

Oak Tree School

Truro Business Park, Threemilestone, Truro, Cornwall TR4 9NH

Inspection dates

24 June 2019

Overall outcome

The school meets the independent school standards relevant to the material change. The material change has already been implemented.

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- Leaders ensure that all staff are vigilant in recognising potential concerns about pupils' welfare. They provide staff with ongoing training and 'refresher' opportunities, which follow guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education. The school's safeguarding policy is in line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2018). Leaders use quizzes to determine how well staff are familiar with their safeguarding responsibilities. They use this information to identify future training requirements.
- Staff record concerns about pupils' welfare on the school's electronic recording system. Designated leaders regularly check on these concerns, determining whether the involvement of external agencies is necessary. Leaders monitor records over time, which enables them to identify patterns or trends. Leaders for safeguarding maintain regular communication with external agencies, to either refer pupils to them or to receive advice. Safeguarding at the school is effective.

Paragraph 11

- Leaders have the necessary systems in place to ensure that pupils' health and safety are not compromised. Leaders ensure that regular checks are carried out on the site, which informs whether maintenance is deemed necessary. The health and safety policy is in depth and closely considers the school environment and the varying needs of pupils.

Paragraph 12

- Leaders carry out regular fire drills at the school site to determine how well staff and pupils evacuate the premises, recording how long it takes on each occasion. Staff also conduct frequent checks on fire safety, including visual checks on fire extinguishers and internal lighting. Fire extinguishers are checked by an external company on a regular basis to ensure that they are suitable for use.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders have ensured a high level of staff in the school, including across tiers of leadership, teaching staff and support staff. Across the school, staff supervise pupils well and are well placed to provide support, while maintaining pupils' safety.

Paragraph 16

- Risk assessments are in place for all activities both in and out of school. Risk assessments closely consider individual pupils' needs, with steps to reduce risk tailored to these needs. Staff regularly review risk assessments to ensure that they remain current and effective.
- School leaders have ensured that the standards in Part 3 are likely to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraph 18

- Leaders ensure that recruitment checks of newly appointed staff are robust. As a result, leaders only appoint staff who are deemed suitable to work with children.

Paragraph 19

- School leaders use a small number of supply staff who regularly work at the school. Leaders ensure that the appropriate checks are in place for these staff to determine whether they are suitable to work with children.

Paragraph 20

- Members of the body of the proprietor, Acorn Care and Education Group, have all had the necessary checks to determine their suitability for their roles in supporting education and care for young people.

Paragraph 21

- The recruitment information for staff, supply staff and members of the body of the proprietor is recorded on the school's single central record. The single central record is compliant.
- School leaders have ensured that the standards in Part 4 are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23

- Pupils, including those with limited mobility, have access to suitable toilet facilities intended for sole use. Pupils also benefit from suitable changing accommodation and showers.

Paragraph 24

- The school has a medical room for the examination and treatment of pupils, including those with complex needs. The medical room includes a washing facility and bed, and

is located near to the pupils' toilets. This room is not used for any other purpose and is therefore readily available for pupils to receive medical attention.

Paragraph 25

- The proprietor, Acorn Care and Education Group, has invested in securing a new, improved building on the site. The new building is impressive and closely considers the needs of pupils and the facilities required to meet their varying needs. Classrooms are finished to a high standard. In addition, the whole site is well maintained and presented.

Paragraph 26

- Leaders have invested in soundboards to reduce echoing and sound transferring between classrooms. Across the school, rooms have suitable acoustic conditions, promoting rich, focused learning experiences.

Paragraph 27

- The lighting, both internally and externally, is suitable. The school building is well lit throughout. Outside, many external lights help to maintain safety as pupils enter and exit the school site.

Paragraph 28

- Pupils have easy access to drinking water, which is in the communal areas of the school. This water supply is clearly labelled as suitable for drinking. Any water that is not suitable for drinking is also clearly labelled. Hot water in pupils' toilets does not pose a risk of scalding.

Paragraph 29

- Pupils benefit from a newly introduced outside space, which is particularly suitable for physical education. The multi-use space is well maintained and pupils frequently use this facility.
- School leaders have ensured that the standards in Part 5 are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- Leaders at all levels demonstrate a clear understanding of the independent school standards. As a result, all those considered during this material change inspection are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.
- The development of middle leaders, an area for improvement at the previous inspection in March 2018, is beginning to have an impact in the school. Leaders swiftly secured further capacity across the school, so they can closely monitor the quality of the school's provision and the impact it has on pupils' progress. The leadership team is well placed to provide education for a larger number of pupils, hence its application for a material change and its subsequent approval.
- The proprietor, Acorn Care and Education Group, has further developed its quality assurance systems. This enables representatives to keep a watchful eye on the

school's performance, using detailed information to provide suitable challenge or support.

- School leaders have ensured that the standards in Part 8 are likely to be met if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets 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	140942
DfE registration number	908/6003
Inspection number	10104971

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 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 status	Independent school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Group
Chair	Mr Richard Power
Headteacher	Mr Mike Deacy
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,950 to £100,000
Telephone number	01872 264221
Website	www.oaktreeschoolcornwall.co.uk
Email address	oaktreeschool@acorncare.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	21–23 March 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 16	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	54	65	65

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	52	65
Number of part-time pupils	2	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	54	65
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	54	65
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	54	65

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	24	24
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	64	64

Information about this school

- The school has been operating with 54 pupils prior to this material change inspection. This is above the agreed number of pupils approved by the DfE. However, as nine pupils were in Year 11, the number on the school's roll has returned to 45.
- Oak Tree School is an independent special school situated on the outskirts of Truro. It

is one of several schools operated by the proprietor, Acorn Care and Education Group.

- All pupils who attend the school have education, health and care (EHC) plans. All pupils are placed at the school by the relevant local authority. The vast majority are placed by Cornwall Council.
- The school caters for pupils who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include social, emotional and mental health needs, specific and moderate learning difficulties, and speech, language and communication needs. An increasing number of pupils have autism spectrum disorder.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place on 21–23 March 2018, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding.
- The school does not use alternative providers. Pupils undertake a wide variety of activities away from the school site, such as outdoor education, but are accompanied by staff from the school at all times.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector considered independent school standards under Parts 3, 4, 5 and 8, as requested by the DfE.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher to determine the school's readiness to provide education for 65 pupils. The lead inspector considered works completed on the school's premises, as well as changes to the structure of the leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with the designated leaders for safeguarding to consider how well staff maintain pupils' welfare and their work with external agencies. The lead inspector also scrutinised the school's single central record.
- The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the proprietor. The conversation considered how well the proprietor can support the school as it increases pupil numbers.
- The lead inspector considered documentation, particularly the school's policies and logs for maintaining pupils' safety on site, including risk assessments.
- The lead inspector conducted two focused walks around the premises to consider specific independent school standards and the school's suitability to provide education for the proposed increase in the number of full-time pupils.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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