

Merrywood House Independent Special School

The Old Pheasantry, Merrywood Grove, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 7HF

Inspection date

4 May 2023

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1)–(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h)–4

- The proprietor has applied to extend the age range of pupils to include key stage 4. This will enable pupils currently in key stage 3 to continue their studies at the school instead of changing provision as they move into Year 10. Leaders do not intend to increase the number of pupils the school is registered for.
- Leaders are aspirational for pupils across all phases of the school. The curriculum is bespoke. It takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. This includes the proposed curriculum for pupils as they move through Years 10 and 11 should the material change be approved.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum taking into account the views of pupils and parents in their work to make sure the proposed curriculum for key stage 4 is fit for purpose. They have also taken advice from independent, external consultants in this matter.
- Curriculum plans and schemes of work are appropriate. Leaders have built in a degree of flexibility to enable pupils of different abilities to achieve appropriate qualifications. These include GSCE and/or functional skills qualifications. The proposed curriculum at key stage 4 has appropriate breadth.
- Leaders have thought carefully about the destinations of pupils, assuming the material change is approved. These include college places or apprenticeships. Leaders are also very aware of the requirements linked to providing careers information and guidance. This also encompasses work experience, as well as providing bespoke opportunities to work in partnership with other local schools.
- The proposed curriculum includes providing pupils with personal, social and health education (PSHE). Appropriate relationships and sex education will also be provided in accordance with paragraph 2A.
- Leaders have already started to provide current teaching and support staff with professional development opportunities to ensure that they are confident and

competent to deliver the proposed key stage 4 curriculum. A long-term plan is in place to ensure that this continues. It contains an element of external scrutiny to ensure that the proprietor is satisfied that the quality of teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make the progress that they are capable of.

- The proposed curriculum has been designed to support pupils' wider development as well as their academic achievement. This includes ensuring that supporting pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is given a high priority.
- Leaders have clear strategies in place to assess the progress pupils are making. Additionally, leaders and staff are well aware of the barriers pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may have to making progress. Discussions during the inspection highlighted that leaders have made appropriate arrangements to ensure that staff are assessing pupil performance and providing additional support when needed.
- This part of the independent school standards (the standards) is likely to be met if the material change is approved.

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

Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)

- Leaders have made appropriate plans to ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development will be supported well should the material change be approved. Plans are in place to extend the current curriculum which takes into account all aspects required in part 2.
- One important strand of the school's work, recognised at the last standard inspection as a strength, is that leaders and staff know pupils well. This has obvious advantages when delivering a programme that encourages good behaviour, as well as building self-esteem and self-confidence.
- A suitable PSHE programme is in place. This will be extended to take into account the needs of pupils in key stage 4 if the material change is approved. This will include ensuring that pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of equality and different aspects of fundamental British values.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7–7(b), 32(1) and 32(1)(c)

- The culture to safeguard pupils is strong here. Leaders and staff understand the additional vulnerabilities that pupils who already attend the school face. The proprietor has taken into account the potential for further demands on staff to keep pupils safe linked to extending the age range of pupils.
- Policies and systems to keep pupils and staff safe are fit for purpose. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and takes into account current guidance. Staff are aware of the school's policies linked to the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Safeguarding training for staff, including those with additional responsibilities linked to safeguarding, is up to date.
- Staff know what to do if they have concerns. Leaders act when they need to. Record-

keeping linked to safeguarding is detailed but manageable. This means that staff are able to report concerns in a timely manner, and leaders are able to act quickly when they need to.

- Aspects linked to safeguarding, such as the recruitment of staff and the close oversight of attendance of pupils, are given a high priority here. The school's single central record is maintained well. Key staff who are responsible for performing the correct checks on adults who work at or visit the school are knowledgeable about what needs to be done and why.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- Leaders and the proprietor have carefully considered the impact the proposed material change would have on pupils currently attending the school. Their rationale for the application is simple and makes sense, especially when pupils' needs are taken into account.
- The proprietor, who is also the executive headteacher, has ensured that there is an appropriate degree of external oversight and scrutiny from an advisory board of suitably qualified and experienced people. This is supplemented by independent external consultants who both advise and deliver professional development for leaders and staff.
- School leaders benefit from a range of professional development linked to their roles. Senior and middle leaders are currently accessing professional qualifications at different levels to ensure that they stay abreast of good practice. This means that the school continues to be led and managed well and that the standards are likely to continue to be met over time.
- Part 8 is likely to continue to be met if the material change is approved.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	147600
DfE registration number	936/6035
Inspection number	10284443

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 likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Merrywood Education Ltd
Headteacher	Michelle Quayle (Executive Headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£56,400 to £77,400
Telephone number	01737 336 352
Website	www.merywood.org.uk
Email address	michelle.quayle@merrywood.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	2 to 4 November 2021

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 14	5 to 16	5 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Up to 66	Not applicable	Not applicable

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Up to 66	Not applicable

Number of part-time pupils	0	Not applicable
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Up to 66	Not applicable
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Up to 66	Not applicable
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Up to 66	Not applicable

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	18	Not applicable
Number of part-time teaching staff	2	Not applicable

Information about this school

- Merrywood House Independent Special School currently provides full-time education for pupils aged five to 14 years. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority. All pupils have complex social, emotional and mental health needs. These are often linked to adverse childhood experiences and trauma. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school opened in December 2019. The executive headteacher is the sole director of the proprietor body, Merrywood Education Ltd. There is an advisory board providing external challenge and support to the proprietor.
- The school operates from two sites. In addition to the school's registered address shown at the top of this report, the school operates from a second site approximately 10 miles away known as the 'Sandmartin Campus'. The address of the Sandmartin Campus is Sandmartin Way, Wallington, SM6 7DF.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provisions.
- The school received its first full standard inspection on 2 to 4 November 2021 when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good and all relevant independent school standards were found to be met.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to consider the proprietor's request for a material change to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to extend the upper end of the age range from 14 to 16 to include Years 10 and 11 pupils. The proprietor does not intend to increase the maximum number of pupils, which currently stands at 66.
- This was the school's first inspection in relation to these proposed changes.
- The inspection took place at the Sandmartin Campus where the proprietor proposes to base the additional year groups if the material change is approved.
- The inspector discussed the proposed changes with the proprietor, who is also the executive headteacher, other leaders, a member of the advisory board and an independent consultant employed by the school. He also met with the school's designated safeguarding lead accompanied by other leaders, as well as reviewing the school's single central record and other safeguarding documentation.
- The inspector toured the school's premises and visited classrooms, talking briefly to pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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