

# Bower Lodge School

Main Road, Southampton SO45 5TD

**Inspection date**

1 August 2024

**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) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(h) to 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2), 3 to 4*

- Leaders have high aspirations for what they hope prospective pupils will achieve through being at the proposed school. They have planned an ambitious curriculum which is likely to provide suitable breadth of learning as required by the independent school standards (the standards). Appropriate written curriculum and assessment policies are in place. These give suitable consideration to provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The curriculum consists of three pathways and is designed to be flexible, with content tailored according to pupils' individual requirements. Some pupils may not have attended school for extended periods prior to joining so may have significant gaps in learning. A range of entry assessments will be used alongside each pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets to identify the most suitable curriculum pathway. Pupils will be moved between pathways wherever appropriate. Leaders have the knowledge and expertise required to ensure that this is done well.
- Leaders have a suitable phonics programme in place to support pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Leaders will prioritise staff training to ensure staff have the required knowledge and expertise to deliver this. Thought has also been given to how pupils with other communication needs will be helped to access the curriculum, such as by learning Makaton, using symbols or a picture exchange communication system.
- The clinical team, including a speech and language therapist, an occupational therapist and a clinical psychologist, will complement the school's educational work. Pupils will be able to access extra help so that any educational barriers can be eased. There are several designated spaces in the school where this additional therapy support can be carried out.
- Curriculum plans include appropriate provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school's relationships and sex education (RSE) programme covers all the required content from the statutory guidance. This includes topics such as keeping healthy, being a good friend, healthy eating and keeping well. Leaders will

ensure that the RSE policy is published on the website. They intend to consult with parents and carers about this policy when the school opens.

- A carefully planned induction programme will be used to support pupils when they first join the school. Building strong relationships with parents and pupils will be a key element in helping pupils to settle into school life. Teachers will assess pupils' academic and social and emotional development continuously as a routine part of their practice. This looks likely to give leaders accurate and useful information about how well pupils are learning and making progress through the intended curriculum pathways.
- Leaders propose to gradually increase the number of pupils on roll. Plans for staffing reflect this intention and several suitably qualified staff have already been appointed. Leaders intend that experienced and knowledgeable staff will enable pupils to acquire the knowledge and skills required to make good progress through their bespoke curriculum pathways.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the school is granted permission to register.

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

### *Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)*

- Leaders have given careful thought to pupils' personal development. They understand the importance of developing pupils' social skills and building pupils' self-esteem, independence and resilience. Leaders plan to offer a wide range of trips and visits which will be influenced by pupils' interests and aspirations.
- Leaders are committed to the promotion of fundamental British values. These will be taught through the PSHE programme and the school's carefully planned schedule of assemblies, as well as throughout the everyday life of the school. The planned curriculum aims to ensure that pupils will be taught about a range of religions, faiths and cultures.
- Leaders are aware of the danger of partisan views being spread by staff and have effective policies and monitoring systems in place to help prevent this.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the standards if granted permission to open.

## Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

### *Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)*

- The proposed school has policies, written guidance and procedures in place to assure the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The safeguarding policy is fit for purpose and follows the latest statutory guidance. The policy will be published on the school website once it is live.
- The headteacher will take the role of designated safeguarding lead. He has carried out suitable training and is knowledgeable about what the role involves. There are appropriate plans in place to ensure that all staff receive ongoing safeguarding training.

- Arrangements for record-keeping are suitable. All safeguarding concerns will be recorded on a centralised electronic system in a timely manner. Leaders intend to complete regular checks on staff safeguarding knowledge to ensure they are confident about taking action when required.

*Paragraphs 9 to 16(b)*

- The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies are likely to meet the requirements of the standards. They have been created with the needs of pupils with SEND in mind. Staff will be rigorously trained in de-escalation strategies and how to use physical intervention as a last resort.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that the school complies with relevant health and safety requirements. These are supported by policy and practice which are tried and tested in other schools within the Outcomes First Group. As such, roles, responsibilities and routines are well defined and appropriate.
- The proprietor has completed an initial review of fire safety arrangements. A further independent fire safety audit is scheduled for early in the autumn term. Newly installed fire extinguishers are located throughout the premises. Fire exit routes are clearly indicated as such. Leaders intend to carry out routine checks on equipment and alarms and hold regular fire drills.
- The first-aid policy is suitable and makes provision for effective first aid. The headteacher is trained to administer first aid. Other key staff will also be trained to an appropriate level to administer first aid prior to the school opening.
- The small class sizes and high ratio of adults to pupils means that pupils will be well supervised at all times. As the school grows over time, there are suitable plans in place to expand the workforce to ensure safe oversight of pupils.
- Admissions and attendance registers are electronic and will be kept in line with statutory guidance. This will allow leaders to look for patterns and trends of absence.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the school is permitted to open.

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

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

- Leaders know what checks they are required to carry out on adults employed by or working at the school. A single central record of recruitment checks is in place. This gives a clear record of the checks that have been carried out, in accordance with requirements. Staff already employed and relevant members of the Outcomes First Group are included on the record.
- The regional director and the headteacher have completed suitable training in safer recruitment procedures. Other leaders will also have safer recruitment training to ensure that the required checks on staff and other adults at the school are carried out appropriately.
- Leaders do not intend to employ agency or supply staff at the school. However, they understand the procedures that should be used to check the suitability of supply staff.

- The school is likely to meet this part of the standards if granted permission to open.

## Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The proposed school is located in the gatehouse and stables within the grounds of the former Dibden Manor and is set in its own secure site. The proprietor body has ensured that these premises have been refurbished to a high standard. Premises comprise seven classrooms, a specialist food technology room and several breakout spaces. The largest room will be used as a dining room and for physical education. The premises are suitable for up to 40 pupils and the associated staffing.
- Classrooms are spacious, bright, airy and well resourced and have good acoustics. The ground-floor classrooms have direct access to the outside learning spaces. Leaders have plans to further develop these areas in due course. Pupils also have access to an activity trail to support their physical fitness and personal development.
- Large windows admit plenty of natural light into the buildings. All windows have been refurbished to ensure safe use. Outside, lighting has been installed to keep the areas safe during the darker hours.
- There are suitable toilets in place for boys and girls, including an accessible toilet. These include running water that is hot but does not present a scalding risk. Drinking-water is clearly labelled as such and will be made readily available to pupils. There are also suitable shower facilities.
- The medical room is fit for purpose. It is suitably equipped with a bed for pupils to rest on, a sink and a lockable medical cabinet, with a toilet nearby.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met should the school be granted permission to open.

## Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii) to 32(4)(c)*

- The school's website is under development and will mirror what is used across the company's other schools. It will contain the relevant policies and information that are required to be published.
- School leaders know about the requirement to report on the progress of pupils with SEND who have EHC plans to local authorities as part of the annual review process. Leaders also know they must account for any funding they receive.
- Leaders see high levels of communication between parents and school staff as a key aspect of the provision. Regular updates and written reports will be provided to parents or carers about pupils' attainment and progress.
- The requirements for this part of the standards are likely to be met if the school is permitted to open.

## Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33*

- Leaders have adopted the Outcomes First Group's policy for handling complaints. It is comprehensive and fit for purpose and clearly identifies a staged approach for complainants to take in the event of having a concern.
- Leaders have suitable plans to keep records of any complaints received by the school. Monitoring of complaints and arising actions will be part of routine checks carried out by those responsible for governance.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the school is permitted to open.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)*

- The proprietor body has extensive successful experience in providing education for pupils with SEND. It is likely that this experience will ensure that pupils' welfare is positively promoted in the proposed school if it is granted permission to open.
- Leaders are clearly committed to making sure that pupils can access high-quality provision. They have a secure understanding of the standards. Systems and processes are already in place to keep the proprietor body informed about the quality of education in the school. For instance, strategic oversight includes layers of reporting and accountability procedures, including weekly operational reports.
- The school will have a governing body made up of experienced headteachers and the regional director, who will be the chair. Personnel will have an appropriate and broad range of experience and expertise. This places them well to be able to support and challenge the school as it develops.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the standards if granted permission to open.

## Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Furthermore, they are wholly committed to inclusion, equality and diversity. The proposed school has a helpful accessibility plan that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- Leaders demonstrate a detailed understanding of all the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory requirements. They intend to plan for children across all aspects of learning. Children's progress against this will be recorded and shared with parents through an online assessment tool.
- The proposed school is likely to comply with all the learning and development and safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS.

## 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 | 150911   |
| DfE registration number | 850/6117 |
| Inspection number       | 10348526 |

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               | Acorn Care and Education Limited   |
| Chair                    | Richard Power  |
| Headteacher              | Anthony Creaser  |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £64,500  |
| Telephone number         | 02381 157 058  |
| Website                  | <a href="http://www.bowerlodgeschool.co.uk">www.bowerlodgeschool.co.uk</a> |
| Email address            | info@bowerlodgeschool.co.uk  |

## Pupils

|                                     | <b>School's current position</b> | <b>School's proposal</b> | <b>Inspector's recommendation</b> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Age range of pupils                 | Not applicable                   | 4 to 11                  | 4 to 11                           |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | Not applicable                   | 40                       | 40                                |

## Pupils

|   | <b>School's current position</b> | <b>School's proposal</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gender of pupils                                    | Not applicable                   | Mixed                    |
| Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age | Not applicable                   | 40                       |
| Number of part-time pupils                          | Not applicable                   | 0                        |

|  |                |    |
|--|----------------|----|
| Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities                              | Not applicable | 40 |
| Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan                               | Not applicable | 40 |
| Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan | Not applicable | 40 |

## Staff

|   | <b>School's current position</b> | <b>School's proposal</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | Not applicable                   | 5                        |
| Number of part-time teaching staff            | Not applicable                   | 0                        |
| Number of staff in the welfare provision      | Not applicable                   | 6                        |

## Information about this proposed school

- Bower Lodge School intends to cater for up to 40 pupils between the ages of four and 11. All pupils will have an EHC plan and their places will be funded by a local authority.
- The school intends to specialise in providing education for pupils with autism. Many pupils will also have associated communication difficulties.
- Bower Lodge School is part of Acorn Care and Education Limited group of schools within the Outcomes First Group.
- The school does not intend to have a particular religious character.
- It is not intended that the school will use alternative provision.
- A governing board will be appointed and will provide a degree of external oversight for the school.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education in response to the proprietor's application to open an independent school. This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Schools must comply with the standards to be registered.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the regional director and the chair of the proprietor body. She reviewed documents provided by the school and those that will be available on the school's website. The inspector toured the school's premises and checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks.

### Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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