

Belle Vue

Cranbrook Health Clinic, Jockey Lane, Cranbrook TN17 3JN

Inspection date

18 November 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

Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4

- The proprietor already runs a similar independent special school. The plans for this school substantially align with that school's approaches, policies and practices.
- The proposed school's vision is that 'every child and young person should go to an inspiring and life changing school, have access to the best teaching, and benefit from all services working in partnership with each other to ensure the life chances of children are improved'.
- The school will cater for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Primarily it intends to support pupils whose education, health and care plans (EHC plan) identify social, emotional and mental health needs and/or autism spectrum disorder as the primary need, taking account of associated diagnoses or needs.
- The intention is to provide a nurturing and therapeutic environment. The headteacher holds a clear view that this is about embedding an entire ethos and approach, for example through curriculum and behaviour policies. While mindful of pupils' EHC plan entitlements, wherever possible, the headteacher aims to maintain the school as a 'neutral, safe space', keeping a separation from potentially traumatic individual therapy.
- The directors say they are driven 'by the unwavering and resolute belief that every child should be able to achieve their potential'. The headteacher advocates a 'no excuses' and 'high expectations' culture. Directors convey a determination 'to remove barriers so that young people can develop self-esteem, good mental health and resilience; make progress; achieve academically and socially; and find a place of belonging within their community and the world'. The proposed policies and plans are consistent with this aim and are likely to support it if implemented effectively.
- The school's curriculum policy sets out the approach that the school intends to take with curriculum plans and schemes of work. These arrangements are likely to meet requirements. The school proposes to use the national curriculum as its benchmark. However, because of the bespoke design of the curriculum around pupils' EHC plan

targets, the curriculum consists of sequences of work not necessarily aligned to traditional year groups. Where possible and relevant, the headteacher proposes that teachers will draw on a wide range of published materials to support pupils' learning.

- The headteacher intends to make pupils' EHC plans central to devising their bespoke curriculums. However, she is mindful that some pupils' EHC plans may be outdated. Consequently, teachers will also be required to carry out their own initial assessments. In addition, leaders are keen to ensure that curriculum plans are informed by realistic but ambitious hopes for what young peoples' lives may be like aged 25 and beyond.
- Ensuring that pupils can read to at least a functional level is an absolute priority for leaders. The proprietor has ensured that a structured, targeted reading programme is likely to be in place to support pupils who are furthest behind in their reading when they join the school.
- The subjects taught by the school are likely to offer pupils the necessary breadth of learning. The subjects the school plans to teach include English, mathematics, science, art, physical education (PE), land-based studies, food technology, computing and music. The headteacher plans to ensure that a proposed 'topic' approach covers aspects of subjects including history, geography and citizenship.
- Plans for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education cover a wide range of both required and other helpful aspects, including relationships and sex education, equalities and British values. The headteacher intends that this programme be flexible enough to be responsive to individual needs. Pupils' individual curriculum plans may include an increased time allocation for PSHE education where helpful. The school aims to ensure its approach to careers advice and guidance exceeds the requirements of independent schools and meets nationally recognised benchmarks.
- The post-16 provision will predominantly be a continuation of previous studies. The intention is to give students who will typically have experienced disruption to their schooling additional time to be as fully prepared as possible for the next stages of their lives. The headteacher plans that impartial advice ensures that pupils who would likely be better placed transferring to a college, or other provision, are guided and supported to do so.
- The proprietor is likely to employ a mix of qualified and unqualified teachers, focusing on applicants who can demonstrate the right skills and approach for the school's ethos. The proprietor plans to replicate arrangements used in its first school to ensure good quality teaching. Proposals include plans for thorough induction, ongoing training, and systematic quality assurance. In addition to the headteacher's experience in this role, she intends to enable a 'quality of education lead' to work across both schools to support staff to develop and improve their practice. The proprietor proposes to make use of the school's capability policy and procedures where necessary.
- The suggested assessments of pupils' progress focus on their EHC plan targets and reading as a priority. Arrangements for reporting to parents and carers are likely to meet requirements.
- The school is likely to meet all the requirements of this part of the independent school standards.

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

Paragraph 5

- The headteacher sees building pupils' character as a central part of the proposed school and intends to ensure that this is embedded in its culture. Some curriculum elements, such as first aid, have been included for this specific purpose, while also offering valuable life skills.
- A main aim of the school will be to develop pupils' sense of right and wrong and their understanding of the consequences and implications of their actions, both in and beyond school. The proprietor has ensured curriculum and behaviour policies dovetail so that, if implemented well, they are likely to provide this consistent approach.
- The headteacher proposes to forge links with the local parish council as part of an effort to ensure that the school becomes part of the local community. She sees building pupils' confidence in the community as critical, particularly for autistic pupils or those with high anxiety.
- The school intends to take pupils on visits further afield when restrictions allow, for example to the houses of parliament. The school plans to seek to involve pupils in democratic processes where possible, for example voting for the school council or school ambassadors.
- The PSHE education programme, supported by a programme of planned tutor time and assemblies, is likely to enable teaching about British values. The proposed topic curriculum includes learning about aspects of different religions and faiths.
- The proprietor is familiar with guidance about how to ensure pupils are not subject to partisan views. She is particularly alert to this in the context of the school's probable pupils, whose circumstances are likely to make them extremely vulnerable and sometimes easily influenced.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6 and 7

- The safeguarding policy takes account of relevant guidance. It aligns with the content of the first school, which will share the headteacher as designated safeguarding lead. The plan is that suitably trained deputies will provide additional cover on each site. The policy is aligned with local safeguarding procedures and reflects the particular context in which the proposed school will operate.
- The policy sets out suitable arrangements for the induction and training of staff. Wisely, the proprietor has also planned procedures for checking that staff understand their responsibilities and have the knowledge to undertake their roles with regard to safeguarding. Arrangements for record-keeping are likely to be fit for purpose if implemented effectively.
- The headteacher conveys a depth of safeguarding knowledge gained through prior experience working with highly vulnerable young people, including in similar school environments. She conveys a strong understanding of the particular realities and risks typically faced by the young people for whom the school plans to provide education.

Paragraphs 9 and 10

- Plans for the school's creation state that, with regard to behaviour, 'clear boundaries, established routines and high expectations will be the norm'. The behaviour policy itself sets out how the school will aim to provide a consistent approach to behaviour management. It sets out high expectations of how pupils are expected to behave and includes reasonable examples of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. There is a clear outline of appropriate rewards and sanctions. The policy also sets out the roles and responsibilities of different people, likely to be supportive of the policy's effective implementation.
- The anti-bullying strategy includes both teaching pupils about issues relating to bullying and the steps that the school intends to take to prevent, identify and tackle bullying. A clear definition of bullying and helpful examples of what bullying may include underpin the strategy. The approach is based firmly in the context the proposed school will operate, recognising that behaviour linked with some pupils' SEND may not always be intentional. Consequently, part of the strategy is a commitment to careful record-keeping, analysis and response to ensure that such behaviour does not 'develop into repeated or targeted bullying' behaviour.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16

- The health and safety policy outlines a range of steps which, if effectively implemented, are likely to promote the welfare of all involved with the school. The proprietor intends to establish a health and safety committee consisting of the operations manager, a staff member and a pupil. The role of this committee will be to ensure routine checks are properly and regularly carried out, seek staff and pupil views and look into health and safety issues that may arise.
- The proprietor has evidence of a timely request for advice from the local fire and rescue service regarding the proposed use of the premises. A fire risk assessment has been carried out in consultation with suitably qualified people.
- The school's risk assessment policy and procedures are likely to meet requirements. Throughout discussions during the inspection, the headteacher routinely referred to aspects of risk assessment underpinning all planned activities, indicating the strong culture of ongoing risk assessment she intends to establish. Considering this and suggested staffing levels, pupils are likely to be properly and appropriately supervised at all times.
- The first-aid policy and arrangements for the associated training and facilities are likely to meet requirements.
- The proprietor has prepared templates for admissions and attendance registers, which prompt for all relevant information.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21

- The proprietor is committed to ensuring that at least one person who is trained in safer recruitment is directly involved in all staff appointments. The headteacher has a sound understanding of all required checks on the suitability of staff. She has

introduced procedures that are likely to ensure these checks are diligently completed in a timely fashion.

- The school's single central register provides scope to record all required information. In addition, the proprietor has chosen to note on the register additional information linked with staff suitability, such as references.
- The proprietor also demonstrates understanding of the checks that must be made on supply staff, volunteers and contractors.
- All requirements of this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31

- The building intended to house the proposed school was formally a medical centre. It is likely to prove suitable for the intended purpose, including in terms of light and acoustics.
- In addition to proposed classrooms of various sizes, there is currently a large, bright communal area and several office spaces. The proprietor plans to reappoint some spaces as classrooms as the school reaches capacity.
- There are separate toilets for staff and pupils. The number of pupil toilets for the school's capacity meet recommendations by the Department for Education (DfE).
- The medical room is likely to meet requirements. It includes a washing facility and is situated relatively close to the toilets.
- The school has plentiful sources of mains drinking water throughout, all clearly labelled.
- A local recreation ground on the doorstep of the proposed school has been risk assessed by the proprietor and provides ample space for recreational use. Entrances and exits to the school have sufficient external lighting to facilitate safe passage.
- The proprietor proposes to take pupils off site for PE to local facilities which include showers.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32

- The school currently has no website, but all of the required information and documents are available on request. The proprietor plans to launch a website once the school is registered, checking that all required information is posted.
- The headteacher is aware of additional information that needs to be published or available on request once the school has been operating for a year, such as the previous year's academic performance and the number of complaints. She also has good knowledge of the other information the school must provide, such as annual written reports for parents and annual accounts for pupils funded by local authorities.
- It is likely that the standard in this part will be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- The proposed complaints policy is likely to meet requirements. The proprietor intends to publish this policy on the school's website when it is launched.
- The underpinning aim of the policy is that, wherever possible, the school will resolve concerns through effective communication at the earliest possible stage. However, the policy also sets out all the required details of a formal complaints procedure, making clear the right of parents to pursue this option if dissatisfied.
- Directors have contemplated the practical implications of their proposed arrangements. For example, they have considered who may provide the independent perspective on a complaints panel. As such, it will likely be possible to implement this policy effectively, so it is also likely that this standard will be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The proprietor body was established in 2018 as a new organisation seeking to adopt 'a fresh and dynamic approach to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable children, irrespective of the difficulties presented, in order to maximise their future life chances'.
- This proposed school is the second of seven intended to form a hub of special schools located in Kent and Medway. The first school opened in November 2019 under the same proprietor and headteacher. That school's overall effectiveness was judged to be good at its first standard inspection.
- The proprietor intends that the headteacher will become executive headteacher of this school and the existing Cornfields School, which is in Ashford. The headteacher is knowledgeable and experienced in running independent schools of the type proposed. She was able to present a vast array of systematic documentation, records and leadership strategies which are likely to support her when running two schools.
- There is already a 'head of school' in place at Cornfields, with the proposal that the founding headteacher, as executive headteacher, will spend the majority of her time establishing this new school. In time, she intends to appoint a head of school at Belle Vue too. Recruitment of staff is underway, pending registration of the school.
- The school's current 'management committee' consists of six members whose biographies show a wealth of rich and diverse experience, including educational psychology, the national professional qualification for headship and a parent of a pupil at the partner school.
- With the proposed expansion of the operation, the proprietor is clear that it is imperative that the strategic overview, direction and structure is fit for purpose. In terms of the establishment of this second school, although not yet finalised, proposed governance arrangements have been carefully considered and the likely shape is emerging. It is anticipated that there will be one overall strategic board for both schools, with a local governing body or management committee for each school sitting beneath. If the registration of this new school is approved, the intention is to hold a prompt extraordinary meeting to confirm the future governance arrangements.

- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has a relatively short-term plan in place for improving accessibility to the curriculum, school information and premises. The intention is to extend this plan once the school is registered.

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	148062
DfE registration number	886/6161
Inspection number	10164381

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	Special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Keefields Limited
Chair	Mary McKeeman
Headteacher	Mary McKeeman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,500
Telephone number	074 8464 3935
Website	None
Email address	info@cornfields.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11 to 19	11 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	60

Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	15.5
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	3

Information about this proposed school

- This proposed school would be the second in an eventual hub of seven independent special schools which the directors of Keefields Limited hope to open. The first school to be registered by this proprietor was Cornfields School in Ashford, which opened 7 February 2019.
- The headteacher and operations manager are the two directors of Keefields Limited, intended to be the proprietor. Although the application names the headteacher as proprietor, the intention is to register this school on the same basis as the other school operated by Keefields.
- The proposed school will be housed in a former health centre adjacent to a large public recreation ground.
- The school will cater for pupils with the following areas of SEND:
 - cognitive learning needs
 - specific learning difficulties
 - moderate learning difficulties
 - behavioural, emotional and social development needs and difficulties
 - communication and interaction needs
 - speech, language and communication needs

- autism spectrum disorder
- sensory and/or physical needs.

Information about this inspection

- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, if the DfE decides to register it. It was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector held extensive discussions with the headteacher (who is also the chair of the proprietor body). He also met briefly the operations manager (who is also a director). The inspector spoke on the telephone with the chair of the management committee, which is supporting the creation and opening of the school prior to the formation of a governing body. He also called the foster parent of a pupil who attends the first school set up by the proprietor.
- The inspector toured the premises and scrutinised a wide range of policies, documents and records presented by the proprietor as evidence of the school's likelihood to meet the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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