

Coombswood Special School

Laborem Place, Halesowen B62 8BH

Inspection date

24 August 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), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor body intends for the proposed school to provide education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is likely most pupils will have an education, health and care (EHC plan) plan.
- The proprietor body intends to provide an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum that aims for pupils to achieve suitable qualifications, including functional skills and/or GCSE in English and mathematics. A curriculum policy and appropriate schemes of work are in place to facilitate the proposed range of study.
- There is a suitable programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education that reflects the school's aims and ethos.
- Leaders will gather information about pupils' needs through liaising with appropriate external agencies, discussions with parents and carers, baseline assessments and initial work with pupils. This will inform leaders of the appropriate pathway and class setting. The curriculum has been carefully designed to enable pupils to access it at a range of levels according to their needs. In addition to this, there are different levels of support provided to enable all pupils to make progress.
- Leaders understand the importance of reading. They have suitable plans in place for supporting those at the early stages of reading with an appropriate phonics programme.

Paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)

- Leaders have appropriate plans in place to provide impartial careers guidance. Each pupil will have a careers passport to record their experiences, which will include attendance at careers fairs, guest speakers from a wide range of careers and opportunities to meet potential employers.
- Leaders aim to ensure that all pupils in key stage 4 have the opportunity for external work experience.
- Leaders have also established links with local colleges so that pupils are well informed

about their options post-16.

Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g), 2A(2)

- Leaders have an appropriate policy and scheme of work ready to deliver the statutory relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum. It includes an appropriate focus on gender identity and healthy relationships.
- The RSE policy outlines the right of parents and carers to withdraw their child fully, or partially, from sex education lessons.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j), 4

- The proprietor body has ensured that a suitably qualified and experienced leader is in post as principal. There are other suitably qualified staff appointed that will provide subject specialism in core subjects such as science.
- Through appropriate training and regular monitoring, leaders will ensure that teachers have good subject knowledge, present well-planned lessons and use effective teaching methods.
- There are clear systems in place to enable teachers to assess and review pupils' progress over time. Frequent sessions throughout the timetable will enable additional support to be provided to individuals to ensure they understand the key learning points in each subject.
- The proprietor body has ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)

- The PSHE curriculum will ensure that pupils explore diversity within British society. It will encourage respect for others, paying regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Through both PSHE and additional 'culture club' sessions, pupils will explore other cultures, faiths and beliefs. These sessions will also encourage respect for a wide range of public services.
- Through the school council, pupils will be involved in events to support the community such as fundraising.
- Regular discussion of current issues in the news will support pupils' wider understanding of British society.
- The proprietor body has ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1)(c)

- There is a suitable safeguarding and child protection policy which reflects the current guidance. The policy is available on the school website.
- Leaders have completed appropriate safeguarding and safer recruitment training. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to establish and maintain a

strong safeguarding culture. Leaders are aware of the needs and challenges their pupils are likely to present.

- There are appropriate systems in place for reporting and recording concerns, including systems to alert the proprietor body so that checks can be made.
- The proprietor body will ensure through regular audits that leaders are doing all they can to keep pupils safe.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10

- There is an appropriate behaviour policy in place. Emotion support plans will ensure that pupils' behaviour is well managed and supported as appropriate to their needs.
- The anti-bullying strategy will ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of the types of bullying. There are clear preventative measures outlined in the strategy. Pupils will explore the impact that bullying can have, as well as the range of consequences possible. Systems in place will encourage pupils to share any concerns in relation to potential bullying through regular check-ins with a trusted staff member.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The proprietor body has appointed competent staff to ensure that there is a rigorous approach to health and safety. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy in place. Programmes for maintenance and checks on health and safety are well organised. The proprietor body has invested in a programme designed to alert those responsible when any checks are due or if issues arise.
- The premises have recently had a fire risk assessment and there is appropriate equipment in place. Leaders have ensured compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- A suitable first-aid policy is in place. Pupils will receive any required first aid from suitably trained staff on site.
- A suitable risk management policy is in place. It outlines clearly how risks will be assessed and managed.
- Risk assessments are in place for all possible activities. They demonstrate a thorough approach to risk assessments.

Paragraphs 14, 15

- Leaders will ensure that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of staff. The level of supervision will be in line with pupils' needs which will be determined before a pupil is admitted. Leaders intend to gradually increase staff numbers in line with a gradual increase in the number of pupils admitted.
- There are currently no pupils attending the school. Leaders have ensured that the information to be included on the admission and attendance registers will meet requirements.
- The proprietor body has ensured that all the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 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(3), 19(1), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i),

19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(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), 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)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c), 21(6)

- Leaders are aware of all the appropriate checks that need to be undertaken before a member of staff can begin working at the proposed school.
- The single central record contains all of the information required to record these checks. The proprietor body ensures that the checks and records of the checks are up to date.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(1)(c), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- The proprietor body has secured the lease of suitable premises for the proposed school. The building has been refurbished to a very high standard. The building provides six spacious classrooms, two multi-purpose rooms, a bespoke cooking room, two bespoke spaces for pupils to regulate, a communal dining space that is also large enough for assemblies, a school kitchen and a range of office spaces. There is also a room that has been fitted out to be suitable as an examination storage cupboard. The accommodation is spread out over three floors.
- All rooms have suitable sources of either natural or artificial lighting. The acoustics in all rooms are suitable.
- There are separate toilet facilities for boys and girls. There is also a separate toilet for staff and visitors. All toilets have suitable washing facilities, and the temperature of the water does not pose a risk of scalding.
- There are two showers, both with suitable space for pupils to change.
- There is a medical room located close to toilet facilities. It will have a portable sink and a bed.
- Cold water, suitable for drinking, will be supplied through a mains-fed water dispenser. This is located in the communal dining area and will be available throughout the day.
- There is a suitably sized outdoor space that will provide space for playing outside. A multi-use games area is currently under construction that will be suitable for the teaching of physical education.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a),

32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f), 32(3)(g)

- The proprietor body has created a school website in preparation for the opening of the proposed school. It contains all of the required details including the school address, name of the headteacher and contact details for communicating with the proprietor body.
- All policies relevant to the independent school standards in this part are available on the website.
- Leaders intend to provide parents and carers with regular written reports on the progress being made by pupils.
- The proprietor body has established processes for sharing the income and expenditure of funding that the proposed school will receive from local authorities.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)

- There is a written complaints policy on the school website.
- The policy outlines the different stages for making a complaint. It gives clear timescales for the consideration and management of the complaint.
- The policy includes an informal stage in the first instance and a panel with an independent member in the final stage.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor body has a clear rationale for why it wants to register this school.
- The proprietor body and school leaders have a secure understanding of the independent school standards.
- Leaders have the relevant experience in teaching and leadership to both meet the individual needs of the intended pupils and to meet the independent school standards consistently.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how they will actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor body has ensured that it has a suitable accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 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.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	150053
DfE registration number	332/6014
Inspection number	10302189

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 school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Coombswood Education Limited
Chair	Tracey Storey
Headteacher	Snita Verma
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,625 to £61,750
Telephone number	07572790282
Website	www.coombswoodschool.com
Email address	mike@melroseeducation.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 16	11 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	50	50

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	50

Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	50
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	50
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	50

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	3	To meet pupils' needs
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	To meet pupils' needs
Number of staff in the welfare provision	3	To meet pupils' needs

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school intends to cater for boys and girls aged 11 to 16.
- The pupils who will attend the school are likely to have a range of social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. Some pupils are likely to have additional needs relating to communication and interaction.
- It is expected that most pupils will have an EHC plan. Pupils will be placed in the school by local authorities.
- The proposed school will have a proprietor body.

Information about this inspection

- This was the 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 independent school standards if it is given permission to open.
- The inspection focused on compliance with the regulatory requirements of the independent school standards, as well as safeguarding procedures and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
- The inspector met with a representative of the proprietor body. He was present in all meetings. The principal was also present in the majority of meetings.
- The inspector visited all parts of the proposed school premises, including the outside space. The property director was in attendance during the tour of the premises and met with the inspector to discuss health and safety.
- The inspector examined a range of policies and documents relating to behaviour, first aid and health and safety. Documents relating to safeguarding were also checked, including the checks that leaders make, prior to employment, on staff's suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Helen Forrest, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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