

Maple Grove School

Abbey Gate School, Clare Avenue, Chester, Cheshire CH2 3HR

Inspection dates

15 July 2020

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)(c), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) and 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor company has a written curriculum that covers an appropriate range of subjects for primary- and secondary-aged pupils. These subjects encompass linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical education and aesthetic and creative education. The associated schemes of work detail the knowledge and skills intended to be taught. Pupils at key stage 4 will be able to study for a range of qualifications, including functional skills, and where appropriate, GCSEs.
- The content of the schemes of work are suitably ambitious for pupils. They take account of specialist curriculum guidance relating to autistic spectrum disorder to better meet the anticipated needs of pupils. Pupils may follow individualised amendments made to the curriculum to meet their needs.
- The curriculum includes provision for secondary-aged pupils to receive impartial advice and guidance about careers and future educational opportunities to enable them to make informed choices. This will be done in a variety of ways, including advice and guidance from specialist staff within the proprietor company and through the use of external impartial careers advisers.

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

- The school's schemes of work include clear and detailed planning of sequences of activities that systematically develop pupils' knowledge and skills. These are age-appropriate and meet the pupils' needs.
- The school's written assessment policy is detailed. It identifies how assessments will be conducted and how the information arising from assessment will be used to inform teaching and leaders' overview of school performance. Consequently, the use of assessment in the school is likely to be purposeful and effective.
- Leaders have ensured there are suitable and sufficient high-quality resources to support learning for primary- and secondary-aged pupils, including those with special

educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes a range of computers, tablet devices and other technology that allow pupils to access online learning. In addition, the well-considered use of technology will allow pupils and teachers to easily, and appropriately, share individuals' work. Suitable equipment to aid teaching in subjects such as mathematics, early reading, science and physical education (PE) are in place and ready for pupils to use. Leaders have ensured that the school has suitable internet connectivity with appropriate filtering and monitoring in place to provide pupils with access to a safe online learning environment.

- The proprietor company has appointed an experienced and suitably qualified senior leader to lead the school. In addition, leaders have completed a well-considered recruitment process to appoint the initial staff to the school. Staff appointed are suitably qualified. Senior managers have high expectations of all teachers and staff appointed. The proprietor and leaders have well-established, carefully planned and comprehensive induction programmes for all new staff to ensure pupils are taught well and make effective academic and social progress.
- The standards relating to the quality of education 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) and 5(d)(iii)

- Curriculum plans show that the school will actively promote fundamental values, including the rule of law and the understanding of democracy. The school's curriculum actively promotes pupils' mutual respect and tolerance of others. This includes those groups identified as having protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, including those relating to gender, sexuality and different faiths and beliefs.
- Clear programmes of study are planned for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC). Leaders also have in place detailed schemes of work to promote pupils' understanding of relationships and sex education, appropriate to pupils' ages. Leaders expect all pupils to follow these schemes of work. The scheme of work contains well-chosen topics to promote pupils' social skills and cultural understanding. It also provides for pupils in key stage 4, if appropriate, to gain nationally accredited qualifications in citizenship.
- Leaders have appropriate policies and procedures in place to inhibit the promotion of extremist or partisan materials and views. This includes the intent to maintain a register of speakers and visitors to the school. As part of their induction to the school, all staff will be trained in strategies to identify and act effectively upon any concerns relating to radicalisation or extremism. This is in line with well-established procedures in the proprietor company's other independent schools that are currently operating.
- The standards relating to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The school's written safeguarding policy and procedures show regard for the current guidance from the Secretary of State. They have also been updated to take appropriate account of guidance from the Secretary of State that will come into operation in September 2020, the time proposed for the school to open to pupils.
- As part of staff induction procedures and ongoing training plans, leaders propose that safeguarding training will be undertaken in line with current guidance. All staff appointed to the school have received training in their duties relating to the prevention of extremism and radicalisation. Systems to record the detail of any staff training are in place.
- The proprietor company has appropriate selection procedures in place to ensure that suitable persons are appointed to staff and leadership roles. All required checks regarding the suitability of the staff have been completed for the headteacher, company directors and the staff appointed to the school so far.
- This standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c)

- The school's written behaviour policy is fit for purpose. The policy takes account of appropriate legislation and the anticipated emotional needs of pupils attending the school. It clearly identifies leaders' expectations of staff and pupils. It provides a range of strategies that teachers and staff may use to promote pupils' good behaviour. It also includes the sanctions that may be enforced when a pupil's behaviour falls below the standards expected.
- Leaders have established an appropriate electronic system to record any incidents of poor behaviour. This system is currently used in the proprietor company's other independent schools. The system will allow leaders to record any incident in detail and to support their evaluation of emerging trends in behaviour.
- This standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph 10

- The school's anti-bullying and behaviour policy is detailed, comprehensive and fit for purpose. It takes account of the ages of the pupils who may attend the school. It identifies the different types of bullying that may occur within the school. It also contains appropriate strategies that are to be implemented to prevent bullying.
- This standard is likely to be met.

Paragraph Paragraphs 11, 13, 14, 15

- The school has a comprehensive range of health and safety policies in place to ensure compliance with relevant laws. For example, systems to ensure frequent checks on the operation of the fire alarm, emergency lighting and firefighting equipment are in place. Leaders have established appropriate logs of safety checks, including those for legionella. Leaders have up-to-date certificates for the fixed electrical installation check that was carried out by a competent and qualified person.

- The school has an appropriate first-aid policy in place. All teaching and academic support staff who have been appointed for when the school opens have a current first-aid certificate. Leaders have ensured that appropriate first-aid resources are always available in the school. This includes the provision of a heart defibrillator and the appropriate training for staff in its use.
- Leaders have established effective record-keeping systems to record and evaluate any incidents relating to health and safety, accidents or behaviour.
- Planned staff numbers are sufficient to ensure the appropriate supervision of pupils at all times when the school is operating.
- Leaders have established an appropriate electronic system to record pupils' admission to the school and their attendance.
- These standards are likely to be met.

Paragraph 12

- Leaders have taken actions to ensure that the school complies with all of the relevant fire safety regulations. Annual maintenance of firefighting equipment, such as fire extinguishers and the fire alarm, has been completed to help ensure that they are in an operational condition. The fire alarm system includes appropriate automatic detection sensors in all teaching areas, offices and high-risk environments, such as the boiler plant room.
- While the proprietor company and leaders have taken appropriate and effective actions relating to this standard, this inspection was conducted without visiting the school site owing to COVID-19 (coronavirus). Owing to this, I am not able to provide the full level of assurance to judge that these standards would be likely to be met should the school open.

Paragraph 16(a), 16(b)

- The school's written risk assessment policy is detailed and well considered. Leaders provided detailed risk assessments that demonstrate their secure understanding of the management of risk and their effective use of control measures to reduce or mitigate any identified hazards. Risk assessments cover a wide range of activities. These include the proposed use of off-site sports centres for the provision of physical education for secondary-aged pupils, including the safe use of changing and shower facilities.
- While the proprietor company and leaders have appropriate policies in place relating to these standards, this inspection was conducted without visiting the school site owing to COVID-19. Owing to this, I am not able to provide the full level of assurance to judge that these standards would be likely to be met should the school open.

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

Paragraphs 18, 18(2), 18(2)(b), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(1), 20(2), 20(3), 20(3)(a), 20(3)(a)(i), 20(3)(a)(ii), 20(5), 20(5)(a), 20(5)(a)(i), 20(5)(a)(ii), 20(5)(b), 20(5)(b)(i), 20(5)(b)(ii), 20(5)(b)(iii), 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 company has carried out the required checks to ensure that persons intended to hold leadership roles in the school have not been prohibited from the leadership and management of a school under section 128 of the 2008 Act. These checks have been completed on the headteacher, officers and directors of the proprietor company.

Paragraph 17, 18, 18(1), 18(2), 18(2)(a), 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)

- The proprietor company has ensured that leaders undertake all the other necessary checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Appropriate criminal record checks, identity checks, qualification and health checks have been completed on the staff appointed to work in the school. Checks to ensure that teachers are free from any prohibition relating to teaching have also been completed. Leaders are aware of the necessity to complete pre-employment checks before newly appointed staff begin working at the school.
- The proprietor company has appropriate procedures in place to recruit any additional staff as necessary and required by the school in the future. These procedures adhere to the most up-to-date requirements of the Secretary of State regarding the safer recruitment of staff. They demonstrate the proprietor company's intention to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

- Leaders demonstrate an awareness of the appropriate checks that need to be made for any staff who have lived or worked abroad.

Paragraph 19(2), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 19(4)

- Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of the suitable checks that should be completed on any supply or contracted staff that are to be deployed in the school. Leaders plan to use procedures and policies that have been used effectively in the proprietor company's other successfully operating independent schools.

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)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(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)

- The school's single central record of the requisite checks that have been carried out on members of staff contains all the required information.
- The standards relating to the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 25

- Remodelling construction and redecoration work on the school have been completed to a high standard. Rooms, recreational spaces and the outdoor areas of the school are well maintained and clean.
- Suitable toilet facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils. Toilets are equipped with suitable locks and are accessible to pupils. Separate appropriately equipped

facilities are provided for the use of pupils with disabilities. Separate toilet facilities are available for adults. The school does not have changing rooms on site. Leaders have designed a curriculum for PE for secondary-aged pupils, which intends to make effective use of an off-site specialist sports centre. Appropriate plans and risk assessments are in place to ensure pupils have safe access to changing and showering facilities after physical activities. Additionally, the school has a shower facility that is available to any pupil or staff member if necessary. This shower facility is well equipped and clean.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(c)

- The school has a suitable room designated for the sole purpose of the provision of medical care. This room is well equipped with washing and private toilet facilities. It provides suitable facilities for medical examinations or short-term care of sick or injured pupils.

Paragraph 26

- The acoustic conditions of the classrooms ensure they are suited to the activities that take place within them. Leaders have drawn on their extensive knowledge of working with pupils with autism spectrum disorder to ensure that teaching environments, including the school hall, have appropriate acoustic dampening and that they are a suitably quiet learning environment.

Paragraph 27, 27(a), 27(b)

- Lighting in all rooms is of high quality and suitable for pupils' learning. This includes the provision of dimmable lighting for all classrooms. External lighting is in place outside the school's building to allow pupils to enter and leave safely. Leaders plan to augment the current external lighting provision. This is to provide additional illumination of the school yard and taxi drop-off point in the school car park. Emergency lighting is extensively installed in all rooms and corridors in the school to aid any necessary evacuation.

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

- Pupils will always have access to drinking water from clearly marked taps supplied by mains water located in the kitchen, art area and the school office. In addition, leaders intend to maintain a stock of refillable water bottles that will be available to pupils for use in class.
- Washing facilities are available in all toilets. Evidence from the school's legionella risk assessment shows that the temperature of the water is unlikely to pose a risk of scalding. However, a physical check of the water temperature was not carried out during this inspection.

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

- Pupils will have access to an extensive area of playground to enable them to play and socialise. This area is of suitable size for the number of pupils and the range of ages proposed to be on the school roll. It has three main play areas that have level hard surfaces suitable for small games and recreation. The school grounds provide pupils with access to a sensory garden, a sheltered pergola with seating, outdoor large play equipment and a well-designed climbing wall. Additionally, the school grounds include grassed areas that leaders propose using for sport, outdoor learning and the growing

of plants and vegetables. Leaders plan to develop an outdoor gym for older pupils and are on the waiting list for a neighbouring community allotment. The school grounds appear to be appropriately secure to ensure the safety of pupils on site.

- The proprietor company and leaders have taken appropriate and effective actions relating to the provision of a well-maintained, high-quality and safe place for pupils to learn. However, this inspection was conducted without visiting the school site owing to COVID-19. Owing to this, I am not able to provide the full level of assurance to judge that these standards would be likely to be met should the school open.

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)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(1)(j), Paragraph 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b)(i), 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)

- The school's website is currently under construction. The proprietor company anticipates that the website will be of a similar style to that used effectively to share information in their other currently operating independent schools. Leaders have a secure understanding of what is required to be published on the website. They have all the information required ready and are finalising its publication online. The website is planned to go live when it achieves registration with the regulator.
- Leaders have ensured that copies of all the school's policies, including the safeguarding policy, are available to prospective parents and carers, including any placing local authority, on request.
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate procedures are in place to report on pupils' progress and attainment to parents, as well as to local authorities who place pupils in the school. Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the obligation and duty to report on the income and expenditure of funds for pupils placed in the school by a local authority. Leaders aim to draw upon their experiences and the effective procedures used in the proprietor company's other schools to provide information to support the annual reviews of pupils with education, health and care plans.
- The standards relating to the provision of information 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)

- The school's detailed complaints procedures fully comply with all the requirements set out in the independent school standards (ISS). The procedures are available for parents or others on request. They set out clearly the steps for each stage of the school's actions. The procedures identify appropriate timescales for each stage of a complaint and the rights of parents to be accompanied to meetings. The procedures outline the rights of appeal if a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcomes of a complaint. The policy makes it clear that the panel who hear a complaint will have, as one of its members, a person who is independent of the management and running of the school. Leaders have a secure knowledge of the requirements of the procedures.

- The implementation of the procedures will ensure that any complaint is dealt with in a timely manner and that the findings arising from a complaint will be used to inform improvements to the quality of the school's provision and practice.
- The standards relating to the handling of a complaint 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)

- Senior leaders have taken appropriate actions to ensure that no standard is unlikely to be met. However, this inspection was conducted without visiting the school site owing to COVID-19. Owing to this, I am not able to provide the full level of assurance to judge that a small number of specific standards would be likely to be met should the school open.
- Leaders have drawn on their extensive experience in working with pupils with SEND. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the anticipated needs of those pupils expected to attend the school. Leaders plan an appropriate curriculum to ensure that pupils are likely to be well prepared for their next stages in education, employment or training.
- Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring the health and safety of pupils and have ensured that all health and safety standards are likely to be met. Buildings are maintained to a high standard and systems are in place to ensure that all health and safety checks are carried out appropriately.
- Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the independent school standards. They have ensured that school policies reflect their school and pay due regard to appropriate national legislation.
- The proprietor company and their regional officers have high expectations and demonstrate a clear vision for the school. They have well-considered systems in place to evaluate the school's performance and offer any necessary support and challenge.
- The standards relating to leadership and management are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has in place an appropriate accessibility plan. Consequently, the requirements under schedule 10 of the Equality Act are likely to be met.

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	147737
DfE registration number	896/6008
Inspection number	10145831

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	David Leatherbarrow
Headteacher	Ben Reading
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,906 - £77,880
Telephone number	01244 257950
Website	Not yet operational
Email address	info@maplegroveschool.org
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	N/A	5 to 16	5 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	0	36	36

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	36
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	0	36
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	0	36
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	0	36

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	2	11
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	5	11

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is to be established in a recently remodelled building that was previously an operating independent school. The school will be the sole occupier of the building.
- The school is to be one of 23 other Acorn Care schools currently operating across the United Kingdom. The proprietor company has a number of regional officers and a peer governance structure in operation. These offer support and challenge to the school's headteacher who is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the school.
- Acorn Care's stated mission for its schools is to provide a structured, nurturing learning environment where pupils can access a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum to meet their significant needs.
- The proprietor company intends that the school will cater for pupils who have a range of SEND, including autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Leaders initially plan to begin the school with a small number of predominantly primary-aged pupils and expect to grow the number of pupils on roll over time. To this aim, leaders have planned appropriately to meet the needs of the full proposed age range of the school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first pre-registration inspection of Maple Grove School.
- This inspection was conducted remotely. This was due to the restrictions placed on non-essential travel during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The inspector checked on the proprietor company's compliance with all parts of the independent school standards.
- During the inspection, online meetings were held with the headteacher, the proprietor company's representative and the school's chair of governance who is a director of the proprietor company.
- The inspector also checked documentary evidence relating to the curriculum, including schemes of work and the curriculum policy, that were supplied by the school's leadership.
- The inspector reviewed the proprietor company's policies in relation to welfare, health and safety. A scrutiny of the proprietor company's safeguarding procedures, including recruitment processes and checks, was also undertaken.
- The inspector viewed video evidence of the exterior of the school. A live online video tour of the internal school premises was undertaken jointly with the headteacher and proprietor company's representative.
- In carrying out this type of inspection, inspectors assess the extent to which the school is likely to meet 'The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014' when it opens.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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M1 2WD

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