

Dibden Park School

Main Road, Dibden, Southampton SO45 5TD

Inspection date

18 July 2023

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), 2(2)(h)–2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)–2A(2)

- Leaders' educational aims are for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to achieve the best possible academic outcomes while developing their character. Each pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan) will be the springboard for curriculum adaptations and meeting academic and personal needs. Pupils will leave school with suitable qualifications and the confidence to play their part in society.
- Most pupils will have experienced significant disruption to their education. Therefore, the curriculum will start by addressing knowledge gaps in literacy and numeracy. Reading will be prioritised. Leaders will train all staff to be experts in teaching phonics through an ambitious, systematic phonics programme. Pupils will be exposed to a range of high-quality fiction to develop a love of reading.
- The school's curriculum will meet the ambition and breadth of the national curriculum subjects. There will be nine key strands of the 'foundation' curriculum in key stages 2 and 3. Pupils will learn English, mathematics, science, the arts, humanities, technologies, health and well-being, outdoor education and enrichment. In key stage 4, there will be an 'options' curriculum which will include vocational areas such as construction, catering and mechanics. Each pupil will follow their own personalised curriculum pathway which could be GCSE, functional skills or vocational qualifications.
- Pupils will have access to a range of therapies as part of their curriculum. There are designated rooms in the school for one-to-one or small-group sessions. These will be led by the group's well-being and clinical team who are qualified therapists.
- Careers information, education, advice and guidance has been carefully planned to prepare pupils for adulthood. Leaders are following the provider access legislation to provide pupils with meaningful encounters with apprenticeship and training providers.

Paragraphs 3 and 4

- Leaders' planning has identified and sequenced the component knowledge that pupils will learn. This is structured around 'steps' rather than national curriculum year groups. Within subjects, knowledge and skills build cumulatively from pupils' starting

points. For example, this could be a pupil in key stage 2 working towards key stage 1 expectations in mathematics.

- The school will recruit qualified teachers. Some of the staff already appointed come with significant experience of working in special schools. Equally, leaders recognise the importance of subject specialists to teach pupils.
- Leaders will focus staff training on adaptive teaching strategies. Teachers will be expected to understand pupils' different levels of prior knowledge and how to provide targeted support to pupils who may struggle with learning a new concept.
- Ongoing assessment of pupils will inform leaders about how well pupils are learning the curriculum. Leaders have planned summative assessments to capture pupils' knowledge and understanding. There will be joined-up thinking in working with educational psychologists for each pupil's annual review.
- All of the independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a)–5(d)(iii)

- Leaders are committed to the personal development of pupils. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education will teach pupils about health and well-being, relationships and living in the wider world. Pupils will learn about being a productive member of a diverse community.
- The relationships and sex education programme meets government expectations. Leaders have ensured that content is appropriate for pupils' levels of physical and emotional maturity. They are mindful that pupils may come from different family types and contexts.
- There will be a daily enrichment programme for pupils. This will develop pupils socially and culturally and will likely provide them with first-time experiences. Staff will make use of the school's geographical location to enrich pupils' wider development. Pupils will be able to choose from a range of activities, including sports, climbing, water sports, cycling, cooking and art.
- A range of trips are proposed to teach pupils about the wider world and different cultural traditions.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a)–7(b)

- Safeguarding children is of utmost importance to leaders. They will ensure staff are thoroughly trained in knowing what to do if there are concerns. At interview, leaders probe staff's understanding of safeguarding and their rationale for wanting to work at the school.
- An online system will be used to record safeguarding information. Leaders will ensure that there will be a thorough transition for all pupils and that any safeguarding documentation is swiftly transferred to them from a pupil's predecessor school. Leaders demonstrate they are vigilant for signs that pupils may be at risk of harm and

know how to involve external agencies promptly.

- The school's safeguarding policy is compliant with the government's latest guidance.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10

- The school has written a 'person-centred' behaviour policy. It recognises pupils are likely to have had adverse childhood experiences. Staff will be trained to understand pupils' needs and focus on solutions. Rewards and sanctions are included in the behaviour policy.
- Leaders will work with the well-being and clinical team to support pupils' behaviour and additional needs.
- Leaders are adamant that bullying will not be tolerated. The school's anti-bullying policy abides by the Equality Act 2010 and all members of the community will be valued and respected.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14

- The school complies with health and safety legislation, and leaders strive for the highest standards of safe working practices.
- All fire risk assessments and checks have been completed, and leaders have ensured compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. All signs are in place for fire notices and evacuation routes.
- The first-aid policy is appropriate, and staff will be trained to administer first aid and medication for pupils.
- Leaders have planned carefully the staff-to-pupil ratios throughout the school day.

Paragraph 15

- The information on the school's admission and attendance registers is maintained in accordance with requirements of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Paragraph 16, 16(a)–16(b)

- There is a suitable risk assessment policy in place. Thorough risk assessments have been produced, including for the vast, outdoor natural environment that pupils will explore.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

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

- The headteacher has completed safer recruitment training. The group's human resources department oversees a robust process to onboard staff.
- The single central record includes what is required in the Department for Education's 'Keeping children safe in education' statutory guidance. Leaders have ensured that stored information is password protected.
- The school does not intend to use agency staff.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(2), 25–27(b), 28(1)–29(1)(b)

- The proprietor body has ensured the converted school building has retained much of the original architecture of the former Dibden Manor. Leaders are passionate to teach pupils and visitors about this school building which is steeped in history.
- Toilets are single-sex, with private cubicles. There are an appropriate number of showers for pupils to use after physical activity.
- Drinking-water is clearly labelled throughout the school building.
- A large medical room has been fitted to a high standard and contains all that is required. It is situated near a toilet facility.
- Classrooms are spacious, with high ceilings. The large windows let in natural light and are a standout feature of the property. The specialist kitchen for cookery, science laboratory and art studio are particular highlights of the school environment. There has been careful attention to selecting paint colours in all rooms.
- There are plans afoot to have an indoor gym. A special 'immersion room' will transport pupils virtually to simulate life in the wider world and help prepare them for different scenarios.
- The outdoor grounds are glorious. Pupils can be at one with nature. There is a large multi-use games area to promote physical activity.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)–32(1)(j), 32(2)–32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii)–32(2)(d), 32(3)–32(4)

- The school's website follows the design specifications of its company. It contains the relevant policies and information that are required to be published.
- Leaders have decided upon the written report template that will inform parents about their child's progress.
- Pupils attending will be funded by their local authority. Leaders and the proprietor body know how to share information about income and expenditure for any funding the school receives.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a)–33(k)

- The school's complaints policy outlines how parents can raise a concern. There are clearly identified stages to follow. Leaders are aware that a panel hearing must contain a member who is independent of the school and company.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- Leaders demonstrate significant knowledge and experience in leading schools. They

show an excellent understanding of meeting the standards.

- The headteacher has created a suitable staff structure, including a senior leadership team, to meet the school's ambitious vision.
- The proprietor body has extensive expertise in managing special schools. It is committed to making this school a 'flagship' centre within the company.
- There are clear accountability systems and processes to hold leaders to account for the quality of education and for meeting the standards. The proprietor body will have regular updates on what is happening in the school and the impact on pupils. The checks and balances in place are likely to be effective.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility plan adheres to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have carefully considered adaptations for the school curriculum and building. Furthermore, they are wholly committed to inclusion, equality and diversity.
- This requirement is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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	149863
DfE registration number	850/6111
Inspection number	10286552

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Matthew Robinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,680 to £82,770
Telephone number	02380 177 958
Website	www.dibdenparkschool.co.uk
Email address	info@dibdenparkschool.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	Not applicable	5 to 16	8 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

Reason for inspector's recommendations

- The school is not ready to accommodate pupils in key stage 1. The environment and resources are only suitable for pupils in key stage 2 and above. In the longer term, the proprietor body plans to acquire an additional building on the school site to extend educational provision to pupils in the primary phase.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
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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	14
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- Dibden Park School will be part of Outcomes First Group (OFG) which runs special schools across the UK. The school is part of Acorn Education, which is one of two brands in OFG. The chief operating officer for education is the chair of the proprietor body for all the schools. A regional director is allocated to a group of schools geographically and acts as each school's chair of governors.
- The proposed school is located in the village of Dibden in the New Forest. OFG has acquired the previously known Dibden Manor to convert the building into a school. Dibden Park School will be situated in acres of land and green areas.
- The school intends to admit pupils from Year 5 to Year 8 in the first instance. All pupils will have an EHC plan, mostly with a diagnosis of social, emotional and mental health needs. In addition, pupils may have cognition and learning needs.
- The headteacher started in May 2023. A deputy headteacher and two assistant

headteachers will form the senior leadership team in September 2023.

- Leaders do not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine if the school is likely to meet the standards if it is given permission to open.
- This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspection focused on compliance with the regulatory requirements of the standards, safeguarding procedures and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and regional director of OFG. He held a telephone call with the chair of the proprietor body.
- The inspector visited all parts of the proposed school premises. He also looked at a wide range of documents and policies.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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