

White Trees Independent School

13a London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3SP

Inspection dates

22–23 July 2020

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- Leaders and governors have made keeping children safe the top priority at the school. Leaders provide regular training so that staff are vigilant for any signs of abuse or neglect. Staff act swiftly and appropriately when concerns arise. Leaders work determinedly so that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need.
- Leaders regularly review the effectiveness of their safeguarding procedures to make improvements. This academic year, leaders have improved the way staff communicate and record safeguarding concerns.
- The safeguarding policy is up to date and includes current national guidance. The policy is available on the school's website.
- The school is likely to meet this independent school standard.

Paragraph 11

- Leaders have written a health and safety policy and have made the policy available on the school's website.
- Staff actions contribute to the health and safety of pupils at the school. Staff practices, however, do not always match leaders' health and safety policy on the website. Leaders have not realised this discrepancy in order to make any necessary changes.
- The school is unlikely to meet this independent school standard if the material change were granted.
- The evidence demonstrates that the school currently no longer meets this independent school standard.

Paragraph 12

- The new accommodation has all the required measures in place regarding fire safety. The building has been certified for fire safety by the relevant authority.

- Leaders ensure that the school has regular fire evacuation practices. Leaders have started to reflect on what they learn from these to improve their procedures.
- The school is likely to meet this independent school standard.

Paragraph 13

- Elements of the first-aid policy are not appropriate for the ages of the pupils at the school. Parts of the policy have been written for children in Reception Year. The school is not registered to have any pupils below the age of 11.
- The school is unlikely to meet this independent school standard if the material change were granted.
- The evidence demonstrates that the school currently no longer meets this independent school standard.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders consider the needs of each pupil when determining the level of supervision required. To meet pupils' needs, leaders alter the size of teaching groups and the number of adults supervising pupils.
- The school is likely to meet this independent school standard.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- Pupils are currently educated on the school site and in locations around the community.
- Leaders have a risk-assessment policy and a large collection of risk assessments. However, these do not identify the risks associated with each location as they are too generic. Risk assessments also do not outline effective measures to ensure that risks are reduced.
- The school is unlikely to meet this independent school standard.
- The evidence demonstrates that the school no longer meets this independent school standard.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3)

Paragraph 19(2), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)

Paragraph 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c)

- Leaders are well supported by their human resources team so that recruitment processes are followed as expected. Leaders ensure that all required background checks are undertaken to determine whether adults at the school are suitable to work with children.
- The school is likely to meet these independent school standards.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 23(2)

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

Paragraph 25

Paragraph 26

Paragraph 27, 27(a), 27(b)

Paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- The proprietor has refurbished a building in the community so that the school can accommodate more pupils. The building meets the expectations outlined in the independent school standards. The building has been refurbished to a high standard.
- Leaders' accessibility plan outlines how they will alter the existing building to enable those using wheelchairs to enter the building and use the toilets.
- The school is likely to meet the standards for this part of the independent school standards. The accommodation, however, is not big enough for the number of pupils requested by the proprietors for the material change request.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The school has experienced a great many changes in leadership over the three years prior to this material change inspection. Since the previous standard inspection, there have been three headteachers and new members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- Leaders and governors have not checked rigorously to ensure that staff practices match leaders' policies or that risk assessments are fit for purpose.
- Leaders used a substantial amount of evidence from existing practices at the school to support their material change request. Inspectors found instances of existing practices that did not meet the independent school standards. This shows that leaders have not ensured that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Leaders acknowledge that they have not thought through well enough their requests for material changes. In May 2019, the registration authority granted a material change to increase the age range of pupils. Leaders have identified that their plans have not developed as fully as they had hoped.
- For this material change, leaders do not have a clear and workable plan to educate an additional 18 pupils on the school premises.
- The school is not likely to meet the requirements for this part of the independent school standards.
- The evidence demonstrates that the school currently no longer meets the requirements for this part of the independent school standards.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has a suitable accessibility plan. Leaders have plans in place to provide suitable access to the school and toilet facilities for people who use wheelchairs.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely 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, as set out in the annex of this report.

School details

Unique reference number	140655
DfE registration number	919/6053
Inspection number	10154780

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 special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Sure Care Residential
Chair	Christina Wells
Headteacher	Laura Bull
Annual fees (day pupils)	Band 2: £55,500 Band 1: £75,000 Band 1+: £117,000
Telephone number	01277 899955
Website	www.whitetrees-school.com
Email address	laura.bull@whitetrees-school.com
Date of previous standard inspection	25–27 April 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18	11 to 18	11 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	20	38	24

Reason for inspector's recommendations

The registration authority increased the permitted maximum number of pupils to 24. An increase to 38 would be a large increase in the number of pupils, for which leaders have not prepared pupils and staff thoroughly. Prior to COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions on schools, only a few pupils were ever educated at the school at the same time. Pupils have been educated in locations around the community. Leaders have not been able to

articulate a plan to educate 38 pupils. Similarly, the combined accommodation across both sites is not large enough to accommodate all 38 pupils at school at the same time.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	11	38
Number of part-time pupils	9	Not yet determined
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	20	38
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	20	38
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	20	38

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	16	Not yet determined
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	0

Information about this school

- White Trees Independent School is a day special school providing for boys and girls who experience social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school opened in

February 2014 and moved to its current location in 2017. To provide space for more pupils, leaders have built accommodation in Little Hallingbury, two miles from the existing school site.

- At the previous standard inspection in April 2018, inspectors judged the school as requiring improvement.
- At the previous material change inspection in May 2019, the school was registered to take 16 pupils in the age range of 11 to 16 years. The school's request to extend the age range from 16 to 18 was granted in May 2019.
- In October 2019, the school's permitted maximum number was revised to 18 pupils. The registration authority increased further the school's permitted maximum number to 24 pupils. This was on an interim basis until August 2020.
- There are currently 20 pupils on the school roll, all of whom have an education, health and care plan.
- A new headteacher and chair of the governing body have joined the school since the previous material change inspection.
- The school makes use of additional off-site locations regularly for day-to-day teaching. This includes local venues in the community, such as the public library.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The school requested that its maximum permitted number be increased to 38 pupils. This would nearly double the current number of pupils on roll.
- The purpose of the inspection was to establish whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the registration authority granted the requested material change.
- Inspectors scrutinised leaders' plans and other relevant documentation regarding the school's policies and procedures and the school's accommodation.
- Both inspectors spoke with the headteacher. In order to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, conversations were held either over the telephone or with other appropriate measures in place, in line with government guidance.
- The lead inspector spoke over the telephone with the proprietor, the safeguarding governor and representatives from Hertfordshire local authority.
- An inspector visited the school in Bishop's Stortford and the new accommodation in Little Hallingbury.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kim Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is not likely to meet the following independent school standards.

The inspection also identified standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 13 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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