

Laurel House School

Bradbourne Park Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3LD

Unique reference number (URN): 152354

Pre-registration inspection report:

25 February 2026

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered

The purpose of this inspection was to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the proposed school's likely compliance with the independent school standards and associated requirements that are required for registration as an independent school.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out pre-registration inspections of proposed independent schools, we report on the provider's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

The proprietor has established a board of executive staff, including some who have expertise in education, therapeutic practice, finance and operations. An experienced headteacher has been recruited alongside other staff, including a deputy headteacher and school business manager.

There are likely to be effective reporting systems in place to enable the advisory board to monitor the school's progress and hold the headteacher to account. The proprietor intends that the headteacher will meet regularly with the head of group operations. There will also be a governing body made up of headteachers from the company's other schools. It is intended that this group will provide knowledgeable support and challenge for the school. In addition, commissioned independent external audits will provide the proprietor with additional assurance that the school is making the intended difference to pupils' education and wellbeing.

The proprietor has experience of running other schools and care settings in the company for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The headteacher has a successful track record of leading similar schools.

There is a well-organised curriculum for personal, social and health education through which it is likely that the proprietor will actively promote pupils' wellbeing. This includes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An additional programme is intended to provide many active experiences for pupils, linked closely to the curriculum and their individual personal development needs.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

Leaders intend for there to be classes from key stage 1 to 3 in the school. Leaders intend to admit pupils into key stage 2 first. The proprietor intends to apply for a material change for increased ages and numbers of pupils, so that pupils can eventually progress to key stage 4 within the school.

The proposed school's curriculum is based on the national curriculum. An appropriate curriculum policy, which prioritises academic success, is in place. Purchased schemes of work and curriculum plans are also in place from key stage 1 to key stage 4. The range of subjects that leaders intend for pupils to learn is likely to meet the requirements of the independent school standards and to support pupils in acquiring speaking, listening, numeracy and literacy skills. The curriculum includes personal, social and health education. Leaders intend that relationships education will be taught in line with government policy. There is a statement and policy in place. Leaders have plans to consult parents and carers on their policy and approach. There is likely to be an appropriate focus on foundational skills and early reading. The curriculum has been refined so that the precise information pupils should understand and learn is clearly identified.

Leaders have thought carefully about the special educational needs of pupils. The intention is that pupils will learn the curriculum through interesting topics linked closely to real-life experiences. This will support any pupils who may be reluctant to re-engage with learning after long periods of time out of education. The curriculum will be adapted to form a tailored learning offer for each pupil. All pupils who attend the school are anticipated to be pupils with SEND.

Teaching

The proprietor has started the recruitment process in preparation for the proposed school's opening. Teaching staff, who are already employed, or in the process of being recruited, are suitably experienced and qualified with backgrounds in education. The proprietor intends that teaching staff hold qualified teaching status. A range of professional development is planned for staff joining the school to ensure subject expertise and a continuity of approach across all classrooms. It is also intended, through ongoing coaching and specific training, that staff will develop expertise in how to teach pupils with SEND.

Assessment

Leaders are ambitious that pupils will progress well through the curriculum over time. There are well designed systems planned to support staff in checking pupils' understanding within lessons. More formal assessment systems are intended to be used to check pupils' progress towards clear curriculum end points.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered.

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

Pupils' development is at the centre of the school's intended provision. Leaders have set out the core values of being kind, safe, hardworking and respectful. These are evident throughout the school's policies and are likely to encourage pupils to respect each other and behave well.

Opportunities to explore a wide range of cultures, values and beliefs are firmly embedded within the curriculum. The curriculum gives appropriate emphasis to developing pupils' understanding of equalities and the fundamental British values.

Leaders demonstrate a clear awareness of the pupils' additional needs. Leaders are likely to maintain a strong focus on ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their next steps when they leave the school. For example, leaders plan to provide opportunities to develop pupils' employability skills, including residential trips designed to build pupils' confidence, problem-solving, teamwork and resilience. An 'Active Citizen' programme is intended to provide pupils with experiences, such as using public transport and shopping in the local community in preparation for independent life beyond school.

The curriculum provides many opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through personal, social and health education (PSHE). A commercial scheme of work is in place for PSHE, which staff will adapt to ensure that it is relevant, meaningful and meets pupils' SEND needs. For

example, leaders have thought about how to teach sex education to children whose physical development outstrips their emotional development. They understand communication with families is important as part of this.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The proprietor understands the importance of creating a culture of mutual respect, tolerance and trust, where everyone feels safe and can thrive. Leaders are alert to the safeguarding risks pupils may face. There are systems in place that are intended to maintain detailed records of any concerns. Leaders understand the importance of working with external professionals and are likely to do this in an effective manner to keep pupils safe.

The school's safeguarding policy meets current requirements. Leaders are knowledgeable about the proposed school's procedures to keep pupils safe. Designated safeguarding leaders are already in place and have attended safeguarding training at a level commensurate with their responsibilities. It is intended that all other staff will complete comprehensive safeguarding training during their induction and probation periods and will receive regular updates and communication about local risks.

Behaviour and supervision of pupils

The proposed school has a suitable behaviour policy based on a therapeutic approach. Leaders are aware of the potential barriers to managing the behaviour that pupils with SEND may display. The proposed school intends to teach pupils about their emotions and to use positive incentives to encourage high standards of behaviour.

Leaders have considered the training that staff will need so that the policy is applied consistently well and pupils' personal plans are delivered effectively. It is intended that staff will be supported to meet pupils' emotional needs through daily multidisciplinary reflection briefings.

Leaders have appropriate plans for pupils to be supervised during lessons and social times. For example, staff will be trained in providing games and activities to help pupils integrate during social times.

Anti-bullying

There is an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place. It links with the behaviour policy and is based on the school's values of being kind, safe, hardworking and respectful. It is intended that any bullying will be de-escalated immediately until a restorative approach can be taken to resolve the situation. Instances will be recorded.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The school's policies, written guidance and procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are comprehensive. The proprietor has ensured that policies needed in this part are suitable. The proprietor understands the requirements for the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations and checks that water on site is safe. Equipment such as power tools and Bunsen burners are housed in secure spaces that are locked.

There are suitable mitigations in place to reduce the risk of injury by fire and to support evacuation in the event of a fire. Leaders have set out a process for half termly evacuation practices. Leaders intend to use personal plans and extra practice for any pupil who needs additional help to evacuate safely. There is appropriate fire safety equipment that has been recently installed. There are new fire safety doors that are automatically activated in the event of a fire. The proprietor has refurbished fire exits, such as staircases, so that they are safe for the intended pupils' needs.

The first-aid policy sets out appropriate requirements for administering first aid. First-aid kits are stored appropriately. Specialist classrooms contain specific first-aid equipment. The proprietor intends to train all staff to a suitable level of expertise in the administration of first aid.

Admissions and attendance

Leaders have established systems that are intended to maintain admissions and attendance registers so that they conform with statutory requirements. Leaders understand the potential safeguarding risks associated with pupils' absence. There are procedures in place that are likely to identify any concerns and keep pupils safe.

Risk assessment

The school's approach to risk assessment is likely to be very thorough. There is a comprehensive risk assessment policy. Additional risk assessments consider pupils' individual needs. Staff understand the need to develop risk assessments for pupils' use of the site and all off-site activities. They have already begun to carry out and

document risk assessments with the intention of training staff as they are recruited.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered

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

The recruitment checks made on staff, supply staff and the proprietor

Robust, online systems are already in place to carry out and monitor pre-recruitment checks on staff.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

The school's single central record meets statutory requirements. Leaders understand the checks that need to be made on all adults at the school. Leaders have attended appropriate training linked to the safer recruitment of staff. Leaders do not intend to use staff contracted through employment agencies in the first instance. However, they are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities with regards to the use of agency staff.

The proprietor and the board of executive staff have systems intended to provide oversight of the school's processes to recruit and check the suitability of staff.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities, water supply, changing accommodation and showers

There are adequate separate toilets for pupils and staff, most of which have recently been refurbished to a high standard. The toilets flush with cold water. All of them have sinks with hot and cold water. There is adequate changing accommodation and a newly refurbished shower.

Where drinking water is available from taps it is labelled as safe to drink. In areas of the building where tap water is not drinkable, this is also clearly labelled and water is installed in drinking stations.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

The school has a separate medical room with a sink, drinking water, toilets nearby and a bed. Inspectors saw evidence of a lockable fridge on order for medicines' storage. There are appropriate first-aid boxes in the room.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

Leaders' clear vision for high-quality education and therapeutic care is at the heart of the site design.

The site comprises one large main building that will house the proposed school and a small separate building, where a specialist therapeutic team will be based. The main school building has recently been refurbished to a high standard. The proposed school is situated in a large site that used to be a school. The main building is a large, Victorian building. The buildings have recently been refurbished to ensure pupils' safety and wellbeing. Recent refurbishments include thoughtfully designed window protectors, which ensure pupils' safety while allowing for light and fresh air to aid wellbeing. The school environment is deliberately designed to meet pupils' needs, creating a welcoming, 'low arousal' environment.

There are enough classrooms and other spaces to accommodate the number and ages of pupils requested. Several classrooms incorporate well-equipped sensory areas. Classrooms are well equipped and an appropriate size for the number of pupils the school intends to admit. There are separate, specialised, well-equipped rooms for teaching art, food technology, science and technology. Physical education will be taught in the hall and outside. A well-stocked library is likely to support pupils' reading.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

There is suitable lighting in all areas of the school, including external lighting. Acoustics are well designed with carpets throughout the building to dull echoes.

Outdoor space

The proposed school site is well considered for the intended cohorts' needs. A car park large enough for taxi turning leads on to the short driveway to the school entrance. Extensive outdoor play areas provide age- and stage-related opportunities for sports and social times. Each area is fenced off to ensure pupil safety without compromising the open and attractive environment.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school website sets out an appropriate level of information about the school. It includes the safeguarding policy, behaviour and anti-bullying policy and complaints policy. The proprietor intends to publish any required reports following

inspection and any decisions made to remove the school from the register or to impose a relevant restriction on the proprietor. The names and details of the school, proprietor and headteacher are on the website.

Leaders intend to provide parents with termly reports about pupils' progress and achievement.

Leaders intend to account for the income and expenditure incurred in respect of pupils funded by a local authority and to participate fully with annual reviews for pupils' education, health and care plans.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

There is a suitable complaints policy in writing, published on the school website. It is available to parents. The policy sets out how to address concerns informally in the first instance and if parents make complaints in writing, timescales by which they can expect a response from the school. The policy provides for a formal panel hearing. This includes an independent person. Parents may be accompanied to meetings and any formal hearings. Any findings are written and available to the parent and inspectors. A written record of complaints will be kept confidentially.

The school is likely to meet this standard if it is registered.

The school's accessibility plan

The school has a suitable accessibility plan which meets the requirements of the Equality act 2010. It sets out how the school intends to enable pupils and visitors to the site to overcome any barriers to access, wellbeing or learning.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. Inspectors checked the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors also met with the proprietor and members of the school's executive team during the inspection. Inspectors considered and discussed a range of documentation and records provided by the proprietor as evidence towards the standards. These included behaviour, curriculum, safeguarding, health and safety information and information about the proposed handling of complaints. The inspector also viewed the school's website.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school will provide for pupils aged 5 to 15 years old, who have a range of complex needs, including social, emotional and mental health, communication and interaction and associated challenging behaviour.

The school does not intend to use any alternative provision.

Lead inspector

Jo Brinkley	His Majesty's Inspector
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Team inspector

Catherine Old	His Majesty's Inspector
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About this proposed school

Proprietor	The Laurel House School Limited
Headteacher	Simone Hopkins
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
Capacity	70
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's proposal: 70
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's proposal: 0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll	Provider's proposal: 70
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	Provider's proposal: 70
Age range of pupils	Provider's proposal: 5-15yrs
Gender of pupils	Provider's proposal: Mixed

Total hours operating as a school per week	Provider's proposal: 27.5 hrs
Total hours of teaching provided per week	Provider's proposal: 25 hrs
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 25
Number of part-time teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 0
Number of staff in the residential provision	Provider's proposal: 0
Annual fees for day pupils	£61,000 to £79,000
Email address	simone.hopkins@rests-sen.uk

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