

# Serenity School

Rowans Hill, Coulsdon Lane, Chipstead, Surrey CR5 3QG

**Inspection date**

24 August 2022

**Overall outcome**

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

## Main inspection findings

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraphs 7–7(b), 32(1)(c)*

- There is an appropriate child protection and safeguarding policy in place, which is published on the school's website. It reflects the current guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Leaders have updated the policy to be in line with new guidance that comes into force in September 2022.
- Leaders described strong safeguarding practice. Staff are trained at induction and annually in a range of safeguarding issues, and in subsequent updates and briefings. Consequently, they are alert to the contextual risks to pupils in the school, including criminal and sexual exploitation and radicalisation. They understand the additional risks faced by children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Leaders are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding. Leaders have secure plans to increase the number of trained deputy designated safeguarding leaders if the material change is granted. Leaders liaise well with the different local authorities and agencies they work with and are knowledgeable about the processes and practices in each authority. Leaders are tenacious and escalate concerns in the best interests of pupils.
- Leaders are trained in safer recruitment. They undertake the appropriate pre-employment checks on adults before they start working in the school.

#### *Paragraph 11*

- The health and safety policy sets out clear intentions for the safe maintenance of the site. The site manager ensures that all checks on the building and environment, including those relating to fire safety and water safety, are carried out at appropriate intervals. Certification for fire, electricity, gas and water safety is in place.

#### *Paragraph 12*

- There are appropriate mitigations in place to reduce the risk of fire spreading and to allow for escape, including fire doors, an alarm system, smoke detectors and emergency exit signage. Doors that are kept secure, automatically open if the fire

alarm is activated. Those pupils who need assistance to evacuate have appropriate personal plans in place. Records show that evacuations, which are practised termly, are carried out within acceptable timeframes.

*Paragraph 14*

- Leaders intend to increase the staffing levels if they take on more pupils. Their intention is to have three extra groups, with one teacher and three support staff in each group. Group sizes will vary between six and eight pupils, depending on pupils' needs. Additional therapists and counsellors work on site to support pupils' special educational and behaviour needs. Staff typically eat with pupils during lunchtimes. Pupils will be well supervised during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes.

*Paragraph 16*

- There is an appropriate policy in place to reduce the levels of risk presented by pupils, the site and by trips, visits and activities. Leaders are knowledgeable about the risks pupils face and mitigate them well.
- Leaders have considered the additional risks presented by having more pupils on site, for example by splitting lunchtime into three sessions so that the dinner hall does not become overcrowded and so that vulnerable pupils do not become overwhelmed with the extra numbers of pupils.
- The school is likely to meet all relevant requirements of this part of the independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

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

*Paragraphs 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(6)*

- Leaders understand the necessary recruitment checks that are required for adults to work in the school. These are recorded in the well-maintained single central record. This includes all appropriate checks on staff, proprietors, governors, visitors, supply staff and contractors. It is overseen by the school's administration officer and checked frequently by a human resources consultant who works for the proprietor body.
- The school is likely to meet all the relevant aspects of this part of the independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraphs 23(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2)–29(1)(b)*

- The school consists of two buildings that have been reconfigured to provide classrooms, therapy rooms, dining spaces and office space. There are designated rooms for science and art, and food technology. Leaders have thought carefully about how many pupils use each space – class sizes range between six and eight pupils, dependent on the size of the room. Collectively, there is enough space for 75 pupils to learn. Leaders plan to operate three sittings for lunch so that the dining hall doesn't become crowded. Consequently, the dining hall is suitable to accommodate 75 pupils overall during lunchtime.
- The site is well-maintained inside and outside. Both buildings meet the requirements for the supply of hot and cold water, lighting, acoustics and heating. Windows have

restrictions on them so that they are safe for a school. External lighting surrounds the buildings.

- The grounds are laid out with a hard surface with seats for socialising and a large field with climbing frame for playing. Extensive forest land attached to the school is used for outdoor learning. A drop off space for cars is safely separate from the main buildings. The site is surrounded by fencing to provide a secure site for the school.
- There is a medical facility that houses a room with a bed next to a toilet and water supply. This is classed as one space by the school as the two rooms are accessible by just one door.
- There are adequate toilets for 75 pupils, with separate toilets for girls and boys. Leaders plan to reallocate two boys' toilets to be girls' toilets should the proportion of girls increase. Some toilets are single occupancy and can be unisex toilets. There is a separate toilet for staff and visitors.
- Pupils use local sports facilities for organised physical education.
- The school is likely to meet all the relevant aspects of this part of the independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)*

- Leadership, governance and proprietary oversight of the school is strong. All have experience of running similar schools successfully.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance are knowledgeable about the needs of pupils in their care. A quality assurance schedule monitors a range of aspects of provision. Six-weekly meetings are held to check how well pupils are achieving, to check their well-being, and check how well leaders and staff are working. Those responsible for governance keep a strategic view but also use their expertise to check directly that pupils are achieving and well-cared for.
- Secure performance management procedures are in place to ensure that leadership is of high quality. Additional training, for example in coaching and mentoring, is provided when leaders identify that this is needed.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are likely to be met if the material change to increase pupil numbers in the school is approved. They have made careful decisions not to make the school too crowded, in recognition of the additional vulnerabilities that pupils with SEND have.
- The school is likely to meet all relevant requirements of this part of the independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

## **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 that are relevant to the material change.

## School details

Unique reference number	146660
DfE registration number	936/6058
Inspection number	10250265

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Serenity School Coulsdon Limited
Chair	Ebere Emezie
Headteacher	Mrs Charmaine Ayisi
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,000–£59,000
Telephone number	020 4517 0920
Website	<a href="http://www.serenityschool.org.uk">www.serenityschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@serenityschool.org.uk">office@serenityschool.org.uk</a>
Dates of previous standard inspection	14 to 16 May 2019

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 19	not applicable	not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	38	75	75

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	not applicable

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	38	75
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	38	75
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	38	75
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	38	75

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	12	15
Number of part-time teaching staff	1	1

## Information about this school

- The school is registered as an independent special school. It offers day places to pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All places are commissioned by local authorities. Leaders wish to provide 25 additional specialist school places in order to meet local needs.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was in May 2019. At that time, the school was located in the London Borough of Croydon and had places for boys aged between 11 and 16.
- In December 2021, the school received a material change inspection. As a result, the Department for Education (DfE) approved a number of changes to the school: an increase in pupil numbers to 50 pupils; an increase in age range to accommodate a sixth form; the school could offer places to girls as well as boys; and a change of school site to the current site in Chipstead, Surrey.

- Since the last inspection, the proprietor body has changed its name from Serendipity School Ltd, to Serendipity School Couldson Ltd, to reflect the change in location of the school.
- The school uses one registered provider of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The material change inspection was carried out at the request of the DfE. The purpose of the inspection was to establish if the school would be likely to meet all the relevant independent school standards if the proposed material change is implemented. The material change intended is to increase the number of pupils to 75. This is the first material change inspection in respect of this particular change that the school has applied to make.
- The DfE requested that checks were made on the school's premises in order to check that they would accommodate an increase in pupil numbers. They also requested that the school's arrangements for safeguarding, health and safety, fire safety, risk assessments and supervision of pupils were scrutinised in order to check that these would be likely to meet all requirements. The DfE also requested that further checks were made on the recruitment of staff and the quality and capacity of leaders to lead the school should the material change be approved.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the chair of the proprietor body, the human resources consultant, the school administration officer, and the school's educational consultant who also sits on the executive board. The inspector toured the school site and scrutinised a range of policies, documents and plans.

## Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector



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