

Willow School

25 Jermyn Street, North Kesteven, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 7RU

Inspection dates

21 February 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

Paragraph 2(1) to 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(g) to 2(2)(i), 2A(1), 2A(1)(b) to 2A(2)

- The school has prepared a curriculum that aims to grow, achieve, inspire and nurture pupils (GAIN). The curriculum is supported by detailed schemes of work for each year group. The curriculum aims to provide pupils with experiences in a range of subjects. These include linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. The school has a written curriculum policy.
- The school's schemes of work take into account learners' starting points, ages and aptitudes, including those with an education and health care (EHC) plan. Pupils' attainment will be checked on entry.
- Pupils will be taught speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read will be supported to develop their knowledge and application of phonics. Pupils will study a wide range of texts, authors and genres.
- The curriculum promotes an understanding of mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. Schemes of work do not undermine fundamental British values.

Paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e) to 2(2)(e)(iii)

- The scheme of work for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is detailed. It covers all necessary content. The content promotes and encourages respect among pupils. It aims to develop pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics.
- Pupils will receive accurate and up-to-date careers advice and guidance from a range of sources. Pupils will be helped to select an appropriate education pathway for key stage 4.

Paragraphs 2A(1), 2A(1)(b) to 2A(2)

- The relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education programme will be delivered as part of the PSHE provision. The proposed scheme of work is comprehensive.

- Leaders will ensure that they make information about RSE available to parents. They intend to consult parents on the content of the programme.

Paragraphs 3 to 3(g), 3(i), 3(j), 4

- The school will carry out initial assessments when pupils first join. These will check on what pupils already know and remember. Assessments will be used to ensure that pupils make progress according to their ability.
- Leaders will ensure that teachers deliver well planned lessons. The schools' 'Every Day' and 'Every Lesson' documents set out the minimum expectations of teaching.
- Leaders will carry out a systematic range of quality assurance activities. These will include visiting lessons, talking to pupils and looking at pupils' work. Findings from these will inform teacher training.
- The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards (the standards) in this part.

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

Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders' have developed 'The World Around Us' curriculum that provides for pupils social, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. They have identified how pupils' SMSC will be promoted through each of the subjects that will be taught.
- Pupils will be systematically taught fundamental British values through the curriculum. Themes will be revisited over time. They will be supported by posters and symbols that highlight to pupils where these are relevant and exist.
- Pupils will be provided with opportunities to make a positive contribution to the local community. This includes through litter picking and bag packing activities.
- Pupils will be taught about a wide range of views, beliefs and cultures form across the world. They will visit local and regional places of worship, across a range of religions.
- Leaders will protect pupils from partisan political views. The school's visitor's policy sets out how visitors will be vetted and briefed before speaking with pupils. Leaders will ensure that pupils are presented with balanced points of views.
- The school is likely to meet all of the standards in this part.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- The school has a written safeguarding policy. It reflects latest national guidance. The policy will be made publicly available on the school's website.
- The school's safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable and suitably qualified. They will meet regularly to oversee the schools' safeguarding procedures. They plan to carry out termly and annual reviews to ensure that safeguarding is working as it should. A safeguarding induction programme will ensure that new staff understand their responsibilities. Posters will be displayed to ensure that pupils, visitors and staff know who safeguarding leaders are.

- The school will adopt a suitable electronic system to record any safeguarding concerns and the subsequent actions that are taken. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that safeguarding information is shared with relevant personnel.
- All staff will complete a safeguarding pathway spanning over a six-year period. This will ensure that, over time, their knowledge of safeguarding is revisited and kept up to date. Leaders plan to supplement this with additional training, weekly safeguarding reminders and updates.
- Leaders recognise the specific vulnerabilities of the pupils with which they will work. They know the potential safeguarding risks in the local area.
- The PSHE curriculum will teach pupils how to stay safe. This will include learning about potential risks in the community and online.
- There are suitable arrangements in place to filter pupils' access to online materials. Leaders will be alerted to any attempts to access inappropriate online content.
- Leaders are aware of their responsibilities should an allegation be made about inappropriate behaviour of an adult towards a pupil.

Paragraphs 3, 3(h), 9 to 9(c), 10

- The school has a written behaviour policy. It sets out what staff will do to promote positive behaviour. It describes the steps to be followed in the event of poor behaviour. Individual support plans and risk assessments will be drawn up for pupils who need extra help to adhere to the school's expectations.
- Leaders will record incidents of positive and poor behaviour on an electronic platform. They will review this regularly to identify any emerging trends and patterns.
- Staff will be trained to de-escalate situations where pupils become dysregulated. Staff will be trained in the use of appropriate, physical restraint.
- The school's anti bullying policy sets out how instances of bullying will be managed. Pupils will be taught what to do if they experience bullying, including online.

Paragraphs 11 to 13

- Leaders have ensured that there are appropriate health and safety policies in place, including for first aid. Staff will be trained in health and safety as part of their induction. The school will employ the services of a consultant to routinely check on health and safety compliance.
- Leaders are ensuring that the school complies with the Regulatory reform (Fire Safety) order 2005. A fire risk assessment is in place. It will be updated before the school opens.

Paragraph 14

- The school intends to employ a suitable number of staff. It will ensure that there are appropriate levels of supervision.

Paragraph 15

- The school's proposed admissions register meets national requirements.
- Leaders will record attendance on an electronic system. They will use this to identify any trends or patterns of absence.

- The school has a written attendance policy. This shows the codes that staff will use to record the reasons for pupils' absence.

Paragraph 16 to 16(b)

- There is a suitable risk assessment policy in place. Leaders are in the process of drawing up many risk assessments, including for arrival and departure times each day. Risk assessments show the risks identified and how the school will mitigate for these.
- The school will carry and a record a risk assessment for each pupil. These will consider risks such as physical intervention and absconding. These risk assessments will be updated termly, or sooner if required.
- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 21(1) to 21(3)(b)

- Leaders know the checks to make on staff before they can be permitted to work with pupils. They will ensure that only suitable adults work with pupils.
- The school will record the necessary recruitment checks on the single central record.
- Leaders know the information they require if they choose to appoint supply staff through an agency.
- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 28(1), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(d)

- There are suitable, separate toilet and washing facilities that are provided for the sole use of pupils. The toilets have an adequate supply of hot and cold water. The hot water does not pose a scalding risk.
- Pupils will be able to use the changing rooms and showers at a nearby leisure centre when they are in receipt of physical education (PE).

Paragraph 24(1) to 24(1)(b)

- A room has been set aside for the care of pupils who are sick or injured. It will be suitably equipped and near a toilet.

Paragraphs 25, 26, 27 to 27(b)

- The building has been adapted to ensure that the accommodation is suitable for the proposed school.
- Internal and external lighting are appropriate.
- Classrooms have suitable acoustics and are well ventilated.

Paragraphs 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(c), 28(2) to 28(2)(b)

- Drinking water will be available. It will be clearly labelled.

Paragraph 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- There will be a small area to the rear of the school where pupils can spend time outdoors. Pupils will use a local leisure centre for the purposes of PE.

- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1) to 32(1)(b), 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f) to 32(1)(i), 32(2) to 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3) to 32(3)(e), 32(3)(g)

- Leaders will ensure that parents have access to all the information and policies required via its website.
- Leaders understand their responsibilities with regard to providing information to local authorities about children who are looked after and pupils with an EHC plan when requested. Leaders will work with local authorities to facilitate this.
- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 32(3), 32(3)(f), 33 to 33(k)

- The complaints policy explains the procedures to follow should parents wish to make a complaint about the school. The policy indicates appropriate timescales and how parents can escalate concerns if they are not satisfied with the response or outcome.
- Leaders will keep written records of complaints received and the actions taken by the school as a result.
- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor has ensured that leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. Leaders have a secure understanding of the independent school standards.
- The school has taken appropriate action to ensure that it is likely to meet the independent standards, including in relation to pupils' safety and safeguarding.
- The proprietor intends to establish a governing body. The governing body will receive frequent reports from the headteacher to assure themselves of the quality of the provision and the school's continued meeting of the standards. Governors will visit the school. These visits will include speaking with staff and pupils and looking at pupils' work.
- The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's accessibility plan identifies how leaders will make sure that its' curriculum, documentation and premises are accessible for pupils SEND.
- The school is likely to meet the regulation in this part.

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	150438
DfE registration number	925/6065
Inspection number	10325175

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 day school
Proprietor	Willow Independent Ltd
Chair	James Mackay
Headteacher	Rebecca Miller
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000
Telephone number	07747535796
Website	None
Email address	willow-independent@outlook.com
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	7 to 14	7 to 14
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	20	20

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	Up to 20
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	20
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 20
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 20

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	0

Information about this proposed school

- This proposed school is located in Sleaford, Lincolnshire. It intends to provide full-time education for up to 20 pupils with SEND from 7 to 14 years old. Pupils will have a diagnosis of autism and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Some pupils who attend the school may be in the care of the local authority.
- Leaders do not intend to use the services of any alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the proposed school's first, pre-registration inspection. It was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet the standards if it is given permission to open.
- The inspector met with the chair of the proprietorial body, the headteacher and an additional senior leader.
- The inspector conducted a tour of the proposed site to check the premises against Part 5 of the standards.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including policies, curriculum plans and assessment.
- The inspector checked the arrangements for safeguarding and staff recruitment.

Inspection team

Vic Wilkinson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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