

Wetheringsett Manor School

Church Street, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QX

Inspection dates

29 September 2020

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

Paragraph 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)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) for full-time provision for 11- to 18-year-old pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils will arrive at 8.30am and leave at 3.00pm. Pupils will start the day with 'launch pad' and tutor time, where staff welcome pupils and help them to get ready to learn.
- Pupils will study the taught curriculum from 9.30am onwards. There will be 20 minutes for a morning break between sessions and 40 minutes for lunch. There will be a 20-minute literacy session every afternoon. The final two periods of each day will be vocationally based study.
- At key stage 3, pupils will study a programme based around the national curriculum. Pupils will focus on literacy and numeracy, complemented by a wide range of other subjects, including science, computing, art and design, music and humanities. The curriculum from key stage 4 onwards will still have the core subjects at its centre but will then be tailored to meet pupils' individual needs.
- Schemes of work have been written for each subject. They are sufficiently detailed and well developed to help teachers to plan and deliver the curriculum effectively. It is clear how leaders will adapt their plans to further meet pupils' different aptitudes. Once pupils start at the school, leaders intend to tailor the learning to meet these pupils' needs more precisely.
- The extensive grounds will be used to provide pupils with a forest school curriculum. The intention is that the hands-on experiences in a natural setting will support pupils to play and explore in a safe and controlled environment. These experiences are designed to help pupils develop confidence, self-esteem and be able to better regulate their behaviour.
- Pupils will have opportunities to learn about the world of work and to investigate different career paths. They will be supported to develop and implement their career

plans. Leaders will measure the school's careers offer against the Gatsby Benchmarks. In time, leaders aim to achieve the Investor in Careers award.

- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j), 4

- Teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their roles. There are no plans to use any staff from supply agencies. There are sufficient staff available to cover absences internally.
- In discussions, staff demonstrate the appropriate skills and experience to be able to implement their curriculum plans effectively.
- Classrooms are light, bright and well equipped. Leaders have created a welcoming learning environment.
- Staff will collect baseline information to identify pupils' individual learning needs when pupils start at the school. Therapy specialists, employed by the company, will carry out assessments to provide a greater insight into pupils' cognitive profiles.
- Education, health and care plans will be used to determine pupils' additional needs. Staff will draw up individual education plans for each pupil. These will be used to ensure pupils follow an appropriate curriculum and make progress.
- Leaders have a broad understanding of how to identify pupils' specific needs for reading. While the policies and teaching sequences for reading are in place, some plans are less clear. More work needs to be done to ensure that enough staff have been trained in teaching phonics, for example. Leaders know what to do and articulate how they will teach reading skills so that pupils become fluent readers.
- Staff will use a range of assessments, centred around formative methods, to adapt learning and monitor pupils' academic progress. The assessment proformas are linked closely to the school's own curriculum.
- A range of formal qualifications and accreditations are built in to the curriculum plans and schemes of work.
- School leaders have ensured that these two independent school 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), 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders' plans, alongside their knowledge and understanding, paint a clear picture of how the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum will be adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- British values will be woven throughout the curriculum. Pupils will also use the 'launch pad' sessions and tutor time to build important skills, such as tolerance, respect, and listening to others.
- The forest school activities will help pupils to participate in specific projects that involve working as part of a team.

- Spiritual learning is included in some schemes of work, particularly humanities and personal, social and health education (PSHE). This will be complemented through assemblies and activities in tutor time.
- The PSHE calendar lists planned activities and national awareness days to give pupils opportunities to experience and appreciate different cultures, values and beliefs.
- Pupils will have the opportunity to compete for a John Muir Award through discovering, exploring, conserving and sharing a wild place. Leaders also plan to have allotments that pupils can tend, and will be offering the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory guidance and is posted on the school's website.
- New staff receive training about safeguarding pupils on induction, including child protection training. The written policy for safeguarding pupils and child protection, together with Part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education, September 2020', gives staff useful information about their roles and responsibilities.
- The head of education is the designated safeguarding leader and has up-to-date training at the required level. There are clear processes in place to ensure that detailed records of any safeguarding concerns are kept.
- School leaders have considered the current COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic extremely well in their arrangements to mitigate risks to the safety of pupils, staff and visitors.
- Staff will consider pupils' individual needs based on information received from the local authority placement teams and their own initial assessments.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c)

- The policy on promoting good behaviour and discipline contains lots of useful information, such as the school's aims, general principles, the psychology of bullying, and the impact that bullying can have on its victims.
- The policy, which incorporates restraint (positive handling), takes account of the social, emotional, mental health and communication needs of prospective pupils.
- The use of positive reinforcement and rewards, as well as consequences, will be tailored to the individual needs of each pupil. Staff training is in place for positive handling and restraint. There are no plans to set up or use isolation rooms.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph 10

- The written policy for anti-bullying includes a strategy that highlights positive steps for staff to take to prevent bullying.

- The policy highlights the particular needs and vulnerabilities of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- Leaders have drawn up suitable policies to cover the required aspects of health and safety and fire safety. Gas and electrical equipment have all of the necessary certificates to show equipment is in good working order.
- Fire safety checks are completed regularly, fire exits are clearly marked and fire evacuation plans are clearly displayed.
- First-aid resources are readily available and easily accessible. There is a sufficient number of trained first aiders in the school.
- The proprietor plans to open up with six pupils initially. This would be one class, with their own teacher who would be supported by a teaching assistant. The high staff-to-pupil ratio would allow for close supervision of pupils in and out of class.
- Appropriate systems for recording admissions and attendance are in place.
- Leaders have put in place detailed risk assessments and stringent health and safety checks to ensure that any potential hazards identified are addressed. Leaders act appropriately to mitigate risks to the safety of others.
- School leaders have ensured that these six independent school 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), 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)

- The required pre-employment checks, relating to the suitability of staff to work with children, have been carried out and meet statutory requirements.
- The proprietor does not intend to employ supply staff. There is sufficient capacity within the school, or by using staff at the group's other schools, to cover absences. Leaders are aware of the required checks that need to be made before any person undertakes supply work, should the need arise.
- The proprietor has plans in place to employ additional staff as pupil numbers grow.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the necessary checks on those responsible for governance, including those relating to section 128 of the Act, have been carried out.
- School leaders have ensured that these two independent school standards are likely to be met.

Paragraph 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(6)

- All appropriate checks on the suitability of staff, governors and the proprietor body are recorded on the school's single central record.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- The proposed school is situated within a large site comprising of 18 acres of grounds. It is served by a long driveway accessed via electronic gates. There is ample space for car parking and for pupils' drop-off and pick-up points.
- The manor house will be the main school building. This is a Grade II listed building, refurbished to a high standard. This includes:
 - seven large and spacious classrooms equipped with interactive whiteboards, chairs, tables and classroom resources
 - an information and communication technology suite
 - a reception and waiting area
 - additional rooms for use as staff offices, additional break-out areas or sensory spaces
 - a staff room
 - store cupboards and a laundry room
 - separate toilet facilities for boys and girls
 - a kitchen and servery area
 - a dining room.
- The stable block, which will be mainly used for administration purposes, includes:
 - a staff room
 - a medical room
 - two meeting rooms
 - additional office space
 - a boardroom
 - a shower room with changing facilities.
- The cottage provides additional space for offices and meetings. It has:
 - additional office space
 - toilet facilities
 - two rooms for therapy sessions.
- There is a large workshop and sports unit. As part of the school's phase 2 building programme, the refurbishment of these areas is underway. The large sports hall requires new flooring but could be ready in the near future. The workshop for practical subjects will take longer to refurbish. This does not affect pupils' curriculum offer at this stage.
- There is an area of perimeter fencing that is incomplete. There is an agreement with the owner and farmer of the neighbouring field that the fencing will be erected after harvest. There is a suitable risk assessment in place to ensure pupils' safety in the meantime.

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 23(2)

- There are sufficient toilets for the proposed number of pupils and their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Separate toilet facilities are provided for boys and girls. All toilets have internal washing facilities with hot and cold water.
- There is suitable changing accommodation and showers provided for pupils who take part in physical education.

- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- The medical room is adjacent to a toilet. It is equipped with a bed and a sink with hot and cold water.
- School leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph 25

- The refurbishment work of the Grade II listed building has been carried out sympathetically. Many original features remain. Inspectors did not find any issues with the premises that would raise concerns about the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

- School leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is likely to be met.

Paragraphs 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- The buildings are in pristine condition and have been finished to an extremely high standard. The lighting and acoustics are suitable throughout the building. However, the acoustics in the dining hall are a bit 'echoey'. Leaders are looking at solutions within the confines of permitted alterations to a Grade II listed building.
- Pupils have access to drinking water throughout the day.
- The site extends to 18 acres. There is ample space and lots of opportunities for pupils to play outside.
- The large sports hall requires the floor to be refurbished so pupils can use this area for physical education. The first cohort of pupils will use the local sports centre and primary school for physical education if the floor is not ready in time.
- School leaders have ensured that these four independent school 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), 32(4)(a), 32(4)(b), 32(4)(c)

- The website for the proposed school contains all the necessary information for parents, such as contact details and policies, including the safeguarding policy.
- For parents unable to access the website, policies are available on request.
- Leaders understand the requirement to inform parents and others about pupils' progress, and to inform local authorities about the spending of income received.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is 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), 33(k)

- The complaints policy includes suitable information and arrangements required for the handling of complaints.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is 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)

- Leaders have a clear vision in place for the school. There are well-thought-out plans to enable leaders to realise this vision effectively. Leaders are conscious of the issues that may well arise if they grow the provision too quickly. The plans sensibly detail how the school will start with a small group of six pupils and grow slowly as systems become established.
- Leaders and staff have a range of valuable and relevant experiences in similar settings that they bring to their roles.
- The peer governance model that is already in place across the three local schools within the group provides leaders with a good balance of support and challenge. The structure and system of accountability aims to enable governors to share expertise across settings and hold each other to account. Peer governors have a secure understanding and experience of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor's arrangements for monitoring the quality of leaders' work and holding them to account are comprehensive, rigorous and well considered. There are clear lines of accountability from the school to the group management board then to the group's executive committee.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have a good understanding of the independent school standards.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standard is likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility plan provides details of how leaders have made, and will continue to make, adaptations to the premises, the curriculum and communication so that they are equally accessible to all pupils.
- School leaders have ensured that the requirement is likely to be met.

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	148058
DfE registration number	935/6027
Inspection number	10154454

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	David Leatherbarrow
Headteacher	David Bishop
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,000 – £79,000
Telephone number	01449 703935
Website	www.wetheringsettmanor.co.uk
Email address	David.Bishop@wetheringsettmanor.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable
Number of pupils of compulsory school age for whom a statement is maintained under section 324, or who is looked after by a local authority	Not applicable
Total hours operating as a school per week	Not applicable
Total hours of teaching provided per week	Not applicable

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11 to 18	11 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	None	42	42

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	None	42
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	None	42
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	None	42
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	None	42

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	3	3
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	3	3

Information about this proposed school

- The proprietor has applied to the DfE to open an independent day special school:
 - for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years
 - for 42 pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs
 - funded through local authority commissioned places.
- The address of the proposed school is at Wetheringsett Manor, Church Street, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QX. There are no other sites.
- Most buildings within the site have been refurbished under phase 1 of the school's programme of works. The proposed school will mainly occupy the manor house, although other buildings will be used to deliver aspects of the curriculum. As the school grows, other buildings will be renovated under phase 2.
- The proprietor plans to provide all physical education onsite. The sports hall is close to completion. There are arrangements in place for offsite provision should it be needed.
- The proprietor does not intend to use supply staff.
- There is a website for the proposed school.
- The proprietor body is Acorn Care and Education, part of the Outcomes First Group. The two named proprietors on the application form are David Leatherbarrow, Chief Executive Officer, and Richard Power, Managing Director.
- Nick Simpson, Regional Director, is the chair of the governing body. The two other peer governors are from the group's other local schools: Peter Marshall (Head of Service at Acorn Park) and Davina Bell (headteacher at Bramfield House). The chair of governors will report directly to the proprietor body via the managing director.
- The proposed school is not operating currently. The proprietor plans to open the school as soon as the registration is confirmed and placements are finalised. The plans are to open with one group of up to six pupils and to increase numbers gradually. The staff required to cater for this group of pupils are already employed.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.
- The inspection was conducted by two inspectors, both onsite so as to minimise the amount of time spent on the premises.
- While on site, inspectors followed the measures put in place by leaders owing to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- This is the first pre-registration inspection for the proposed school.
- The inspection was conducted with two days' notice.
- Evidence gathered to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards comprised:
 - an onsite tour of the premises, including the grounds
 - an onsite check of the single central record
 - onsite meetings with the proprietor's representative (the regional director)
 - onsite meetings with the headteacher and the head of education
 - onsite meetings with the designated safeguarding leader
 - an online virtual meeting with one of the named proprietors (managing director)
 - separate online virtual meetings with the two peer governors for the school
 - scrutiny of documents provided by leaders.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kim Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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