

# Hawthorn

Chalkhill Farm, New House Lane, Chartham, Kent CT4 7BF

## Inspection dates

6 December 2023

### 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(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g) to 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2), 3, 4.*

- The proposed school will cater for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders anticipate that most, if not all, pupils will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The proprietor intends to provide a curriculum which 'inspires, challenges and safeguards all pupils and 'puts their social, emotional and mental health needs before all else'. The aim of the curriculum will be to combine equine and animal therapy with academic learning.
- The curriculum will be based on the national curriculum and examination courses. It will include an appropriate range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Older pupils will be able to access functional skills courses in subjects such as English, mathematics and ICT where this is appropriate. Leaders have developed programmes of study, which indicate suitable coverage of topics and themes in each subject.
- At the time of the last inspection, leaders had not developed a scheme of work for physical education (PE). This omission has now been corrected. The PE curriculum has been planned to incorporate a range of activities using local facilities, including swimming, dance and mountain biking. The Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award Scheme will be introduced to encourage pupils to challenge themselves and to try something new.
- Leaders are much clearer than at the time of the last inspection about induction and professional development processes to support new staff. The headteacher has now taken sole responsibility for planning and overseeing this aspect of the school's work. The proposed school will have two teachers, one of whom will be the headteacher and who has appropriate experience in teaching to GCSE level. A second member of staff is currently completing their teacher training.
- Leaders do not intend to offer a traditional sixth-form experience. Students in the sixth form are likely to be those who need more time in the school before moving on to other post-16 settings. Curriculum content will be shaped by individual students' needs, but will include the completion of functional skills qualifications alongside the

DofE programme. Leaders also intend to offer students the option to study AS and A-level courses where this is appropriate. They are also considering offering other qualification options, such as City and Guilds in horse care.

- At the time of the last inspection, leaders did not have suitable plans to provide pupils with regular, impartial and up-to-date careers information and guidance. Leaders now intend to use an appropriate range of local services to provide pupils with suitable careers advice, including online services and those provided by the local authority.
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum includes coverage of suitable topics and themes. Leaders intend the teaching of PSHE themes to be highly individualised to pupils' needs and taught sensitively.
- The content of the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum complies with statutory guidance. Leaders have suitable plans in place to consult with parents and carers about the content of the programme.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements in this part of the independent school standards.

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

### *Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)*

- Leaders have made suitable arrangements to promote pupils' personal development. They are alert to the likelihood that pupils will have experienced significant trauma in their lives prior to joining the school. Leaders intend to provide a flexible curriculum which is responsive to pupils' ongoing needs.
- Fundamental British values will be promoted throughout school life. The curriculum will be supplemented with learning about a range of special events, such as Armistice Day, Pride Week, and Remembrance Sunday.
- Leaders are alert to the benefits of giving pupils access to activities and experiences beyond the school site in order to support their personal and social development. Visits to places of worship and learning about religious festivals will be used to capture pupils' interest and to facilitate further learning about different faiths and beliefs.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements in this part of the independent school standards.

## Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

### *Paragraph 7 to 7(b), 9 to 16(b), 34(1)(c)*

- Leaders have ensured that the welfare and safety standards are likely to be met should the proposed school open. At the time of the last inspection, the proposed health and safety policy was not suitable. The current policy is now fit for purpose. Leaders have swiftly addressed concerns around outside lighting and standards of cleanliness in the outdoor kitchen, demonstrating their appropriate application of the policy.
- At the time of the last inspection, leaders had not completed all required checks to ensure that staff and managers are qualified to work with children. In addition, the proprietor had not completed safer recruitment training. These omissions have now

been rectified. Both the head of school and the manager have now completed suitable training.

- Leaders have ensured continuing compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Weaknesses in fire safety procedures identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. Fire evacuation routes and assembly points are clearly identified. Leaders have addressed all actions identified as required by a specialist fire safety audit, including identifying and training two members of staff as fire safety officers.
- At the time of the last inspection, processes and templates for recording accidents and injuries and for managing pupils' medication were not suitable. Appropriate systems and record-keeping approaches are now in place. Leaders have completed suitable risk assessments for a range of circumstances and activities.
- Arrangements for staff training and induction in safeguarding matters are likely to be suitable. Leaders have identified a suitable online system for recording and monitoring safeguarding concerns, which they intend to adopt once the proposed school opens.
- Leaders are trained in specialist therapeutic approaches to support pupils' behaviour and social, emotional and mental health needs. The designated safeguarding lead has extensive experience in safeguarding matters.
- The relevant standards in this part are now likely to be met.

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

*Paragraph 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(6)*

- Leaders have rectified omissions in the single central record identified at the time of the last inspection. Leaders have taken reliable advice about expectations for recruitment and suitability checks and have a secure understanding of what is required as a result. All required suitability and recruitment checks have been completed and the single central record complies with statutory guidance.
- The proprietor does not intend to use agency staff.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements in this part of the independent school standards.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraph 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25 to 29(1)(b)*

- The proposed school is located on a five-acre farm which currently operates as a youth activity and equine therapy centre. It has its own secure entrance, office space and adequate toilet facilities. There are two main classrooms. Leaders have ensured that this accommodation is of sound standard. For example, classrooms are fitted with suitable furniture for the proposed age range and needs of the pupils. Acoustic and indoor lighting conditions are suitable for the nature of the activities that will take place.
- Leaders have taken steps to improve site safety since the previous inspection. For instance, farming and construction equipment is now stored appropriately and is out of bounds for pupils; a glass panel has been replaced; and aerosols and hazardous substances are safely stored in locked cupboards. Leaders have now installed suitable

external lighting to ensure that pupils and staff can move around the site safely in the dark.

- The school's unique setting will provide plenty of space for pupils to relax and play. The extensive outdoor space has been organised into different areas, including an allotment, a quiet garden, a sensory space and several breakout areas, which pupils will be able to access at various times during the school day. Outdoor areas are securely fenced and gated.
- The school has separate toilet facilities for pupils and staff. These can be locked from the inside to provide privacy. A fault with the school's solar-powered energy system meant that here was no hot water available in the toilet facilities at the time of this inspection, so it was not possible to check the temperature of the hot water in these facilities. However, hot water at an appropriate temperature was readily available in a nearby classroom.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a suitably equipped medical room with a toilet nearby. Drinking water is clearly labelled as such and will be freely accessible to pupils throughout the day.
- The relevant standards in this part are likely to be met.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(d) to 32(4)(c)*

- Leaders have made suitable arrangements to ensure that the school's website provides all required information. They have successfully used part 6 of the independent school standards as a checklist to ensure compliance.
- Policies and related documents are ready to be uploaded if the proposed school is approved. This includes the safeguarding policy, which complies with current guidelines, and the complaints policy.
- Leaders have suitable plans to provide parents, carers and local authorities placing pupils at the school with regular updates and written reports.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements in this part of the independent school standards.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33 to 33(k)*

- The school's complaints policy continues to comply with the requirements of this part of the independent school standards. It makes suitable provision for concerns to be raised at an informal stage and sets clear timescales for each stage of the process.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements in this part of the independent school standards.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- Leaders' collective understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards has improved. Weaknesses identified in the provision at the time of the last

inspection have now been addressed, meaning that all of the standards are now likely to be met.

- The proprietor does not intend to have a governing body in the first instance. However, there are plans in place to employ independent consultants to provide advice about aspects of the school's work.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school now has a suitable accessibility policy. The school is likely to meet paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school is unlikely to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements, as set out in the annex of this report.

## Proposed school details

Unique reference number	150446
DfE registration number	886/6185
Inspection number	10320738

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 special school
Proprietor	Chalkhill Farm Youth Activities Limited
Chair	Julie Hardy
Headteacher	Sarah Watson (head of school)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £65,000
Telephone number	07889 762 782
Website	<a href="http://www.chalkhillfarm.co.uk">www.chalkhillfarm.co.uk</a>
Email address	chalkhillfarm123@gmail.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	11 to 18	11 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	8	8

## 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	8
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	8
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	8
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	8



## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	5
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	2
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	Not applicable

## Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school will operate on Chalkhill Farm. The site is currently used as an outdoor youth activity centre providing equine and animal therapy. Some pupils currently attend the centre as part of Kent local authority's 'education other than at school' programme. These pupils receive most of their behaviour and therapeutic support from Chalkhill Farm.
- The proposed school will offer education, equine therapy and mental health input to pupils aged 11 to 18. All pupils will have an EHC plan and will have social, emotional and mental health needs, autism, and attachment and trauma difficulties. Some pupils may also have speech, language and communication needs and cognition and learning difficulties. It is likely that some pupils will be looked after by local authorities.
- The head of school, who will take up her position in January 2024, is also listed as one of the directors of Chalkhill Farm Youth Activities Limited.
- Places will primarily be commissioned by Kent local authority.
- The proprietor body does not intend to use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 if the Department for Education decides to register it. This was the school's second pre-registration inspection. The first pre-registration inspection took place in August 2023.
- The inspection was conducted with two days' notice.
- The inspector discussed and reviewed all relevant proposals and plans for the new school with the proprietor, head of school, and other members of staff. She toured the school site and scrutinised a wide range of policies, documents and records presented by the proprietor as evidence of the school's likelihood to meet the standards, including the single central record.

## Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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