' individual needs and vulnerabilities.
- Leaders intend to make checks on pupils' starting points in literacy and numeracy when they join the school. Leaders also aim to check that pupils with special

educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs accurately identified and met. Leaders plan to work closely with those who look after pupils when they are not attending school to check on pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders expect that teachers will use this information to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs.

- The proprietor has made sure that classrooms are well equipped with resources to support teaching. For example, the food technology room contains several workstations, each with a working oven and hob, while the design and technology suite has a number of workbenches.
- Leaders' plans to ensure that pupils receive up-to-date careers guidance are well considered. They have thought carefully about the way pupils will be supported to make appropriate choices about their future careers. For example, leaders have developed links with several local and national employers who can provide pupils with meaningful interactions with the world of work. Leaders intend to develop these further once pupils begin attending the school.
- Leaders have ensured that these independent school standards (the standards) are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii) and 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders are committed to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and have taken appropriate steps to ensure that the curriculum will not undermine fundamental British values. They intend to make sure that pupils will not be exposed to partisan political views.
- Leaders recognise the vulnerabilities that pupils attending the school are likely to face. They have plans in place to ensure pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities, specific to their needs. These opportunities will likely support pupils to develop as confident individuals with an appreciation of British values.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is a member of the school's senior leadership team. This leader has a wealth of experience and is knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders are clear about the likely vulnerabilities that pupils who attend the school may have. Leaders have well-developed plans to ensure all adults working with pupils understand how to mitigate these risks.
- Leaders have clear systems ready to record and report any concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. These include detailed daily handovers with staff working in the care homes. Leaders also have clear systems to deal with any allegations made against members of staff.

- Leaders have high expectations of all staff regarding their participation in safeguarding training. All staff currently employed at the proposed school have undertaken safeguarding training as part of their induction.
- There are comprehensive behaviour and anti-bullying policies in place. Leaders intend for every pupil to have a 'pupil profile'. These profiles will provide information about how teachers should best manage pupils' behaviour, including information about the triggers for misbehaviour.
- In line with the behaviour policy, leaders plan to keep records of sanctions imposed in response to poor behaviour. They plan to share this information with those who care for pupils when they are not in school to ensure that pupils receive high-quality pastoral support at all times. Leaders also intend to use this information to identify trends and patterns in pupils' behaviour and update pupil profiles accordingly.
- Leaders have made sure that staff have received training in the implementation of the school's behaviour policy. For example, all staff have recently received training in the use of de-escalation techniques. As a result, it is likely that staff will have the knowledge and skills to implement the behaviour policy well.
- The school has comprehensive policies in place for health and safety and first aid. The proprietor has made detailed checks on the proposed school's systems and policies and provided support and guidance to ensure these policies are likely to be implemented effectively.
- The fire risk assessment confirms that the school is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. There are appropriate measures in place for fire evacuation and the maintenance of fire equipment. All current members of staff are trained as fire marshals.
- The risk assessment policy details how assessments will be carried out and how the risks identified will be minimised. There are well-thought-out systems in place to ensure that any incidents or near misses are thoroughly investigated, and lessons learned.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c) and 21(6)

- Records show that the proprietor has made sure that all staff currently employed have been subject to all the required safeguarding checks.
- All safeguarding checks are recorded on the school's single central record. The proprietor intends to ensure that this is well maintained.

- Leaders have a secure understanding of the steps to follow when appointing new staff. Because of this, any staff appointed to the proposed school will likely be recruited in line with safer recruitment guidance.
- Leaders do not intend to use supply staff. They recognise the disruption this would cause to the pupils they intend to provide for. However, they are clear about the checks to be undertaken, and the procedures to be followed, if supply staff are used.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The premises are maintained to a high standard. Rooms are suitable for teaching and learning. They have high ceilings and benefit from plenty of natural light. There is plenty of outdoor space for pupils to play safely. Additionally, there is a purpose-built area for the teaching of physical education.
- Throughout the building, there are good acoustic conditions. The proprietor has made sure that pupils will always have access to drinking water. There is adequate external lighting around the school site.
- All rooms and corridors are fitted with smoke detectors and all windows are secured with appropriate security locks.
- There is a small purpose-built medical room. The room has a portable sink and is situated next door to a toilet facility.
- Leaders have given due consideration to the accessibility of the building. They have made arrangements to ensure the site is accessible for all pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(1)(j), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f), 32(3)(g), 32(4)(a), 32(4)(b) and 32(4)(c)

- At the time of the inspection, the school did not have a working website. On request, leaders ensured that all the required documentation under part 6 of the independent school standards was made available.
- Leaders have prepared reporting procedures to support the annual reviews of pupils with an education, health and care plan. Leaders plan to work closely with those that look after pupils when they are not in school, as well as the therapeutic and clinical teams among the school staff, to ensure the information in these reports is as accurate and as helpful as possible.
- Leaders understand the requirement to publish any future inspection reports to parents.

- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The complaints policy is in writing and is to be made available on request. The proprietary body has ensured that the policy is clear and contains information about how to raise a complaint, as well as the timescales associated with each stage of the complaints process.
- Leaders have made sure that processes are in place to ensure that all formal complaints, including those made against the headteacher, will be recorded.
- Leaders have ensured these standards are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor has a clear vision for the school. It is clear about the model of education and therapeutic care the school will follow. It brings with them a wealth of experience from leading similar schools. It is knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils they intend to cater for and have ensured all staff working at the proposed school are equally well skilled.
- Leaders and members of the proprietor body demonstrated a secure understanding of the independent school standards. They also demonstrated that it is likely that they can ensure these standards are consistently met.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have ensured that the school is likely to meet the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility policy sets out how the school intends to be fully accessible to all and how it would cater for a range of disabilities.

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 | 149196 |
| DfE registration number | 893/6046 |
| Inspection number | 10243267 |

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 | Witherslack Group Ltd |
| Chair | Richard Wilkins |
| Headteacher | Louise Brown |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £109,183 |
| Telephone number | 01539566081 |
| Website | None |
| Email address | Richard.Wilkins@witherslackgroup.co.uk |
| Date of previous standard inspection | Not previously inspected |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal | Inspector's recommendation |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 19 | 7 to 19 | 7 to 19 |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 0 | 18 | 18 |

Pupils

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

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age | 18 | 18 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 | 0 |
| Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities | 18 | 18 |
| Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan | 18 | 18 |
| Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan | 18 | 18 |

Staff

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | 5 | 5 |
| Number of part-time teaching staff | 0 | 0 |
| Number of staff in the welfare provision | 5 | 5 |

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school will be located within a large property close to the village of Albrighton, near Wolverhampton. The house is situated on a country road. The proprietor owns all the properties on the school's site.
- The school proposes to cater for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) and Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD).
- The school wishes to cater for 18 pupils aged 7 to 19. The proprietor intends that local authorities will place most pupils at the school.
- The school does not have a religious character.

Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered. This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- An inspector conducted a tour of the premises with the headteacher. He also took account of arrangements for pupils' welfare and safeguarding. This inspection work included scrutiny of the school's checks on the suitability of staff, the safeguarding policy, the health and safety policy and the latest fire risk assessment.
- The inspector checked documentary evidence relating to the curriculum, including the curriculum policy and schemes of work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the DSL and members of the proprietor body.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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