

The Spires

School Lane, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3YA

Inspection date

30 March 2021

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2

- The proprietor proposes to increase the maximum number of pupils from 22 to 32 and to extend the lower age limit to admit pupils from age six. The school's existing registration allows it to admit pupils from age seven to 18 years. Currently, the school has 21 pupils on roll. Three of these pupils are of primary-school age, and the rest are aged between 11 and 16 years.
- Senior leaders have produced a curriculum policy that sets out how pupils' social skills and their knowledge will grow incrementally from key stage 1 to key stage 5. There are suitable curriculum plans to support the systematic teaching of reading for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow a programme based on the national curriculum. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 take courses based on their interests that lead to qualifications such as functional skills, GCSEs or vocational awards. For example, some older pupils recently completed a 16-week course in motor vehicle mechanics at a local college.
- The school has an aspirational careers education programme. Recently, pupils took part in a careers event at school. Older pupils express their career plans readily. For example, one pupil has been inspired to become a firefighter.
- Senior leaders aim to build pupils' self-esteem. A personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is in place. This is tailored to meet pupils' individual needs and takes into account their ages. Many pupils have experienced significant trauma in the past. The school provides suitable counselling and therapeutic activities, such as drama therapy.

Paragraph 3

- In September 2020, the school appointed two teachers with experience in key stages 1 and 2. Their expertise in the teaching of early reading and phonics and in play therapy makes them well placed to teach the youngest pupils in the school.

- Over the last year, the school has recruited more specialist teachers as the number of pupils has steadily grown to the current maximum. Along with suitably qualified staff, the school has dedicated teaching rooms for science, food technology, music, engineering and art. Senior leaders have plans to develop further the range of vocational qualifications available for pupils in Years 10 and 11. For example, staff already have the necessary expertise to offer City & Guilds carpentry and joinery. The proprietor proposes to increase the number of pupils the school may admit so that more secondary-age pupils will benefit from these facilities.
- Staff understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. They implement the school's behaviour policy consistently.

Paragraph 4

- The school has a framework for assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding and reporting this to parents and carers. Senior leaders are ambitious for pupils. They have very recently introduced a new system to allow these assessments to match more precisely pupils' personalised programmes.
- The standards in part 1 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

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

Paragraph 5

- The school's ethos is to develop pupils' self-confidence and independence. Pupils increase their social skills through the curriculum. For example, they meet a variety of people through farm visits and equine therapy. Pupils lead their peers by taking part in the school council or acting as environmental leaders.
- The school's curriculum plans demonstrate senior leaders' strong commitment to teaching pupils about fundamental British values. Staff have established links with local Christian, Jewish and Sikh communities, so that pupils can be taught about the importance of tolerance of, and respect for different faiths and cultures. Senior leaders ensure that pupils receive a balanced view of contentious or political issues.
- Senior leaders recognise the importance of assessing pupils' social and emotional development as well as their academic achievements. In September 2020, they introduced an emotional profile document for each pupil, so that teachers can evaluate pupils' personal development and celebrate their wider achievements.
- The standard in part 2 is likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities to keep children safe. The school's safeguarding policy complies with the latest safeguarding requirements

published by the Secretary of State. The policy is available on the school website. It provides a secure basis for safeguarding practice throughout the school.

- Senior leaders are keenly aware of the risks that pupils may face as a result of organised criminal activity. Staff are given comprehensive safeguarding training when they join the school. Leaders provide staff with regular training that includes information about specific risks in the local area. Consequently, staff are knowledgeable and vigilant. The proprietor gives this aspect of the school's work a high priority.

Paragraph 9, 10

- Senior leaders have established an effective behaviour policy that is understood and implemented by staff. The school has a well-considered system for keeping records of any incidents. Leaders have an appropriate anti-bullying strategy. Pupils understand that bullying is not acceptable.

Paragraph 11, 12

- The school has a detailed health and safety policy that identifies the main roles and responsibilities for health and safety in the school. Senior leaders carry out regular monitoring to ensure that it is implemented.
- The proprietor has ensured compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Fire doors are well maintained, suitable signage is in place and escape routes are clear, including for the proposed new classrooms on the upper floor of the main building. The school employs an external consultant to carry out regular fire safety reviews.
- The school buildings are fitted with a modern fire protection system. This covers all parts of the main building and includes the outbuildings where music, art and technology are taught. Staff and pupils take part in evacuation drills each term. Leaders use these to ensure that all pupils know what to do and where to assemble, including how to support any pupils who are reluctant to participate or those who are much younger or new to the school.

Paragraph 13, 14

- The school has a suitable first-aid policy. This provides appropriate guidance for staff to administer first aid. It identifies the training staff will receive.
- Supervision ratios are high and suitable arrangements are set out for the change in age range and increase in pupil numbers. All classes have a sufficient number of staff to ensure pupils' health and welfare. Further appointments are about to be made. Senior leaders' vision is to employ two specialist teachers in each curriculum area.
- Pupils use the playground and play equipment at break- and lunchtime. For example, they play basketball. Staff provide adequate supervision at these times. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy being at school and feel safe.

Paragraph 15

- The proprietor ensures that the school records all necessary information about pupils in an admissions register. Appropriate attendance records are kept. Senior leaders are planning to implement a new system for monitoring attendance, so that the information can be analysed more effectively.

Paragraph 16

- The school has a suitable risk assessment policy. Risk assessments are in place for activities, areas of the school and for individual pupils. Where controls are necessary to ensure pupils' safety, suitable measures have been developed. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly to reflect changing circumstances.
- The standards in part 3 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

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

Paragraph 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

- Senior leaders follow safer recruitment procedures when appointing new staff. They ensure that all checks that are required to verify that adults are suitable to work with children have taken place. They keep a single central record of these checks. This includes appropriate checks on the proprietor's board members.
- The standards in part 4 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 24, 25, 26, 27

- The proprietor proposes to use a suite of eight rooms on the first floor of the existing main school building. These rooms are currently used by the proprietor's staff as therapy rooms and offices. These staff support the proprietor's other activities, including fostering and residential care services nationally. They will move out of these rooms as the proprietor has set up its head office in another location.
- The proprietor has maintained both floors of the main building to the same high standard seen at the previous inspection. This includes systems that are integral to the whole building, such as the fire alarm. Consequently, the rooms on the first floor already have suitable heating, lighting and acoustic properties. They are ready for pupils within the proposed age range to use.
- The first floor can be accessed by stairs at either end of a corridor. Fire escape routes are clearly marked. Internal and external lighting is provided at each of these access points.
- Senior leaders ensure that the medical room is clearly signed and kept ready for use. This room, which is on the ground floor of the main building, has a toilet, sink, bed and fully stocked first-aid kit.

Paragraph 23, 28

- The first floor includes a kitchen and two toilets in addition to the eight rooms. Senior leaders propose that these remain solely for staff use. The ground floor has four separate toilets for pupils' use. A further toilet is available in one of the three outbuildings. These toilet facilities are all easily accessible from the first-floor rooms.

The existing toilet facilities are sufficient to accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

- Each of the toilet areas has a washbasin with an adequate supply of hot and cold water. The temperature of the hot water is regulated so that it does not pose a scalding risk. Pupils have access to drinking water supplies that are separate from the toilet facilities.

Paragraph 29

- The curriculum includes physical education (PE). Staff use the school's large playground for teaching PE. Staff use other facilities, such as a local swimming pool, to extend the range of sports available to pupils.
- The proprietor proposes that the school will begin using a large, grassed area immediately adjacent to the existing playground. This outdoor space is accessed through a gate from the playground. It is enclosed by a high wall and so provides a safe, secure area that is suitable for a wide variety of games. Senior leaders intend to build a wooden cabin in this area to make it more inviting for younger pupils to play in. This extra outdoor area would approximately double the area available for pupils to play outside.
- The standards in part 5 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The head of education and the compliance officer provide diligent oversight of the work of the school on behalf of the proprietor. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of the independent school standards. The headteacher has expertise in providing education and therapy for pupils with SEMH needs.
- Senior leaders are passionate about the education and support of young people who have experienced trauma. They are committed to preparing pupils for life after school or care. The headteacher maintains good communications with the local authorities that commission places at the school. Senior leaders' plans for expansion are well considered.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding and promoting the well-being of pupils at the school.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards have been met consistently.
- The standards in part 8 are likely to continue to be met if the proposed material change is approved.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has produced a suitable accessibility plan for the premises. The school meets the requirements 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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	146166
DfE registration number	865/6051
Inspection number	10183064

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	Five Rivers Child Care Ltd
Chair	David Howard
Headteacher	Louise Bethel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£90,000
Telephone number	01722 820970
Website	www.five-rivers.org
Email address	louise.bethel@five-rivers.org
Date of previous standard inspection	18–20 June 2019

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 18	6 to 18	6 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	21	32	32

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	17	32
Number of part-time pupils	4	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	21	32
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	20	32
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	20	32

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	16	24
Number of part-time teaching staff	4	4
Number of staff in the welfare provision	1	2

Information about this school

- The Spires is an independent special school. It operates from one site in the centre of Salisbury. The school provides education for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The proprietor is Five Rivers Child Care Ltd. This is a social enterprise company that provides fostering, education and residential care services for children nationally. The proprietor employs a head of education and a compliance officer to oversee the work of its education provision.
- The Spires is currently registered for up to 22 pupils from age seven to 18 years. At the time of this inspection, there were 21 pupils on roll. The lower age limit was

extended from age eight to seven years in December 2019 with the agreement of the registration authority.

- The great majority of pupils have an education, health and care plan. They are placed at the school by their respective local authorities. Pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education prior to joining the school.
- The school uses three alternative education providers, Wiltshire Outdoor Learning (an outdoor pursuits centre), Riverbourne Community Farm and GUL (an equine therapy centre).
- The school operates an outreach provision called 1ACE. It provides tuition for any pupils on its roll who are not able to attend on site.
- The school's previous inspection, a standard inspection in June 2019, was the school's first inspection after its initial registration in November 2018. At this time, the school was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education commissioned this inspection to establish whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if a material change to the school's registration is implemented. The proprietor proposes to extend the lower limit of the school's age range from seven to six years old. The proprietor proposes to increase the maximum number of pupils from 22 to 32 and to begin using eight classrooms on the first floor of the existing school building. The proprietor also seeks to begin using a grassed outdoor area adjacent to the current playground.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the chair of the board of Five Rivers Child Care Ltd, its head of education and its compliance officer, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Some of these meetings were held online. The inspector held meetings with teachers, teaching assistants and the business manager. He held a telephone conversation with a representative of Wiltshire County Council. The inspector carried out lesson visits, observed breaktime activities and spoke with pupils.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation, including site plans, curriculum plans, policy documents and documents relating to safeguarding. He toured the site and visited the rooms on the first floor that the school proposes to begin using. He visited the outdoor space that the school proposes to use.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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