

Groveside School

40 Christchurch Road, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7AT

Inspection date

19 July 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)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) to 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2), 3, 4

- Groveside School plans to cater for pupils with a range of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Prospective pupils are likely to have found it difficult to attend a mainstream setting or engage with formal education. The curriculum of the proposed school reflects this. The school plans to deliver an academic curriculum alongside a programme of therapies and personal development.
- Leaders have put in place a broad curriculum across key stages 2, 3 and 4. Teachers will be trained to adapt this curriculum using information in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan), the school's baseline testing and ongoing assessment. There is a coherent framework for checking that pupils are acquiring the skills and knowledge set out in the curriculum.
- The school plans to provide a personalised curriculum to meet the needs of each pupil. For older pupils, a set of pathways will be used to ensure that they access suitably ambitious qualifications, including GCSEs. Once they reach Year 11, the school intends giving some pupils the opportunity to study vocational courses by attending a local college as part of their timetable.
- Reading will be prioritised for all pupils. There will be a programme of phonics for pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read.
- There is an age-appropriate curriculum in place for relationships and sex education and health education. This is underpinned by a suitable policy which acknowledges the requirement to consult with parents on the content of this curriculum.
- There are plans in place to provide pupils with good-quality careers advice and guidance. This includes providing all pupils with impartial advice to support them in making informed choices about the next stage in their education or training.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders intend to prioritise pupils' personal development through the taught curriculum, as well as through opportunities such as trips and visits. They have considered how they will promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including through their procedures and policies in school. For example, the behaviour policy aims to help pupils regulate their behaviour with increasing independence.
- Leaders have considered how they will promote equality and create an inclusive culture at the proposed school. They plan to visit places of worship within the local area and host speakers from different faith groups. There are procedures identified to ensure that pupils are not exposed to partisan political views.
- There is a broad curriculum planned for pupils' personal, social, health and economic education. This will be adapted to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge. Within lessons, tutor times and other activities there will be a particular emphasis on developing pupils' communication and social skills.
- To ensure that all pupils can participate, opportunities to develop their talents and interests will be built into the timetable of the proposed school. Activities will be selected in consultation with pupils but are likely to include a range of outdoor and sporting activities making use of local parks and leisure facilities.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 32(1)(c)

- Leaders and the proprietor body have ensured that there are robust safeguarding arrangements in place for the proposed school. This includes a comprehensive policy that is published on the school's website. Leaders have made plans to deliver training to all staff on the school's procedures. This is in addition to a package of safeguarding and other training which is delivered online to all new employees within the Acorn Education group. The proprietor body has developed systems to ensure that it has oversight of the school's work in this area and can ensure that arrangements are effective.

Paragraphs 9 to 16(b)

- There are written policies on behaviour and anti-bullying. Leaders intend for all staff to be trained in the school's 'person-centred' approach to managing behaviour. This approach will focus on building strong relationships and supporting pupils to regulate their emotions. Leaders plan to take regular opportunities to celebrate positive behaviour that aligns with the school's values.
- There is a suitable risk assessment policy and this has already been applied to the building and grounds of the proposed school. There are templates and procedures in place to create further risk assessments, including for off-site activities.
- There are systems in place to record and monitor pupils' admissions and attendance.

The school is likely to admit a small number of pupils in its first year and then grow gradually. The school has secured sufficient staffing for September 2024 to ensure that pupils are properly supervised.

- A fire risk assessment has been carried out and the site is compliant with the necessary fire regulations. Measures have been taken to reduce the risk of fire, such as internal fire doors and regularly serviced fire extinguishers. There is a schedule in place to check that the building remains compliant, which includes regular testing of fire alarms and evacuation drills.
- There is an appropriate first-aid policy. Designated staff will be trained in administering first aid as required.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

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 and the proprietor body are committed to safer recruitment. They have put in place stringent processes to ensure that safeguarding is considered at each stage of the hiring process. Necessary checks are being carried out on all new employees. Evidence of these checks is documented in the single central record.
- The school has a suitable procedure in place to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on temporary supply staff.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

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 school's premises have been unoccupied for some time and have undergone extensive renovation. The main building was previously used as a school. There are several rooms arranged over three floors. These rooms will be designated as classrooms, therapy rooms and offices. In addition, there are several classrooms in a separate building, which have also been renovated to a high standard. Classrooms are spacious for the small number of pupils expected in each class. There is a bright and welcoming school library and adjoining canteen area.
- There is a sizeable outdoor play area to the rear of the property. It is a safe and secure space, currently containing outdoor gym equipment for pupils' use. Leaders intend for this area to be fully landscaped before September 2024.
- The school site is safe and secure. There is ample outdoor lighting, including in the car park at the front of the building.
- There is an appropriate medical room with access to a sink and a nearby toilet. There is a bed for pupils who are sick or injured, as well as lockable storage for medication.
- The school has separate staff and pupil toilets. Water temperature is monitored to ensure it remains suitable for handwashing. Drinking-water is available and clearly

labelled. Pupil showers are available, as well as space for changing if required.

- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

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)

- Leaders are aware of the information that they must publish or make available on request. The school's website is ready to be published online and contains all necessary policies and information.
- Leaders have a schedule for regular reporting to parents. They also intend to provide a range of opportunities for parents to visit the school and discuss the progress their children are making.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- The proposed school has a suitable and clear complaints procedure that meets the requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders hope to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible by working proactively with parents at the informal stage of the process.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor body has experience in opening and running several similar schools. It has systems for quality assurance and ensuring that the school is compliant with the independent school standards. These include reviewing regular, standardised reports produced by the school's headteacher.
- The school has appointed a governing body which consists of headteachers from other schools operated by the proprietor body. To ensure external scrutiny, the school will also work with an independent school improvement partner who will conduct regular reviews of the provision.
- Leaders and the proprietor body have demonstrated a secure understanding of the independent school standards through their work to prepare the school for opening.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- School leaders are committed to fulfilling the statutory duties set out in the Equality Act 2010. They have produced and published suitable policies and drawn up an accessibility plan which is published on the school's draft website.

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	150898
DfE registration number	870/6018
Inspection number	10348441

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	Mary Rome
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,000 to £97,000
Telephone number	01183 744 556
Website	www.grovesideschool.co.uk
Email address	Mary.rome@grovesideschool.co.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	7 to 16	7 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

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	60
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	7
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	6

Information about this proposed school

- Groveside School intends to provide full-time education for up to 60 pupils between the ages of seven and 16. All pupils will have an EHC plan and their places will be funded by a local authority.
- Pupils attending the school will have a variety of SEMH needs. They are likely to have been out of formal education for a period of time before joining the school.
- Groveside School is a part of the Acorn Education group of schools. Acorn Education is owned and operated by Outcomes First Group.
- The proposed school will not have any particular religious character.
- The school does not intend to use any alternative provision. There are plans to accompany some pupils to a local college as part of their timetable in the future.
- A governing board has been appointed and will provide oversight of the school.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education. The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards if registered. This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector telephoned the school's headteacher before the inspection to discuss the proposed school and the details of the inspection.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the school's headteacher, the chair of the proprietor body and the director of operations. The inspector evaluated the suitability of the school premises and scrutinised a range of policies and documents. He spoke with leaders about a range of matters relating to the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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