

Courtlands Independent Special School

37 Parklands Avenue, Goring By Sea, Worthing, West Sussex BN12 4NG

Unique reference number (URN): 149890

Material change inspection report:

11 June 2026

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), which is the registration authority for independent schools. The school has applied to the DfE to make a material change to its registration. The school proposes to change the maximum number of pupils attending.

The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out material change inspections of independent schools, we report on the school's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

Leadership is effective. The headteacher brings relevant expertise to his role. A chair of governors with appropriate educational experience works closely with the school to provide oversight and quality assurance. Leaders recognise, however, that opportunities for external quality assurance would further add value, so as to assure them that their provision remains as effective as they intend. This is

something they intend to implement from the new academic year. Leaders and the proprietor engage with wider educational networks, including some overseas, to further explore ideas to develop their provision.

Pupils feel safe, secure and happy in this school. They trust staff and develop positive relationships with staff, who know them well. Staff receive appropriate training so that they can undertake their roles effectively.

Leaders have made developments to the school site, creating 2 additional classroom spaces, to ensure that there is sufficient space and resources for the proposed additional pupil numbers to be educated. The school site is well resourced to provide an appropriate breadth of educational opportunities for pupils, including designated spaces for art, science and music, as well as appropriate therapeutic spaces.

Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of the independent school standards and take actions to ensure that they are readily met. They are therefore likely to meet these if the material change application is approved.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school website and aligned with statutory requirements. Staff receive regular and comprehensive safeguarding training. This ensures they can identify when a pupil may be at risk of harm and report any concerns swiftly.

Leaders are appropriately trained for their role in overseeing the safeguarding culture in their school. This includes 2 senior leaders who have appropriate training to perform the role of designated safeguarding lead. They work well with external agencies, as well as their own therapeutic interventions, so that pupils and their families receive appropriate and timely support.

Records are kept of actions undertaken. The actions that are taken are timely. However, there is some inconsistency in the detail of record-keeping of leaders' actions. While at times these are detailed and record the appropriately swift responses that leaders have taken, at other times records do not record the steps taken as they must. Leaders are clear that their records need to be sufficiently detailed and promptly completed to ensure that the actions they take are recorded centrally in one place, in detail, with accuracy, so that there can be assured oversight of their responses.

Pupils feel safe, have positive relationships with staff and are confident to share any worries they have. They know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

Health and safety, fire and first aid

Leaders have put in place appropriate health and safety and first aid policies that support the welfare of pupils and staff. These policies are implemented consistently and underpinned by effective systems. Leaders ensure that frequent health and safety checks of the school site are carried out. Any identified issues are addressed swiftly. As a result of these systems, the site is maintained to a high standard and is safe.

A compliant fire safety policy is in place. Clear escape routes are supported by ample signage. Regular fire drills ensure that staff and pupils know what to do were an emergency to occur. Regular external checks are undertaken of fire alarms and fire extinguishers to ensure these are well maintained. These processes ensure the school maintains ongoing compliance with fire safety regulations.

Risk assessment

An appropriate risk assessment policy is in place, supported by clear systems and processes that are carefully followed. Risk assessments are well written, reflecting the specific needs of pupils and the activities they undertake. This includes for distinct components of the school site, for example the lake and the woodland area, for specific activities such as use of tools and equipment, as well as off-site visits such as trips.

Leaders have individual risk assessments in place that identify pupils' vulnerabilities and any associated risks. These plans clearly set out appropriate mitigating steps to reduce potential risk and are reviewed regularly so that they remain responsive to pupils' ongoing needs and circumstances.

As a result, the proprietor body has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

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

The recruitment checks made on staff, supply staff and the proprietor

Appropriately robust systems are in place as part of the school's recruitment processes which give due regard to safer recruitment requirements. The senior leaders involved in recruitment are appropriately trained.

The school has current capacity in its staff body to meet the needs of the proposed increased capacity.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

The single central record is accurately maintained, kept up to date and includes all staff. Regular checks of the single central record help the proprietor ensure that it reflects the most recent statutory guidance. All required checks, including those for individuals in leadership and management roles, are completed and recorded appropriately.

The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities, water supply, changing accommodation and showers

The school site has appropriate toilets, handwashing and shower facilities for pupils which are separate from staff amenities.

Hot water is set at a safe temperature and is regularly checked. Pupils have ready access to drinking water at numerous locations across the school site which is clearly labelled.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

A medical room with handwashing facilities is appropriately located next to a toilet. The room contains a fold out bed and suitable first-aid provisions. Medication is stored securely in locked facilities away from the medical room.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

The premises provide a safe and well-resourced environment which is effectively maintained. Leaders have created 2 additional classroom spaces to serve the additional proposed pupil numbers. There are ample break-out spaces, including an atrium, and a range of well-equipped therapeutic rooms so that pupils have sufficient space to access wider support when needed. Extensive grounds provide ample outdoor space, and a range of different spaces support pupils' regulation when required. These areas are well maintained and accessed by pupils when they need to regulate their behaviour. This includes a small lake and a woodland area which are accessed only under supervision of staff. These, too, are appropriately risk assessed.

Staffing levels are appropriate and staff are well trained so that they supervise pupils effectively throughout the day. The school already has sufficient staffing to meet the needs of the proposed increased capacity. Leaders have appropriate consideration for staff to pupil ratios in anticipation of pupils' needs.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

There are appropriate acoustic conditions and suitable internal lighting across all learning spaces and communal areas. These support effective teaching and learning as well as more tranquil break-out spaces such as the atrium to support when pupils need alternative space. External lighting is appropriate, ensuring that the school is a safe and sufficiently illuminated environment.

Outdoor space

The external school grounds are extensive and well maintained. They provide adequate space for physical education, as well as space to support regulation and wider education such as the woodland area and horticulture spaces. Leaders have ensured that the outdoor areas allow pupils to socialise safely during breaktimes and lunchtimes. These are well supervised and managed so that pupils can use them safely.

Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met were the material change to be approved.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. Inspectors checked the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The proprietor body has requested a material change to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll to 80.

The Department for Education commissioned the inspector to inspect the suitability of the school's provision in relation to the welfare, health and safety of pupils; the suitability of staff; the suitability of premises and accommodation; and the quality of leadership and management.

The inspector checked the suitability of the school premises during their site check. They met with the headteacher and a range of other staff. The inspector also met with the proprietor and the chair of governors, as well as a new health and safety governor.

The inspector visited some learning and spoke with pupils and staff. They also reviewed documents related to health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment.

The inspector also considered the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record of pre-employment checks and whether the school's safeguarding policy is available to parents and carers. These requirements of the independent school standards are met.

The inspector confirmed the following information about the school:

Courtlands Independent Special School is an independent special school specialising in supporting pupils with needs linked to anxiety, emotional wellbeing and self-regulation, as well as emotionally based school avoidance. The sole proprietor is Peter Zalecki.

All pupil places are commissioned by the local authority and all pupils at the school have education, health and care plans.

The school currently uses no forms of alternative provision.

Lead inspector

Marian Feeley

His Majesty's Inspector

About this school

Proprietor	Courtlands By The Sea Ltd
Headteacher	Mr Mark Birkbeck
Type of school	Other independent special school
Capacity	65
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	59
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	4
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Annual fees for day pupils	£56,100
Email address	head@courtlands-school.co.uk

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