

North East Centre for Autism - Aycliffe School

Cedar Drive, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 6UN

Inspection dates

5 March 2020

Overall outcome

The school is likely 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)

- Pupils attending the school are vulnerable and have complex needs. Leaders put pupils' welfare, health and safety at the heart of their work.
- When pupils join the school, detailed assessments of their needs take place. Careful plans are then made to ensure that staffing levels provide the support to keep them safe.
- The principal and other senior leaders are the designated safeguarding leads for the school. They have a good understanding of the principles of safeguarding and child protection. They apply their knowledge effectively to support pupils' needs and welfare.
- New staff receive thorough training on topics relating to safeguarding and welfare. They read the school's safeguarding policy. They know who to report any concerns to. All staff complete online training to widen their understanding of issues, such as the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. The director of education sends out monthly updates. These include the latest local and national safeguarding information.
- Records of safeguarding concerns are carefully logged. They show that leaders take appropriate action. They work well with a range of other agencies to make sure that pupils are safe.
- Pupils spoken with said that they felt safe in school. They said that they had a trusted adult to talk to. Parents spoken with said that their children were 'definitely 100%' safe in this school.
- It was clear in conversations with the director of education and the principal, that they have carefully considered the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Leaders plan a gradual increase in pupil and staff numbers. This will help to ensure that the safeguarding and welfare of pupils will not be compromised.

Paragraph 11

- Four new modular classrooms and a toilet are a few feet away from the existing school building. The new build blends well with the existing school.
- The proprietor makes sure that the relevant health and safety laws are complied with. The existing school building and the new site are included in the health and safety policy.
- Health and safety checks are well organised and documented by the site manager. The asbestos management register, electrical installation certificates, electrical appliance testing, and water risk assessments are compliant with requirements.
- All staff receive health and safety training. They carry out health and safety checks on their areas of the school.
- Leaders say that the new building is incorporated into the existing health and safety checks and procedures. They are confident that standards will continue to be upheld when pupil and staff numbers increase.

Paragraph 12

- Records show that leaders make appropriate checks on all aspects of fire safety. Fire alarms, emergency lighting, fire doors, fire extinguishers, call points and fire panel checks are carried out in a timely manner.
- Trained fire wardens assist the smooth evacuation of pupils and staff in an emergency. Regular fire drills are recorded. Fire wardens meet to discuss how they can improve practice.
- The proprietor and leaders ensure that they are compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, across both sites.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders explained how they intend to gradually admit individual pupils if they are granted the material change. They will recruit staff to match the assessments that have been made of each pupil's needs.
- A tour of the school with the principal showed that there were appropriate numbers of staff to support and supervise pupils. Class numbers are small, with approximately six pupils to one teacher and six teaching assistants. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Leaders say that this level of staffing will continue if the material change is granted.

Paragraph 16

- The school has an up to date risk assessment policy, which is on the website. It sets out the school's approach to keeping pupils safe at school.
- Detailed risk assessments are written for a wide range of activities. Risk assessments are of a good quality. They set out what the risks might be and the actions to be taken to reduce those risks. Risk assessments seen during the inspection included those for the kitchen, a visit to a museum in Durham, the gymnasium and sports hall, swimming and for use of a heat press.
- The risk assessment for the school building includes the new site.

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, 18(1), 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(2)(f), 18(3), 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)

- The proprietor and principal have made the necessary checks on all staff, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.
- All staff who interview prospective employees, have been through the safer recruitment training. Three references are required from job applicants. Checks on identity and medical and professional qualifications are also made. New employees cannot take up their post until leaders are satisfied that all checks meet requirements.

Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(vii), 21(3)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)

- All staff are recorded on the school's single central record. All the relevant checks are included.
- The director of education and the principal talked about their intention to appoint new staff over time, if the material change is granted.
- 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 22, 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c)

- Toilets at both sites are suitable for the numbers of pupils that the material change proposes. Separate toilet facilities are available for boys and girls and for staff and visitors. Shower facilities are available to pupils.

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

- There is a fully equipped medical room for the medical examination and treatment of pupils. Washing facilities, a bed, medication storage and first aid equipment meet the needs of the pupils.

Paragraph 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)

- The school building and the new site are very well presented. The accommodation is bright and attractive and well maintained. Both buildings are very spacious. Classrooms can accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- The acoustic conditions of the classroom spaces are suitable. Leaders have taken account of the sensitivity of some pupils to noise. They have fitted sound insulation panels to classroom walls.
- Classrooms are bright and the lighting is suitable for the activities taking place. Special

lighting can be adapted for pupils who are sensitive to light.

- External lighting is situated around both buildings. This means that people can safely enter and leave the school premises after dark.

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

- Leaders have ensured that drinking water is available from a water dispenser. Taps are labelled where water is unsuitable to drink.
- There is an adequate supply of cold water in the toilets so that they can be flushed. The sinks have hot and cold water. The hot water does not pose a scalding risk to the pupils.

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

- There is a suitable outdoor space for pupils at both sites. It is safely enclosed by a fence. A new playground will offer climbing frames and spinning equipment.
- Pupils access the on-site sports hall and swimming pool. There are shower facilities available.
- The standards in part 5 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- The proprietor and leaders have provided the school's safeguarding policy on the website. Parents can get a copy from the school if they prefer.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- There is a strong culture of safeguarding pupils in the school. Staff are well trained in a range of safeguarding matters. They know the pupils and their families well and as a result can support them effectively.
- The director of education and the principal have a good understanding of the independent school standards. They have ensured that these standards have been met. They work well together in looking at what the school does well and what it could do better.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They say that they cannot thank the school enough for what they have done for their children. They told the inspector that communication between home and school is excellent.
- The director of education and the principal have given careful consideration to how they will put in place the material change that they have requested.
- The standards in part 8 are likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have put in place an accessibility plan. The plan shows how the school will increase the participation of the pupils and improve the physical environment of the school.
- This standard is likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

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	139329
DfE registration number	840/6013
Inspection number	10132720

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	John Phillipson
Chair	Gavin Bestford
Headteacher	Mrs N Brown
Annual fees (day pupils)	£22,620 to £86,334
Telephone number	01325 328 090
Website	www.ne-as.org.uk
Email address	info@ne-as.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	5–7 March 2019

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	3 to 19	3 to 19	3 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	51	84	84

Pupils

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

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	40	84
Number of part-time pupils	8	2
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	51	84
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	51	84
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	51	84

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	12	13
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	68	101

Information about this school

- Aycliffe School, the North East Centre for Autism, is one of two independent schools run by the North East Autism Society. It provides education for pupils with autism.
- The school opened in January 2013 and is registered for 60 pupils aged three to 19 years. There are currently 51 pupils on roll aged between five and 19.
- There are six classes grouped according to needs.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils are funded for placements from a number of local authorities.

- The school's last inspection was in March 2019, when it was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) for a material change to increase the number of pupils from 60 to 84.
- The inspector held meetings with the director of education and the principal.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke with parents on the telephone.
- The inspector spoke with the local authority designated officer (LADO).
- The inspector toured the school with the principal, to check the premises against the independent school standards.
- The inspector looked at school documents, records and policies. These related to safeguarding, health and safety, staff training, fire safety and the school premises.
- The single central record was checked.

Inspection team

Suzette Garland-Grimes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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