

Running Deer School

Butterdon Wood, Willingstone, Moretonhampstead TQ13 8PY

Inspection date

10 October 2024

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

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)

- The proprietor publishes the arrangements for safeguarding on the school's website. The safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The policy is comprehensive and implemented effectively.
- There are clear arrangements for the leadership of safeguarding. Leaders are knowledgeable about a range of safeguarding matters, including those relevant locally. Leaders consider the increased vulnerability of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) when making safeguarding decisions. For example, the school is acutely aware of the potential risks found online.
- There is a culture of vigilance among staff. Staff report any concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils promptly. Where appropriate, leaders involve safeguarding partners. They are tenacious in their efforts to secure the right support for pupils and families.
- The school builds an accurate and detailed picture of the risks in pupils' lives through careful record-keeping. As a result, the school shares valuable information with the local authority.
- Leaders use the safeguarding information they hold intelligently. For example, it is used to inform staff training. This helps the school to continually strengthen safeguarding practice by learning from any incidents.

Paragraph 11

- Health and safety have a high priority within the school. For example, there are clear protocols for keeping pupils safe around the campfire. Leaders carefully assess the risks presented by high winds within the woodland setting. There are arrangements in place for remote learning, in the event that the site becomes dangerous.
- Drinking-water is sourced from a borehole. The school works with the local authority to ensure that water quality is checked annually.

Paragraph 12

- The school complies with fire regulations. The risk of fire is carefully assessed, taking into account the particulars of the site and the nature of pupils' needs. The proprietor ensures that appropriate routines are in place for fire drills and the checking of fire systems and equipment.

Paragraph 14

- The proprietor provides a high ratio of staff to pupils. There is an identified member of staff for each pupil. Typically, lessons are taught on a one-to-one basis. Outside of formal lesson time, pupils interact in very small groups. Pupils are closely supervised at all times.
- The proprietor intends to sustain a high ratio of staff to pupils if the material change is approved.

Paragraphs 16 to 16(b)

- The proprietor makes sure that staff know how to assess risks effectively. Risk assessments cover a wide range of appropriate matters. Risks associated with the site are clearly identified and mitigated. For example, in the woodland setting, there is a risk of slips and falls due to wet leaves underfoot. During the inspection, paths were observed to be clear, presenting minimal risk.
- The inspector sampled risk assessments associated with off-site activities such as visiting the beach. These were found to be appropriate.
- There is an individual risk assessment for each pupil considering risks in the home, in the community and while attending school. This helps staff to personalise their approach to ensuring the well-being of each pupil.
- The proprietor has ensured that these independent school standards (the standards) are likely to be met by the school if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3)

- The proprietor ensures that necessary vetting checks are carried out as part of the process of appointing new staff.

Paragraphs 19(2) to 19(3)

- The school does not employ supply staff or make use of third-party employment agencies. Any staff absence is covered by existing employees.

Paragraph 20(6)

- Members of the proprietor body undertake the required vetting checks. For example, section 128 checks for managers of independent schools.

Paragraphs 21(1) to 21(3)(b)

- The proprietor maintains a digital single central record in which vetting checks are recorded and monitored. This can be printed as a spreadsheet for the purpose of

inspection.

- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23 to 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- Toilet facilities comprise two composting toilets, with additional and separate provision of the same type for staff. Each toilet cubicle is for individual use. A shower, including a changing facility, is made available for pupil use.
- The school includes five wood cabins, known as 'pods'. Two of the pods have been adapted for the provision of first aid and the accommodation of sick pupils. Both include washing facilities. One of the two pods is not otherwise used for teaching.

Paragraph 25

- The proprietor ensures that the site and its resources are well maintained. Four of the five pods are used for teaching. These provide warm and comfortable classroom spaces. Each is attractively presented with no signs of disrepair. The outdoor area is equally well maintained. The proprietor ensures that undergrowth is cut back regularly so that pupils and staff can move safely around the site.

Paragraphs 26 to 27

- Classrooms benefit from appropriate lighting and acoustics. External lighting is solar powered as there are local restrictions in place to protect the natural habitat of bats. Checks on external lighting form part of the school's approach to fire risk management and site maintenance.

Paragraphs 28(1) to 28(2)(b)

- Drinking-water is clearly signposted and accessible at all times.
- The proprietor provides a heated unit which dispenses hot and cold water for hand washing. The site is also well supplied with hand sanitiser as part of the school's approach to infection control.

Paragraphs 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- The school is situated in an area of woodland. Parts of the site have been adapted for outdoor learning, including den building. The site includes clearings which allow for playing games. The school provides further, structured physical education at local facilities such as a climbing centre.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- Leaders share a strong vision for the purpose and ethos of the school. They are experienced leaders of outdoor learning for pupils with SEND. The last standard

inspection took place in October 2023. The inspectors identified that the standards in parts 1, 3 and 8 were not met in full. Since then, the proprietor has strengthened the governing body to increase the support and challenge provided to the school with a focus on the quality of education. The school's progress was monitored at an inspection in May 2024 and the school was found to meet all of the standards checked. Since then, the proprietor has continued to work in partnership with the governing body to ensure that the standards are met consistently and securely.

- The welfare of pupils is given the highest priority. The proprietor closely monitors and provides advice to the school on matters of safeguarding and health and safety. Leaders at all levels act in pupils' best interests. They expect staff to uphold their professional responsibilities and to play an active part in keeping pupils safe.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve the implementation of the material change.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school complies with the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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	143539
DfE registration number	878/6067
Inspection number	10365788

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 category	Independent day school
Proprietor	CiC Running Deer
Chair	Jo Winterburn
Headteacher	Nicholas Hurst
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,098.54
Telephone number	01647279328
Website	www.runningdeerschool.org.uk
Email address	school@runningdeer.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	31 October to 3 November 2023

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	8 to 16	8 to 16	8 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	12	15	15

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	12	15
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	12	15
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	12	15
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	12	15

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5	6
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	15	17

Information about this school

- Running Deer School is an independent special school catering for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and neurodevelopmental disorders. The school is located in 16 acres of woodland, in Dartmoor National Park. The school site comprises four teaching pods, one office pod, a campsite and storage tents.
- The proprietor is Running Deer Community Interest Company. This is a not-for-profit organisation offering a range of support services for vulnerable people.
- The last standard inspection took place in October 2023, and the school was judged to be inadequate. A progress monitoring inspection took place in May 2024, and the school was found to meet the standards.
- The school does not comply with its registration agreement at the time of this inspection. There are 12 pupils on roll. The maximum capacity recorded on the DfE's 'Get Information about Schools' service is 10.

- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to the proprietor's request to increase pupil capacity from 10 to 15. This is the second material change to the school's registration agreement. In December 2019, Ofsted carried out a material change inspection regarding an increase from four to 10 pupils.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and chair of the proprietor body.
- The inspector toured the school site to check that the premises were suitable and safe for the accommodation of 15 pupils.
- The inspector checked that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are clear, effective and published on the school's website. The inspector reviewed the single central record; held discussions with leaders; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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