

Yarrow Heights School

104–106 Cobden Avenue, Bitterne Park, Southampton SO18 1FS

Inspection date

16 June 2021

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(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h)–2(2)(i), 3–4

- Leaders have set out the proposed school's aims of 'transforming' pupils' lives so that they are 'well-prepared to enjoy a fulfilling and successful future'. They explain that this will be achieved through academic achievement and building pupils' emotional well-being and social and independence skills.
- The proposed curriculum intertwines a personal development programme with academic studies culminating in nationally recognised qualifications, including GCSEs. Leaders intend that most pupils will follow the full national curriculum. Those who don't will still study a broad and balanced curriculum that provides them with experience of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education.
- Leaders have set out plans for all national curriculum subjects. These are mostly matched to the needs that leaders anticipate pupils will have. Leaders are aware that these will need to be revised when they confirm the specific academic needs of pupils during admission and as they progress through the curriculum. It is anticipated that many pupils will have missed long periods of school prior to joining Yarrow Heights. Leaders are identifying ways of flexing the planned curriculum to help pupils to make up gaps in their knowledge.
- Reading is set out as a key priority for the school community. Leaders intend that all pupils will be involved with reading every day, whether reading by themselves, being read to or discussing books. Leaders aim to offer phonics teaching for pupils who need it. Leaders are waiting for the Department for Education (DfE) to announce the list of newly validated systematic synthetic phonics programmes at the end of June 2021 before deciding which programme to follow. They plan to provide full staff training and to ensure that resources are appropriate for the ages as well as abilities of the pupils.
- The plans for the personal development programme are detailed and show that wide-ranging opportunities are intended to be offered. Proposed timetables show that the school day is planned to be longer than that found at many schools, with 'mind and

body boost (MABB)' at the start of each day and 'enrichment' at the end. These sessions will also cover personal, social, health, economic and character (PSHEC) education. Leaders aim that the Duke of Edinburgh Award will be a key part of pupils' enrichment. They have appointed a qualified assessor to the staff team and will resource it as needed.

- Careers information, education, advice and guidance will be provided through these sessions and also via independent careers advisers that leaders plan to appoint. Leaders intend to meet all the Gatsby benchmarks and to ensure that pupils are provided with impartial guidance.
- Leaders plan that group sizes will typically average six pupils, with appropriate supervision from qualified teachers, teaching assistants and therapeutic support. Leaders are planning a comprehensive induction programme for staff. Leaders aim to ensure that staff have a secure knowledge of the needs of pupils before pupils join the school. Leaders have scheduled routine work with teachers, including team teaching, joint planning and observations, to ensure that the curriculum is implemented as they intend.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

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

Paragraphs 5–5(d)(iii)

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development will be promoted through the daily MABB and enrichment activities. Leaders intend these experiences to prepare pupils for the wider world and life in modern Britain, as well as promoting respect for others, including those with protected characteristics. This is in addition to more formal PSHEC lessons because leaders identify this knowledge as key to success for the pupils that they anticipate joining the school.
- Plans show that sessions are intended to support pupils' character development and learning about relationships. Topics such as respect, consent, understanding different cultural traditions and considering religious beliefs are included.
- Leaders plan that these activities will also help to promote British values and pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. There are routine checks proposed to ensure that all work around political understanding will be balanced and exclude all partisan political views. Activities such as mock elections aim to encourage respect for democracy and promote participation in the democratic process.
- All pupils will have a personal development plan, which will form the basis for tutors to monitor their progress across the whole curriculum, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders plan that tutor sessions will dovetail with group work to help pupils develop initiative and independence and build skills for adult life.
- It is likely that the standard in this part will be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7–7(b)

- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and safeguarding team hold appropriate certification and show secure knowledge of safeguarding and child protection

requirements and processes. Plans to ensure that all staff hold a similarly secure knowledge are well-considered and training materials are comprehensive. Leaders plan to hold routine conversations as a staff group to ensure that safeguarding remains a priority for all. They intend that all staff will know what to look for and what to do in case of any worry.

- Leaders have purchased an online system for staff to record all safeguarding and behaviour information. All staff will be trained to use this as part of their induction prior to the school opening to pupils. Leaders have set out how they will monitor and act on concerns notified through this system. In their training materials, leaders have emphasised the need for immediate face-to-face communication for more serious worries.
- The safeguarding and child protection policy is published on the school's website. It is a comprehensive document and corresponds with national and local requirements. It sets out the contextual risks that pupils might face in their homes and communities. It details additional vulnerabilities staff must consider for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Other policies, including whistleblowing, anti-bullying and positive behaviour management, also meet guidelines and are intended to help to keep pupils safe.
- During the inspection, leaders and proprietors displayed their strong commitment to keeping pupils safe. Although experienced, they are not complacent and recognise the need to continually learn and be aware of changing contexts, risks and approaches. The members of the safeguarding team have set up meetings with local authority designated officers to discuss safeguarding processes. They intend to keep communicating frequently with them. They also intend to ensure that all involved with the school will keep their knowledge up to date by attending briefings and training offered by national and local organisations.
- The DSL will lead the family liaison support team, a group of trained staff who will support parents and whole family groups. Part of their role will be to work with parents around any safeguarding issues and to help to ensure that pupils are supported to keep themselves safe outside of school.

Paragraphs 9–10

- The positive behaviour policy promotes positive and respectful behaviour throughout the school. Leaders intend that this will be supported with comprehensive staff training and review. The policy sets out a staged approach to sanctions, called 'consequences', that take into account the context of events and any reasonable adjustments required.
- The anti-bullying policy aims to prevent bullying as far as possible. It will be supported by education and activities in MABB and enrichment sessions. A range of actions and support for those involved in bullying are set out. These show that both perpetrator and the person bullied would be supported should bullying occur.
- Leaders intend to use the online recording system to monitor all behaviour concerns, including incidents of bullying. They will record actions and evaluate their success over time. Leaders recognise that poor behaviour of any sort may be an indication of a safeguarding concern. These records will be considered as part of the overall support for each child.

Paragraphs 11–16(b)

- The policies for health and safety, first aid and fire safety are comprehensive and comply with requirements. Leaders have set out routine checks to ensure that procedures are met consistently. These will be recorded and checked regularly. Some have already started, for example fire drills and tests of fire safety equipment, and are logged properly.
- The overall risk assessment policy for the school buildings, activities and pupils is still being refined. Leaders know what it must contain, and that staff need to understand their responsibilities relating to risk assessment to ensure that actions are implemented effectively. Risk assessments for individual aspects of the school's work, whether buildings or activities, are detailed and are likely to meet requirements when the overall policy is finalised. As part of pupils' induction, individual risk assessments will be created.
- Many safety systems have been replaced or upgraded during the refurbishment of the buildings, for example there is now a suitable fire detection and alarm system. Leaders have appointed specialist contractors to undertake this work and assessors to check that it is functioning properly.
- The proposed staffing arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders intend to employ qualified teachers to teach pupils. The school grounds have been fully fenced and made safe; for example, dangerous steps have been replaced. Leaders intend that pupils will be supervised by staff at all times.
- Leaders have purchased an electronic system to record admission and attendance information. They understand the process to follow regarding recording and checking attendance. The policy shows that the family liaison support team has clear procedures for checking attendance. Proposed actions in case of absence are clear and likely to meet requirements.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2)–18(3), 19(2)–19(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(6)

- Leaders are trained in safer recruitment and have followed recommended processes in initial recruitment activities. They have set out their commitment to continue this. They have a detailed knowledge of the procedures required, including checks to be made on the suitability of staff. They have ensured that all checks are made and recorded on a single central register (SCR). Checks are made on all adults working in the school, including the proprietorial body. Leaders confirm that any visitors or volunteers will be appropriately checked and accompanied.
- The SCR and associated staff files are kept securely. Both contain the required information, for example identity, management and medical checks. The proprietors intend to recruit a governor with responsibility for scrutinising safeguarding processes and checking this documentation.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements of this part.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(1)(b), 25–29(1)(b)

- Proprietors are overseeing the refurbishment of a former secondary school. Extensive work has been done to the buildings and site. Inside, classrooms are spacious, bright and welcoming. Leaders have considered the likely needs of pupils when planning layout, fixtures and fittings. There are still many tasks to complete but the schedule of works is reasonable. Leaders have obtained confirmation from contractors that all should be finished by the first week in August. Materials are appropriate, the standard of work is high and is likely to meet requirements when complete.
- Corridors are spacious, with drinking water easily accessible. Leaders have the labels ready to mark this as such when decorating is completed.
- There are separate toilets and washing facilities for staff and pupils, including changing rooms with showers for pupils to use. Leaders are exploring ways to improve the acoustics in these rooms as they could be difficult for pupils with sensory needs to use. They intend for this to be complete before the proposed opening date.
- The new boiler is currently being fitted. Leaders have booked an assessor to ensure that that water is at suitable temperatures. The legionella test is also booked for when this work is complete.
- The dining hall is due to be completely refitted to make the space more welcoming and accessible for all pupils. There will be formal dining tables so that pupils can eat breakfast and lunch with their tutors. There will also be smaller, less formal areas for those who might find the formal space tricky. Leaders also plan a family room and an informal seating space. Meals will be provided for all pupils. Leaders plan that these will help to promote healthy eating.
- Around the school, leaders have designed smaller spaces for individual work and to support pupils with sensory needs. There will also be fully equipped therapy rooms.
- The medical room is appropriately situated near a toilet. It will have a sink, bed and locking cabinet. It is near an office and a room for pupils to meet with staff and offers appropriate privacy without being isolated.
- Outside spaces have been similarly upgraded. There will be a gate with security entry system at the front of the school. A multi-use games area is due to be fitted at the front of the school, along with a large rubber tarmac area with a wide range of outdoor resources. At the side and back of the school, the grass area is intended to provide space for pupils to play and do physical education.
- Outdoor and emergency lighting has been installed around the external walls of the buildings.
- It is likely that the requirements of this part will be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1)–32(1)(d), 32(1)(f)–32(1)(j), 32(2)–32(4)(c)

- The school website contains the information required. This includes contact details for the school, the proprietorial body and the chair of the governing body. There is a statement of the school's ethos and specified policies, including those concerned with safeguarding pupils.

- Leaders know the requirement to publish other information as it becomes available, for example inspection reports and the number of complaints made under the formal complaints procedure each academic year. An annual report for parents, to supplement the information in pupils' annual review statements, has been drafted.
- Leaders have set up the means by which they will provide specified information to local authorities for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and/or are looked after.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33(a)–33(k)

- A clear complaints policy is published on the website. It sets out a staged process that will be followed. These start by dealing with complaints on an informal basis, moving to more formal arrangements as required.
- The policy is compliant with government legislation. For example, there is provision for a panel hearing, the panel comprising members not involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one member independent of the management and running of the school. Written records will be kept and evaluated. The school is not yet operating and therefore there have been no complaints made against it in the last academic year.
- Leaders intend to keep and evaluate written records of complaints, making them available for inspection as requested. They are aware of the need to keep details relating to individual complaints confidential, except when requested as part of an inspection.
- This part is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- The proprietorial body and the leadership team have a background in education for pupils with SEND. They know the independent school standards and associated requirements and have followed them closely when designing the proposed school. They know that these standards must be met consistently.
- The proprietorial body has made sure that there are a range of experienced and suitably qualified professionals to run the school on a day-to-day basis. The proprietors intend to hold leaders to account through regular meetings. They have also started to establish a governing body to closely scrutinise the school's operation. They intend that governors will have experience of safeguarding, education, finance and SEND.
- Leaders have made contact with local authority safeguarding leaders and have set up initial meetings with a view to creating strong relationships that will help them to work together to safeguard pupils.
- Leaders have appointed an experienced DSL to create the family liaison support team to oversee pupils' well-being and safety. The curriculum is also designed to promote pupils' welfare along with their academic achievement.

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

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has produced an accessibility plan that sets out appropriate steps in order to ensure that pupils who are disabled have access to the physical environment, information and the curriculum.

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	148599
DfE registration number	852/6013
Inspection number	10193356

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 special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Yarrow Heights School Limited
Chair	Anne Marie Carrie
Headteacher	Karen Gaster
Annual fees (day pupils)	£75,000
Telephone number	023 8212 4590
Website	www.yarrowheights.com
Email address	hello@yarrowheights.com
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	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	Initially 40, rising to 60 from September 2022	Initially 40, rising to 60 from September 2022

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	Initially 40, rising to 60 from September 2022

Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	Initially 40, rising to 60 from September 2022
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Initially 40, rising to 60 from September 2022
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Unknown

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	14.8 initially, rising to 31.8 when full
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	3

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school intends to be a special school for pupils aged between seven and 16. It intends to admit 25 pupils in September 2021 and admit more pupils according to the needs of current and potential pupils up to a maximum of 60.
- The proposed school intends to cater for boys and girls with EHC plans for social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils are likely to also have additional needs, such as autism spectrum disorder or communication and interaction needs. Leaders expect that the vast majority are likely to have missed long periods of formal schooling prior to admission.
- The proposed school's building is situated on the site of a former school in Bitterne Park, Southampton.
- The proposed school's vision is to 'nurture aspiration, develop resilience and empower learning'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the DfE 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.
- Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) held discussions with representatives of the proprietorial body, including the chair of that body. She also met with the headteacher and members of the leadership team, including the head of personal development and enrichment, who is also the DSL, and the school's head of education.
- HMI toured the site of the proposed school. She scrutinised a wide range of policies, documents and records presented as evidence towards the school's likelihood of meeting the independent school standards. This included the single central register. She also reviewed the school's website.

Inspection team

Lucy English, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021