

Inspection of Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning CIC

Westland Farm, Lordshill Common, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0TL

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this school and settle in quickly. Staff take great care to understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. The school's animal-assisted therapeutic approach is highly effective in allowing pupils to express themselves in a nurturing environment. Pupils enjoy learning in the farm setting and feel at home. For some pupils, attending this school has enabled them to feel understood and to thrive in education for the first time. Staff support is highly appreciated by parents and carers. One said, 'Elysian has saved my child's life.'

Pupils learn to get on with each other well and incidents of unkindness between pupils are rare. Pupils trust the adults who look after them. Any pupils with concerns are supported successfully. Positive working relationships between pupils and staff are a key feature of this school.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' personal development. Pupils grow in confidence. They develop positive social skills, a sense of responsibility and empathy for others.

The school's curriculum is built around pupils' interests. At times, pupils do not learn as well as they could in reading and other academic subjects. This is because curriculum goals have not been established clearly enough.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

There has been turbulence in leadership since the school opened, including two changes of headteacher. This has impeded leaders' plans to develop the curriculum. Staff absences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have also hampered progress. The school remained open for pupils throughout the pandemic.

Staffing has stabilised this academic year. Members of staff feel valued and are a committed team. They are united in their aim to provide the best experience for pupils.

Teachers build on pupils' interests to develop the curriculum. Sometimes, this means that pupils do not access a wide enough variety of experiences. In addition, the curriculum does not sequence learning well enough. Therefore, pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills.

The school's curriculum for English places insufficient emphasis on the importance of reading. Leaders have not established a systematic approach to developing pupils' reading skills; nor have they created a positive reading culture. This means that pupils do not gain the skills needed to become fluent and confident readers.

When teaching mathematics, teachers start by finding out what pupils know and can do. They use the farm environment successfully to provide real-life scenarios to supplement learning in mathematics.

Teachers keep a close eye on how well pupils are doing. Teaching staff and therapists communicate regularly about pupils' ongoing capability, learning and areas for development. Teachers use this information securely to assess pupils' achievements and to plan subsequent learning.

Pupils' personal development is a strength. Pupils make great strides in developing the personal skills that enable them to cope with learning and relationships. This is because the school's therapeutic approach identifies precisely what is needed to support pupils' social and emotional needs. Pupils become aware of their personal behaviours and actions. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to reflect, and to explore the triggers that can cause anxiety. Pupils appreciate what staff do for them. Most pupils attend school regularly. For many, this is a vast improvement on their pattern of attendance in previous education placements. Knowledgeable staff provide pupils with helpful careers advice and guidance.

The proprietors have a sense of deep moral purpose in their work. They are committed to providing a high-quality therapeutic and educational experience for pupils who have failed in the education system thus far. The advisory board strives to support and challenge leaders to achieve the school's aims. Unfortunately, this arrangement has not ensured that the independent school standards (the standards) are met at this time. Leaders and those responsible for governance do not know or check the standards well enough.

The sex and relationships education policy does not comply with government statutory guidance. Leaders have not consulted with parents about the school's approach to teaching this subject, and the school's policy is not published on the website. Nevertheless, sex and relationships education is taught well in the school, despite these shortcomings.

Leaders have not developed coherent plans about how to improve the school. Consequently, it is difficult for the proprietor and advisory board to hold leaders to account for their actions. This means that the school does not have a reliable mechanism to ensure that the standards are met consistently, or to make sure that pupils receive high-quality education.

The school follows equality duties appropriately. For example, it has a suitable accessibility plan on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture in this school. All staff know pupils well and are alert to any changes in their well-being. Designated safeguarding leads make good use of external agencies to secure help for pupils should they need it. Leaders make appropriate safeguarding checks on all adults that enter the site. There is a robust policy to follow should any safeguarding concerns about staff arise.

Leaders make safeguarding a high priority. The administration of safeguarding is meticulous. The safeguarding policy follows government requirements and is published on the school website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information or the school and proprietor)

- Proprietors and leaders have not developed an ambitious, rich curriculum. Leaders should establish a suitably ambitious curriculum to enable pupils to know more and remember more in academic subjects. This is to improve pupils' preparation for their next stage of education, training and/or employment.
- Some pupils have gaps in their phonics knowledge and reading skills. Clear guidance and training in the teaching of reading should be provided for staff. Leaders should enhance the culture of reading and provide it with more prominence in the curriculum. This is so that teaching can develop pupils' interest and skills in reading.
- The proprietor and those responsible for governance have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met consistently. They need to ensure that an action plan is put in place that clearly states how the proprietors and advisory board will monitor the success of leaders' actions. The proprietors should then establish a robust system so they can hold leaders to account for their actions. This is to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Leaders did not consult parents about the sex and relationships education policy or publish it on the school website. Parents may not be aware of the school's approach to this important aspect of the curriculum. Leaders should communicate with parents about how they teach this subject and place the policy on the website.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	147789
DfE registration number	936/6043
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10202268
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning CIC
Chair	Charlotte Williams
Headteacher	Jo Nunn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,750
Telephone number	07944 875155
Website	www.elysianuk.org
Email address	admin@elysianuk.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- There have been two changes of headteacher since the school opened in September 2020.
- Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning is registered for 15 pupils aged 11 to 16 who have special educational needs and/or disabilities associated with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school had a pre-registration inspection in July 2020, when it was found that the school would be likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opened.
- The school does not place pupils at any alternative provision.
- The school provides an animal-assisted therapeutic service for eight pupils on a part-time basis as an alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke with the proprietors and a representative of the advisory board.
- To investigate the quality of education, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The inspectors viewed the school's website and looked at a number of policies and documents to supplement information collected to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector checked the single central record of recruitment checks and other safeguarding records. Inspectors also talked to leaders in charge of safeguarding, and a range of staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and spoke with a parent on the telephone.

Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lucy English

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

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