

Conifers House School

Egmont Road, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9BG

Inspection date

22 December 2025

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

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) to 2(2)(i), 2A(1) to 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2) and 3 to 4

- The proposed school will cater for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It is intended that all pupils will have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has a curriculum policy in place. This is supported by well thought through curriculum plans that consider the level of need and the cognitive ability of its pupils. The curriculum plans support pupils to learn through the relevant 'pathway' for them. Leaders intend that pupils will study towards accredited and appropriate qualifications, such as GCSEs and functional skills, depending on the level of individual need.
- There are appropriate measures in place to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
- The school intends for staff to have suitable qualifications, including qualified teacher status. Leaders plan to provide a wealth of professional development so that staff reach their expectations for managing behaviour and teaching meets pupils' individual needs.
- The curriculum is of a suitable breadth and includes English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE). This will support pupils to develop strong foundations of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy.
- The provision for PSHE is through a bought curriculum scheme, which will be adapted to support pupils' cognitive understanding. Leaders intend to ensure that pupils develop age-appropriate understanding of relationships and sex education. PSHE will include preparation for adulthood and an understanding of life in modern Britain, including the fundamental British values and careers education.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards (the standards) in this part.

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

Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The proposed school's curriculum includes the teaching and celebration of different faiths and cultures. It also covers teaching pupils how to stay safe online and in the community. This includes road safety. The curriculum also outlines how respect and tolerance will be developed.
- Leaders understand the need to ensure that there are no partisan political views. For example, they will check the content of any visiting speakers.
- Leaders have considered how the fundamental British values will be taught through the curriculum. Plans are in place to support the development of pupils' self-esteem as well as their confidence as they progress through the school.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7 to 7(b), 9 to 10 and 11 to 16(b)

- There is a safeguarding policy in place, which is on the website and adheres to statutory guidance.
- The school has considered how it will create a positive culture of safeguarding. Staff will be well trained in understanding how to identify and support the needs of pupils with SEND.
- The proprietor has appointed a member of staff to be the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and another member of staff, who will fulfil the role of deputy DSL. Both are appropriately trained and have a robust understanding of the role requirements.
- Safeguarding leaders intend to join local networks to remain up to date with local intelligence and risks.
- There is a well-set-out policy for managing pupils' behaviour and an anti-bullying strategy. Leaders intend for staff to be trained in de-escalation procedures so that they use restrictive physical intervention appropriately and only when necessary.
- There is a suitable health and safety policy in place. The proprietor has ensured that appropriate checks have been made on the school site, including those related to water, electrical and fire safety. This extends to the playground equipment.
- There are clear procedures for safe evacuation from the site in the event of a fire and fire safety equipment is placed throughout the school. This includes extinguishers, call points and fire doors. The fire risk assessment is up to date and acted on.
- All appointed staff have had first-aid training. This is supported by an appropriate written policy.
- Leaders intend to follow statutory guidance on admissions and attendance provision. There are clear procedures in place.
- There is a well-written risk assessment policy, which allows for the reduction of risk for the site. Pupils' needs are well considered. Leaders describe appropriate processes for identifying and reducing risks that pupils may face.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5)(a)(ii) and 21(5)(c) to 21(6)

- A well-maintained single central record is in place. Appropriate checks are carried out for staff, governors and the proprietor. There are clear processes in place related to checks for contractors and visitors.
- The chair of governors and other leaders are safer recruitment trained.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The site is maintained to a high standard. The proprietor has considered the anticipated needs of pupils when designing classrooms. Consequently, rooms have been decorated to be low arousal. The school is clean, tidy and uncluttered. Rooms are well lit.
- There are enough classrooms for 60 pupils. These are set out for a maximum of 8 pupils per class with suitable-sized tables and chairs for the ages. There are additional spaces, including a library and sensory rooms.
- There is space to play outside on site. This is not enough for 60 pupils to use at once but enough for the staggered breaks that leaders intend. There is also a large field that pupils are able to use, which is accessed by crossing the main road outside of the school. Leaders have plans in place to ensure that pupils are well supervised when walking between the school and the field. A risk assessment is in place for this arrangement.
- The site is secure with fencing and well-established hedging. Automated lighting outside is also in place.
- There are suitable and sufficient toilets throughout. These are of an appropriate size for the age range of pupils. Suitable hot and cold water is available throughout the school. There is also a shower available for pupils to use. Drinking water is available from designated taps and a cold-water facility. These are appropriately labelled.
- There is a suitable medical room, which has a bed, sink and lockable cupboard. This room is close to a toilet. First-aid equipment is readily available. This includes grab-bags for trips.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

Part 6. Provision of information

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

- Leaders are familiar with the information they need to make available to parents and carers. The school website contains the key information. They intend to provide termly reports to parents on pupils' attainment and progress. Templates for these reports are in place.
- Leaders know what information they need to provide to local authorities. There are well-established processes for this.

- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- A complaints policy is in place. This policy provides for the informal handling of complaints before a formal process. There is provision for complainants to attend a panel hearing. The policy has clear timings for the management of complaints at each stage.
- Leaders demonstrate an understanding of how to support parents through the process, including to help them recognise when a complaint becomes formal.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor demonstrates a secure understanding of SEND provision, as well as the requirements of the independent school standards. The proprietor has experience of opening and running similar schools. They are employing qualified teachers and senior leaders to run the school.
- There is a focus on the school's vision of 'nurturing potential, inspiring futures'.
- The proprietor has put in place a local board consisting of qualified individuals to provide challenge and support to school leaders. There are suitable plans in place to oversee staffing, wellbeing and safeguarding.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- There is a suitable accessibility plan in place, which meets the needs 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	151900
DfE registration number	938/6031
Inspection number	10409349

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 day school
Proprietor	Special Needs West Sussex Ltd
Chair	Dr Julie Smith
Headteacher	Georgios Chatzakis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000 to £80,794.65
Telephone number	07737 539516
Website	conifershouse-school.co.uk
Email address	info@conifershouse-school.co.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	5 to 16	5 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

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	60
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	8
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is to be situated in a two-storey building in Midhurst with an additional 5 classrooms housed in outbuildings on the school site. The accommodation consists of rooms suitable for a class of up to 8 pupils, and a small number of additional rooms suitable to be used for smaller groups, offices and a medical space. There are associated toilet facilities. The building would be for the sole use of the school.
- The proposed school will cater for pupils with a range of SEND. It is intended that all pupils will have an education, health and care plan.
- The school intends to cater predominantly for pupils with autism and communication and interaction needs. Pupils may also have the following need types: cognitive and learning needs; speech, language and communication difficulties; social, emotional and mental health needs, moderate and severe learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first pre-registration inspection commissioned by the DfE. The inspection was commissioned to determine whether the school is likely to meet the independent school standards if it is given permission to open.
- The inspection team met with the chair of the proprietor body, a governor, the executive headteacher and head of school at the proposed school premises.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders to discuss the vision for the school and how they intended to operate the school.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including behaviour and safeguarding policies and curriculum information.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Old

His Majesty's Inspector

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