

Minerva May School

Dovenby Hall, 271 Balcombe Road, Horley RH6 9UU

Inspection date

18 February 2025

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)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) to 2A(2)

- The school's curriculum is likely to provide suitable breadth of learning as required by the independent school standards (the standards). A core curriculum of English and mathematics will be supplemented with project-based learning which will incorporate aspects of science, humanities and the arts. The school anticipates that this approach will help pupils who have been absent from formal education for a long time to re-engage with learning and, over time, achieve academic success.
- The school aspires for pupils to gain relevant qualifications that will enable them to access further education, employment or training when they leave the school. Pupils will work towards nationally accredited qualifications, such as functional skills and GCSEs, as well as vocational qualifications in subjects such as music production and hair and beauty.
- Curriculum plans set out precisely what will be taught in each subject. The content will be consistent with the national curriculum, sequenced appropriately and designed to ensure that pupils will know more and remember more.
- Pupils are likely to have significant gaps in their learning because of disrupted education prior to joining the school. The school intends to adapt the curriculum according to pupils' individual needs, contexts and starting points. Pupils will work towards individualised targets to support academic and personal development.
- Pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans will provide the starting point for the curriculum for each pupil. The school will use a range of assessments, as well as discussions with pupils and parents and carers, to evaluate pupils' needs when they join the school. The school will provide therapeutic input, such as speech and language therapy, according to pupils' needs and their EHC plans.
- The school intends to give the importance of reading a high priority. Leaders anticipate that sometimes pupils joining the school will have relatively low levels of literacy and may have negative attitudes to reading. Assessments completed as part of the school's induction procedures will be used to evaluate pupils' reading skills. Careful thought has been given to procedures to help weaker readers to acquire

secure reading skills. Support will include a suitable phonics programme with ongoing checks to identify pupils' progress. The school will ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the teaching of reading.

- The school's physical education (PE) programme will be delivered on site in the school's hall and spacious grounds. The PE curriculum will be supplemented with a range of additional off-site activities, such as kayaking and gardening.
- The school aims to 'nurture independent, lifelong learners who are prepared for adult life'. This aim is central to its personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. The school's personal development curriculum aligns well with its vision and ethos. Pupils will learn a range of topics relevant to their age and developmental needs.
- The curriculum will be enriched with a programme of activities, trips and events selected to support pupils' personal, social and physical development. Activities such as travel training and local shopping trips will be used to support the development of independence and confidence. Fundamental British values will be embedded in the curriculum and will be promoted throughout school life. Appropriate thought has been given to the provision of impartial careers guidance.
- The school's relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education curriculum includes an appropriate range of themes and topics. The RSE and health education policy complies with statutory guidance.

Paragraphs 3 to 3(j), 4

- Arrangements to recruit suitably qualified staff are well in hand. Leaders intend to recruit well-qualified and experienced staff. The small number of staff already appointed have relevant teaching experience and expertise in special educational needs. The school has carefully considered plans in place for ongoing staff recruitment as the school grows. New staff will complete a suite of training as part of an induction process, in addition to ongoing training.
- The school will monitor and review pupils' progress against their targets regularly. Ongoing assessments will be used to inform curriculum planning and target-setting for individual pupils. The school will liaise regularly with pupils and parents so that everyone is informed about pupils' learning and next steps.
- The school's behaviour policy provides a suitable framework to promote good behaviour. Staff will be trained in behaviour management. A senior leader will oversee behaviour and will liaise with parents.
- Leaders have appropriate plans to develop classroom resources, which will be selected carefully to support pupils' individual needs.
- It is likely that all the standards in this part will be met if the planned curriculum is delivered effectively.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a clear strand running through the school's curriculum. The school regards this aspect of the curriculum as central to re-engaging pupils with formal learning and in preparing them for life in modern Britain.
- The PSHE programme aims to equip pupils with skills for spiritual and personal health, learning, employment, as well as for independent living and active citizenship. The curriculum will include activities and trips in the local and wider community to support the development of independence and life skills. Pupils will have regular opportunities to discuss topical issues and current affairs. They will learn about different religions as part of the planned curriculum. The school's behaviour policy emphasises pupils' active participation in considering the impact of their own behaviour on others. Pupils will be supported to recognise their own emotions and to learn strategies to help them to manage responses when anxious or stressed.
- Plans for the school's development reflect the clear intention to build an inclusive and accepting community in which differences are respected. The PSHE programme sets out an appropriate range of themes and topics which will be considered during tutor times and assemblies. The Equality Act 2010 and teaching of the protected characteristics will be embedded in the curriculum.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)

- The proposed school's policy for safeguarding and child protection takes account of relevant statutory guidance and of safeguarding arrangements in the local authority where the school is located. It is published on the school's website, which is in the advanced stages of preparation. Safeguarding training will represent a key element of staff induction procedures.
- Appropriate arrangements have been made for the appointment of a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) should the school's application be approved. The school will have an assistant headteacher for behaviour, inclusion and pastoral care who will also be the DSL. She and the headteacher have completed suitable safeguarding training. The headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team will be deputy DSLs.
- All safeguarding concerns will be logged on a centralised electronic record system. The school has clear procedures for monitoring and analysing safeguarding incidents. These systems will be used, in part, to identify any staff training or curriculum adaptations needed.
- The school understands the local safeguarding context and is acutely aware of the potential for pupils to have additional vulnerabilities due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The headteacher has a strong safeguarding background and maintains positive and constructive links with the local authority.

Paragraphs 9 to 10

- Behaviour and anti-bullying policies will be published on the school's website. These policies focus on promoting a positive ethos and a culture of respect in the school. The establishment of strong relationships, high expectations and clear routines will be central to the school's approach to behaviour management. The school's assistant head for behaviour, inclusion and pastoral care will liaise with parents to support pupils' attendance and well-being.
- Positive handling will be used occasionally and only where a pupil's behaviour represents a risk for pupils or staff, or serious damage to property. Staff will be trained in its use, although the emphasis will be on intervening at an early stage to avoid its use wherever possible. All incidents will be documented and parents will be notified.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13 and 16

- The proprietor understands its obligations in relation to pupils' health and safety. They have relevant written policies in place, such as those relating to the administration of medication and risk assessment. Regular health, safety and premises checks are already an established part of school routines.
- The proprietor has ensured the completion of suitable premises and safety checks, such as asbestos surveys, gas installation reports and water checks. The school has completed an acoustic survey due to its proximity to Gatwick Airport. The survey's report confirms the presence of suitable sound insulation.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that the school conforms to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. An independent fire survey has been carried out and relevant actions taken. The building is supplied with firefighting equipment, fire safety signage and an alarm system.
- Suitable policies and procedures have been formulated to ensure that first aid arrangements are followed.

Paragraph 14

- The school has careful plans in place to ensure that pupils are supervised properly. Supervision arrangements for different parts of the school have been well thought through to ensure that pupils are well looked after across the school day. Suitable plans are in place to manage transition arrangements at the start and end of each day.

Paragraph 15

- Appropriate arrangements are in place for managing pupils' admissions and attendance. Admission and attendance registers are set up to include all required information. All pupils will be referred to the school through the local authority's admission consultation process.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

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(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c) to 21(6)

- The proprietor has a thorough knowledge of the recruitment and suitability checks required when staff are recruited. All necessary checks have been completed for current employees, directors and advisory board members. The school's safeguarding and child protection policy identifies suitable safer recruitment practices.
- A single central record is already in place. It contains all the required information. All checks completed so far are recorded appropriately, including those completed for the directors.
- The school may use supply staff from time to time. The proprietor is clear about the written confirmations and assurances that relevant agencies would need to provide to confirm that appropriate vetting had taken place.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The proposed school will occupy a large building which was originally used as a private residence before its more recent use as business offices. The proprietor is in the process of refurbishing the building. Much of this work has been completed to a high standard. However, while most of the classrooms have been refurbished and furnished appropriately, a small amount of work is ongoing. This means that there are too few classroom spaces for the number of pupils proposed.
- The school accommodation includes a spacious hall which will be used for activities, such as PE lessons and assemblies. Several classrooms will be used for the teaching of specialist subjects, such as food technology, art and music production.
- Classrooms are bright and airy. All windows are secondary glazed and fitted with locks. Climate control throughout the building means that it will not be necessary to open the windows except in an emergency.
- Suitable toilet facilities are available for pupils and staff, as well as showering facilities. Water supplied for handwashing is a suitable temperature. Drinking water is clearly labelled and will be freely available to pupils.
- The medical room has been refurbished and equipped to a high standard. Resources include a sink with a drinking water supply, a medical fridge and a suitable medical bed, with a toilet nearby.
- The school's premises include an extensive and attractive outdoor area, which is largely laid to lawn and divided by a series of footpaths and borders. All areas are securely fenced with plentiful external lighting. There is ample space for pupils to relax, play and socialise.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(h) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(d) to 32(3)(f), 32(4) to 32(4)(c)

- The school has a professionally designed website which is nearing completion. The proprietor has ensured that all required information will be published on the website, including safeguarding and complaints procedures.
- The school has thought carefully about how it will share information about pupils' learning and attendance with parents. Formal assessment and reporting arrangements, including annual reviews and parents' evenings, will take place regularly, alongside ongoing liaison with parents.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- The policy is clearly written and includes timelines for each stage of the complaints process. It will be published on the school's website when this is launched. The school's complaints policy sets out clear procedures to be followed in the event of complaint. The policy emphasises a focus on resolving complaints informally, and at an early stage wherever possible.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor and advisory board bring relevant expertise and experience to their roles. The headteacher has extensive experience in providing education for pupils with SEND.
- The proprietor has established an advisory board whose role will include monitoring the school's work, providing challenge and holding leaders to account. The proprietor and advisory board will use a suite of reports covering a range of topics, such as admissions, attendance, staffing and safeguarding, to inform its work.
- It is likely that the standards in this part will be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The principle that 'all individuals are equal and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect' is fundamental to the school's work. The school aims to provide an exceptional education for all pupils, regardless of backgrounds or starting points. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils and staff will adhere to schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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	151489
DfE registration number	936/6077
Inspection number	10381888

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	Minerva May Limited
Chair	Melvin George
Headteacher	Melvin George
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,000
Telephone number	07487 624260
Website	None
Email address	melvingeorge@minervamayschool.org

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11 to 17	11 to 17
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	50	34

Reason for inspector's recommendations

- Refurbishment work has not been completed in some rooms and areas of the school. Some classrooms are not suitably equipped with furniture and resources.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	50
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	50
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	50
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	50

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	3
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	3

Information about this proposed school

- The school intends to cater wholly for pupils with SEND. All pupils will have an EHC plan, with places funded by a local authority.
- Leaders intend to specialise in providing education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, moderate learning difficulties and autism. Pupils may also have a range of associated conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, speech and language difficulties and attachment disorders.
- The school will be housed in a two-storey building which was built originally for residential use and was subsequently used as an office building. It is located in a semi-rural area on the edge of a small town.

Information about this inspection

- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, if the Department for Education decides to register it. This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspectors discussed and reviewed all relevant proposals and plans for the new school with the headteacher, who is also one of two directors. They also spoke with the second director, a member of the advisory board and the property's landlord.
- The inspectors scrutinised a wide range of policies, documents and records presented by the proprietor as evidence of the school's likelihood to meet the independent school standards. They also checked the single central record.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Laura James

His Majesty's Inspector

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