

River Valley

Mansfield Road, Sheffield, S26 5QW

Unique reference number (URN): 152223

Pre-registration inspection report:

10 February 2026

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

The purpose of this inspection was to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the proposed school's likely compliance with the independent school standards and associated requirements that are required for registration as an independent school.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out pre-registration inspections of proposed independent schools, we report on the provider's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

School leaders and the proprietor have a secure understanding of the independent school standards (the standards). They demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills to ensure that the standards are met consistently. There is a shared vision that the school will support 'young people to turn their lives around'.

The provider bases its approach on the latest research, particularly in the clinical team. The proprietor works closely with universities to enhance its understanding of trauma-informed education.

The local authority states that there is a need for this provision to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

The proprietor is proposing a layered quality-assurance process that includes colleagues who are independent of the proprietary body. This will ensure objective reporting to the proprietary body on the school's improvement journey.

The proprietor ensures that all staff will have opportunities to network with other colleagues in Five Rivers schools. This will support staff to share expertise.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum

The proprietor has written a detailed curriculum policy outlining how the school's ethos and values link to its curriculum offer. The school proposes using some published schemes of work to support curriculum delivery. Many of these schemes are in use at other Five Rivers schools. These programmes are well sequenced to ensure that pupils build knowledge and skills from Year 1 through to Year 11. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It includes mathematics, English, science, technology, humanities and creative subjects, such as music. The school has appropriate plans in place to teach phonics and early reading. 'The book nook' is a cosy library space created by the school to promote a love of reading. The school proposes a post-16 curriculum tailored to the pupils' needs. It will include academic, vocational, industry-experience and life-skills sessions.

The proposed school will support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders plan to train staff to offer specialist support for pupils with SEMH. Leaders recognise that teachers will need to adapt the curriculum to address gaps in pupils' learning.

There is a well-planned careers curriculum proposed by leaders. It will support pupils to make informed independent careers choices. For example, pupils will access a neighbouring 'Skill Street' provision to participate in hands-on experiences, such as using a flight simulator or planning a new housing estate.

Teaching

The school proposes an appropriate number of teaching and welfare staff to support pupils with SEND. Leaders have a robust 4-day induction procedure. This should ensure that all staff receive high-quality professional learning in child development, attachment and understanding trauma.

Assessment

The school proposes an assessment system that will record pupils' attainment in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics and science. Staff will establish pupils' starting points and track progress so the school can quickly identify and address gaps. Teachers will use this information to shape their planning.

Leaders will ensure that timetable flexibility and high adult-to-pupil ratios will enable staff to respond closely to pupils' needs.

The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

The school has considered how it will support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This includes annual events such as Parliament Week and online safety days.

The school proposes to use a personal development programme. The units are age-appropriate and, over time, should build pupils' understanding of important content. This includes fundamental British values, such as democracy and those characteristics protected by law. For example, in Year 3, there is a proposed unit, 'What it means to be British', and in Year 6 pupils learn about respecting other cultures.

In form time, pupils will engage in 'River Valley chat'. Teachers will use this dedicated time to help pupils to discuss and debate significant world events. The school proposes to offer pupils music tuition to develop their talents and interests.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The proposed school has suitably trained designated safeguarding leads. It proposes to ensure that staff receive relevant training associated with SEMH. New staff will receive safeguarding training before working with pupils. Leaders intend to make sure staff are confident to use the school's reporting system.

Leaders know pupils may have multiple vulnerabilities. The school's clinical team will support staff with strategies to help manage pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

The proprietor will quality assure safeguarding routinely. This should support leaders' case management and hold them to account.

The school proposes that each pupil will have a key adult. This aims to support staff and pupils to build positive relationships. The school has a clear process to record low-level and significant concerns about staff.

Behaviour

The proposed school will take a highly structured, nurturing approach to behaviour management. It will be grounded in an understanding of the trauma pupils may have faced. The school's core principles of 'regulate, relate and reason' will shape how staff support pupils before, during and after incidents. All staff will receive 4 days of de-escalation training, including how to safely hold and care for a pupil.

Leaders want pupils to feel motivated and able to succeed. The school will use incentives and rewards to encourage engagement in learning. Each pupil will work towards personalised 'pencil targets', such as sustaining engagement for 5 minutes. The school proposes to reward pencil-target success with enrichment activities.

Leaders plan for each pupil to have a behaviour risk assessment. These documents will be working records where behaviours are 'RAG rated' and plans regularly updated. If a pupil's behaviour escalates significantly, the school proposes to use supportive language to avoid higher consequences. This aims to help pupils stay connected to the school community.

The school proposes to log and analyse behaviour and bullying data. Leaders will review the patterns and trends and use the information to identify whether a pupil needs additional support.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The proposed school's health and safety procedures are well considered. All checks are in place and completed regularly. The school's first-aid procedures are suitable. The school has ensured that staff are first-aid trained.

Admissions and attendance

There are systems to maintain the proposed school's attendance and admission registers. The school proposes a staged admissions procedure. This includes a

referral and screening process, assessment, provisional offer, confirmation of the placement, admission and, finally, transition plans. Where concerns arise, particularly for pupils at risk of frequent absence, the school will work closely with parents and the local authority. The school will regularly review its attendance data. The school recognises that for some pupils, an individualised approach may be essential. Where appropriate, this may include virtual learning or temporarily reduced timetables, with a clear plan for gradually increasing attendance back to full time.

Risk assessment

The school has a wealth of risk assessments in place, supported by a suitable risk assessment policy.

The proposed school has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met should it open.

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

The proposed school has a compliant single central record. It consists of the appropriate checks to ensure that staff and visitors to the school are suitable to work with pupils. The school is not proposing to use supply staff.

All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities.

The proposed school has suitable unisex toilets with floor-to-ceiling doors for privacy. Each toilet contains its own washing facilities. Staff will monitor the use of the toilet area closely to ensure that older pupils do not access it at the same time as the youngest pupils.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

The medical room has an accessible toilet, shower, sink and medical bed. This room is readily available. There is a small clinical room for therapists to use. A large sensory room equipped with furniture and textured floor coverings is available to all pupils. This ensures pupils have a space to take time out if necessary.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

The proposed school is situated in a building on the site of a theme park. The school has a suitable health and safety representative. Leaders complete checks around the building. For example, they check the water temperatures and fire exits.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

The proposed school has several suitably sized classrooms to accommodate pupils. There are additional spaces, such as a common room space for older pupils, with appropriate resources like table football and air hockey. The acoustics, and internal and external lighting, are all appropriate.

Outdoor space

The school's outdoor space is secure. The school's security-coded entrance keeps pupils safe. The outdoor space is large and includes a woodland area. The school proposes to use this for outdoor learning.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proposed school is developing a website. This will be on the Five Rivers Child Care website. All policies and relevant school information are available on request by parents and carers.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school has a comprehensive complaints policy. Leaders have outlined a staged process that includes timescales for complaints to be heard. It has ensured that a member of the complaints panel will be independent and not associated with the school.

The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

The school's accessibility plan

The school has an accessibility plan. The proposed school is likely to fulfil its responsibilities under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. Inspectors checked the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This is the proposed school's first pre-registration inspection.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, head of school, representatives of the education team and the proprietary body during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The proposed school will operate from Mansfield Road, Sheffield S26 5QW. It is on the site of a local theme park, Gulliver's Valley Theme Park.

The school will cater for pupils who have an education, health and care plan. They will have SEMH needs.

The school is not proposing to use any alternative provision.

Lead inspector

Alison Stephenson

His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector

Lynda Florence

Ofsted Inspector

About this proposed school

Proprietor

Five Rivers Child Care Ltd

Executive Headteacher

Matthew Palmer

Type of school

Other independent special school

Capacity

45

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll

Provider's proposal: 45

Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	Provider's proposal: 0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll	Provider's proposal: 45
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	Provider's proposal: 45
Age range of pupils	Provider's proposal: 6 to 18
Gender of pupils	Provider's proposal: Mixed
Total hours operating as a school per week	Provider's proposal: 30
Total hours of teaching provided per week	Provider's proposal: 24
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 25
Number of part-time teaching staff	Provider's proposal: 0
Annual fees for day pupils	Between £77,883 and £89,700
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