

Bricklehurst Manor School

Bardown Road, Stonegate, Wadhurst TN5 7EL

Inspection date

11 September 2024

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 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) to 4

- The school currently provides education for pupils in the age range 11 to 16. The proprietor's application for material changes includes increasing the number of pupils and extending the age range to cater for younger pupils aged seven to 11. The proprietor intends that the curriculum offer will broadly reflect that which is currently in place at its other schools, which also cater for pupils with similar special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- A curriculum policy is in place. Schemes of work are available that cover the additional age range should the proprietor's requests be approved. Leaders are clear that these schemes of work will need further refinement to meet the needs of individuals, groups and cohorts of pupils that may join the school in future. The aim is to offer a bespoke curriculum, tailored to meet the needs of all pupils who are likely to follow different pathways according to their particular needs.
- The proposed curriculum offer is based on a range of commercially available or bespoke programmes of learning. It has appropriate breadth and takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. It fully covers the requirements of part 1 of the independent school standards (the standards). It includes appropriate provision to support pupils who may struggle to read. It includes provision for relationships and sex education, as well as promoting pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.
- Pupils currently attending the school talk positively about the school's curriculum offer, despite only attending for a short period of time. They are already focusing on their next steps and potential career pathways, happy to share with the inspector their aspirations for post-16 education after leaving the school.
- The proprietor has already established a team of teachers with specialist subject knowledge at the school. Middle leaders are also in place to ensure that the curriculum is implemented in the way the proprietor intends. Teaching staff are also supported by the proprietor's central team of curriculum experts.

- Sensible plans are in place to recruit suitably qualified teaching and support staff should the material changes be approved. Appropriate systems have been established to monitor the quality of education the school currently provides. These will be further refined as the school expands and the curriculum offer grows.
- A suitable programme to assess pupils' progress is in place. Leaders are currently revising this in line with changes being implemented across other schools run by the proprietor.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the relevant standards checked in part 1 are likely to continue to be met if the material changes requested are approved.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The school gives a high priority to promoting pupils' personal development. Leaders understand the importance of getting this aspect of the school's offer right. Central to this is a clearly planned programme to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Many of the requirements of part 2 will be covered by the school's formal PSHE programme of study. Leaders intend that cross-curricular links will also support work in this area, especially for younger pupils should the material changes be approved.
- Appropriate arrangements are already in place to promote current pupils' understanding of British values and aspects such as the protected characteristics and different cultures and traditions. These arrangements will be extended to ensure that younger pupils access similar themes in an age-appropriate way, enabling them to build on their knowledge and understanding over time.
- Building pupils' sense of right and wrong and developing self-esteem and self-confidence are also central to the school's work. Staff know that these areas are particularly important when pupils' previous experiences in education are taken into account.
- Many pupils have had negative experiences in previous settings. Many have been out of education for considerable periods of time before coming to the school. The proprietor intends that adding provision for younger pupils will strengthen the school's work to provide successful experiences over time for these vulnerable pupils. Current pupils already attending the school are positive about the benefits additional pupils will bring them, particularly linked to their social and emotional development.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the standards in part 2 are likely to continue to be met if the material changes requested are approved.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- Leaders' work to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff at the school is sound. Staff understand the additional barriers pupils with SEND face both in

and out of school. Pupils currently at the school say that they feel that the school is a safe place to be and that staff listen closely when they have problems.

- The proprietor has appropriate oversight of safeguarding. Procedures to recruit staff are sound. Basic aspects such as statutory and ongoing safeguarding training and clear procedures to follow when staff have concerns are already well established.
- Safeguarding records are appropriately detailed. Leaders with additional responsibilities for safeguarding are knowledgeable. They already know pupils and their families well despite the relatively short time the school has been open. Their work with other agencies is effective in ensuring that pupils and their families receive the timely support required.
- The school's policies linked to keeping pupils safe are appropriate. These include the safeguarding policy which meets current guidelines and is published on the website.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14 and 16 to 16(b)

- The proprietor employs a range of specialist officers and staff to ensure that the health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors to the school is promoted appropriately. Those in positions of governance understand their roles well. Staff who are responsible for the day-to-day running of the school's premises are suitably experienced.
- Suitable policies linked to all aspects of health and safety are in place. Risk assessments are available for different aspects of the school's premises, including for the newly refurbished manor house building. These include appropriate fire risk assessments. A range of other risk assessments such as those for going off site or for the use of the school's teaching kitchen are also in place.
- Ongoing checks on the premises by facilities staff ensure that the school is a safe environment. These include servicing of fire extinguishers and alarms by external specialists for instance. Legionella testing and routine checks on lighting and play equipment are in place.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how the proposed increase in pupil numbers and age range will impact on health and safety. The safe supervision of all pupils will continue to be given a high priority. Staff-to-pupil ratios will continue to be high.
- Clear policies and routines to support pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are already established at the school. These will be refined and reviewed as required should the material changes be approved.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the standards checked in part 3 are likely to continue to be met if the material changes requested are approved.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(6)

- The school's single central record of checks on adults is fit for purpose. It contains all of the checks required on staff, officers who work for the proprietor and members of the proprietor board. The school does not use supply agency staff.

- Pre-employment procedures are sound. Key staff have attended appropriate training to help them understand the statutory requirements and potential pitfalls linked to the recruitment of staff. The proprietor's specialist human resources team also supports school leaders with all aspects of the safe recruitment of staff.
- The proprietor has well-established processes for employing new staff. These include induction training and probationary periods to confirm the ongoing suitability of all staff for work at the school. The proprietor's regional director has suitable oversight of this process. There is appropriate capacity to support school leaders to recruit new staff should the material change be approved.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the relevant standards in part 4 are likely to continue to be met if the material changes requested are approved.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25 to 29(1)(b)

- The changes requested are based on the proprietor's refurbishment of the manor house that forms the basis for Bricklehurst Manor School. This was formally an independent preparatory school.
- The proprietor previously planned two phases for establishing the school. Phase one was the refurbishment of a range of subsidiary buildings adjacent to the manor house. This was subject to a successful pre-registration inspection in April 2024. As a result, the school was approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and opened in June 2024.
- Phase two has now been completed, with a considerable amount of renovation to the manor house undertaken to make it safe and fit for purpose as a school. The new accommodation offers five additional classrooms, associated breakout spaces and quiet areas, a common room, a hall and a range of additional facilities for office space, therapy rooms and such.
- Additional toilet facilities are now provided for pupils and staff as part of the phase two renovation. A working kitchen is available to provide meals for staff and pupils. Extensive outdoor areas are now accessible for pupils and staff. These include wooded areas, lawns and dedicated areas for pupils to play and take their breaks.
- The accommodation has been renovated to a high standard. Acoustics and lighting are appropriate in all areas of the buildings. External lighting provides for safe passage in the grounds if required. The entrance and perimeters of the school are maintained to an appropriate standard and allow staff to monitor and control visitors to the school.
- Aspects such as a medical room, teaching kitchen and facilities for science were assessed as appropriate at the original pre-registration inspection earlier in 2024. This continues to be the case. Drinking-water is available and appropriately labelled.
- The new accommodation provides appropriate space for the additional numbers of pupils the material changes requested. It also provides the capacity for leaders to be flexible about how they provide dedicated accommodation for younger pupils should the material changes be approved.

- Leaders have ensured that all of the relevant standards in part 5 are likely to continue to be met if the material changes requested are approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor's rationale for the changes requested is sound. Leaders at all levels have a clear vision for the school and how it will grow over time. The strategic oversight of the board of directors is based on a model that is operating in other schools owned by the proprietor.
- Those in positions of governance, including the proprietor's regional director, have a clear understanding of the requirements of the standards. Leaders and managers at the school are experienced and committed to providing the best possible provision for pupils who currently attend the school, as well as those who will join if the changes requested are approved.
- Leaders have considered carefully the impact additional pupils will have on those pupils already attending the school. They intend for a gradual increase in pupil numbers should the request be approved. Leaders are mindful of the need to employ appropriately qualified and experienced staff to ensure that the school offers a high quality of education and pastoral care to all pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the standards in part 8 are likely to continue to be met if the material changes are approved.

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	150476
DfE registration number	845/6073
Inspection number	10356408

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	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Jim Cameron
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,680 to £87,680
Telephone number	01580 857 271
Website	www.bricklehurstmanorschool.org
Email address	info@bricklehurstmanor.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	11 to 16	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	12	60	60

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Up to 14	Up to 60
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Up to 14	Up to 60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Up to 14	Up to 60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Up to 14	Up to 60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	12	45
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	6

Information about this school

- Bricklehurst Manor School caters for up to 14 pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. All pupils have an education, health and care plan and their places are funded by local authorities.
- The school specialises in providing education for pupils with a range of social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school opened at the beginning of June 2024 and, as such, has not yet had a standard inspection.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the DfE because the proprietor has applied to make changes to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to increase the number and age range of pupils on roll. This was the first inspection regarding these particular material changes.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other school leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding. The inspector met with the proprietor's regional director and also with the school's facilities and office managers. He also held an online meeting with the chair of the proprietor's board of directors.
- The inspector toured the school, visiting classrooms and communal areas and talking to pupils and staff. He also held a formal meeting with a small, representative group of pupils.
- The inspector considered a wide range of policies, records and documentation in relation to the specific standards that were checked at this inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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