Melksham House School

27 Market Place, Melksham SN12 6ES

Inspection dates	29 May 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 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2), 3 to 4.

- Leaders have a clear, ambitious vision for the education they intend to provide at Melksham House School. They anticipate that many pupils will have missed a lot of education by the time they arrive at the school. The curriculum is intended to re-engage pupils with learning and enable them to bridge the gaps in their knowledge.
- The curriculum has been designed to ensure that pupils study a broad range of subjects including artistic, sporting, creative and technical areas. At the secondary phase of the school, the curriculum enables pupils to study for accredited examinations such as GCSE and Functional Skills. Leaders are ambitious for pupils to gain accredited qualifications so that they are prepared for the next steps in their education.
- The school has considered in depth the ways in which the curriculum can address and meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils will have education, health and care (EHC) plans which will inform pupils' personal learning plans. These are meticulously detailed enabling staff to adapt the teaching of the curriculum to meet the learning needs of pupils. Support staff known as pupil coaches will be employed.
- The curriculum also focuses on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is drawn from the materials provided by the PSHE Association. Through the curriculum, pupils will learn about the importance of individual liberty and freedom of speech and the importance of equal rights. The school intends to become a UNESCO Rights Respecting School which will further support pupils' knowledge of national and global citizenship. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum has been well planned. Dependent on the needs of pupils, this may be taught on a one-to-one basis. The policy provides clear guidance for parents and carers to withdraw their children if they so wish.

- Leaders have established clear monitoring cycles to check how well pupils are learning. Leaders will monitor how well pupils' EHC plan targets are tracked and met. Transition into school and between phases have been planned carefully. For many pupils, particularly secondary pupils with EBSA, re-engagement with school including school attendance is anticipated to be problematic. Clear systems are in place to enable the school to support pupils on a bespoke basis. Staff will work closely with pupils to establish trusting relationships and identify barriers to learning.
- The curriculum encompasses assessment opportunities where pupils' knowledge and understanding is checked before moving on to more complex learning. On entry to the school, pupils will be assessed to determine their starting points. Many pupils in both primary and secondary will have previously struggled to attend school due to their autism and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. It is anticipated that many pupils in the secondary phase will have emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) issues. A breadth of tiered therapeutic intervention is in place to address pupils' needs. Staff will work closely with pupils to establish trusting and trusted relationships. Thus, the curriculum will be personalised to address pupils' academic, social and emotional needs.
- Parents and carers will receive assessment information routinely through reports and parent consultation events.
- The school plans to appoint an independent, impartial careers adviser to support the careers programme. Leaders plan to introduce suitable work placements to help pupils make links between learning and their future adult lives.
- The school has already recruited staff and plan to recruit more before the opening of the proposed school. They have planned extensive training for staff. Staff who have already been appointed are currently completing a breadth of training. They plan for all support staff to be trained in therapeutic interventions so that they can offer both academic and therapeutic support. This is likely to ensure that pupils prosper in a setting that meets their needs.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

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

Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders and staff will ensure pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development through the curriculum. The focus on building positive relationships with pupils is intended to further support pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world around them.
- The PSHE curriculum includes appropriate coverage of the roles and values of citizenship in modern Britain. Pupils will be taught about how to live physically and emotionally healthy lives and to respect differences, including in relation to all the protected characteristics. The planned curriculum focuses on celebrating a breadth of cultural events such as Diwali, Summer Solstice and Chinese New Year. Pupils will learn about different faiths.

- The proposed school will provide pupils with opportunities to enhance their knowledge of both their local and national heritage. Visits, external visitors and activities will enable pupils to learn about academic subjects as well as develop their social skills.
- Leaders are aware that pupils may be vulnerable to the influence of others. Leaders will ensure that pupils are not exposed to partisan political or religious views.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 9 to 16(b), 34(1)(c)

- The proposed school's written safeguarding policy draws on statutory guidance. It is published on the school's website and is available on request. The proprietor has appointed a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) alongside two deputy safeguarding leads (DDSLs). They are suitably knowledgeable and have completed the requisite training.
- Some staff, including the head teacher and deputy headteacher, have already been appointed. They have undertaken a range of safeguarding training including reading the statutory guidance document, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and contextual safeguarding training. The training ensures that staff understand the contextual risks facing pupils at the school including internet safety.
- Leaders have considered the SEND needs of pupils in the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies. They encompass current guidance. Staff training includes autism appropriate behaviour strategies and physical intervention strategies.
- Record keeping arrangements are fit for purpose.
- Appropriate plans are in place for record keeping. These are suitably detailed ensuring that pupils are kept safe. Leaders will thus be able to identify issues as they emerge swiftly and appropriately.
- The school's policies for health and safety and risk assessments are fit for purpose. They comply with statutory requirements. The proprietor has conducted pertinent risk assessments for the premises and for activities that take place off site.
- Leaders have an appropriate first-aid policy. It has ensured that current staff are trained to administer first aid. Leaders will ensure that all staff will be suitably trained in first aid. First-aid equipment and resources are easily accessible in the medical room and in strategically appointed places around the school.
- The proprietor has ensured that the premises are compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. All fire detection, alarm systems, emergency evacuation systems and emergency lighting have been externally certified. Leaders have ensured that suitable persons have been trained as fire marshals. Leaders have also planned routine fire drills alongside suitable fire assembly points.
- The proprietor has planned a high pupil-to-staff ratio to ensure that pupils are suitably supervised at all times in the school and during off-site activities.
- Leaders have put in place effective admissions and attendance systems in accordance with paragraph 15 of the independent school standards.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

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

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

- The single central record is maintained with diligence. Leaders including the proprietor have ensured that the required checks are made prior to appointing staff at the school. The requisite checks have also been made of the proprietor and leaders.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

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 situated on a community campus of sporting and cultural amenities in the centre of the town of Melksham. The secondary and primary phases will be based on two floors of a grade II listed building. The school will be accessed via a road that leads into the school car park at the back of the school.
- The school has 8 classrooms. All of these are light, acoustically appropriate and well maintained. There are therapy and break out rooms for pupils to support their sensory needs. There is a well-maintained kitchen for pupils to learn to cook as well as a commercial kitchen to ensure that pupils eat healthily. There are sufficient toilets for pupils and washing facilities for pupils and staff and the hot water temperature is regulated. Pupils have access to drinking water.
- The medical room is well resourced with a bed, washing facilities and suitable medical resources.
- The outdoor area for secondary and primary pupils to exercise and socialise in is well maintained and appropriate. Pupils will access the adjacent leisure centre to do physical education and learn to swim. Pupils will have access to shower and changing facilities in school and at the sports facilities.
- The proprietor has ensured that the grade II listed building has been suitably adapted to address the SEND needs of pupils as well as keep them physically safe. For example, adaptations have been made to ensure that the perimeter fence is secure.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(g), 32(1)(j) to 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(dc) to 32(3)(d), 32(3)(f) to 32(4)(c)

- The proposed school's website provides prospective pupils, parents and carers with a breadth of information about the school and its staff. This includes the contact details of the proprietor, the school and the values of the school. Pupils can access personalised information about members of staff to enable them to begin to re-engage with school. All required documentation and policies required under part 6 of

the independent school standards were also provided by leaders, either electronically or during the on-site visit.

- The school has robust systems to monitor the progress of pupils with SEND. The school has put in place rigorous plans to support the annual reviews of pupils with an EHC plan. Leaders have established personal learning plans for each pupil that draw on the targets in their EHC plans. The local authority has commissioned the proprietor, Brunel Education, to operate the school. The school and the local authority intend to work closely together.
- Leaders understand the requirement to publish any future inspection reports to parents. Parents will be able to request paper copies of policies and documents if needed.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- The proposed school's complaints policy and procedures are fit for purpose. The policy makes clear the timescales and the process for parents and carers who wish to make a complaint.
- The complaints policy makes clear the first stage for complaints to be resolved informally. The process for escalating complaints to the next stage are clearly articulated.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor, Brunel Education, has a background in the strategic management of SEND schools both in collaboration with Brunel Academy Trust and in its current role as a charitable body that oversees other SEND settings. Leaders demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor demonstrates a strong moral imperative to provide educational opportunities for pupils with autism, attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), SEMH and EBSA. Their work in other settings exemplifies their commitment and knowledge.
- The leadership team has profound experience in leading and providing SEND education. Both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher who were in post at the time of inspection are experienced in teaching pupils with SEND needs.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The policy is fit for purpose.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- Leaders demonstrate a detailed understanding of all the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory requirements. They have planned the curriculum to address the learning needs of early years children. Children's progress will be shared with parents and carers.
- The proposed school is likely to comply with all the learning and development and safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS.

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	151646
DfE registration number	865/6069
Inspection number	10394924

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	Brunel Education
Chair	Christopher Sims
Headteacher	Rebecca Deacon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,00 to £35,000
Telephone number	07810398317
Website	www.melkshamhouse.uk
Email address	info@melkshamhouse.uk
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	4 to 16	4 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	67	67

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	67
Number of part-time pupils	0	67
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	0	67
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	0	67
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	0	67

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	0	12
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	1
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	0

Information about this proposed school

- The school is located on a campus providing cultural and sporting amenities in the middle of the town of Melksham. It intends to cater for 42 primary and 25 secondary pupils up to the age of 16. All pupils will have SEND needs such as autism, ADHD and SEMH. All pupils will have an EHC plan.
- Most pupils are likely to have missed parts of their education and have significant anxiety about going to school.
- Places will be commissioned by Wiltshire local authority.
- The proposed school will not have any religious character.
- The school does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to the proprietor's application to open an independent school. This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Schools must comply with the standards to be registered.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector also met with the chief executive officer (CEO) of Brunel Education and the proprietorial representative. The inspector took a tour of the site with the facilities manager and senior staff. She reviewed documents provided by the school and those that will be available on the school's website. The inspector checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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