

# The Wildings Lovaton

Lower Lovaton Cottage, Lovaton, Devon PL20 6PT

**Inspection dates**

5 December 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

*Paragraph 2, 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g) to 2(2)(i)*

- The proprietor intends for the proposed school to provide education for pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, typically for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Many will have had poor experiences of education or missed a significant amount of school. The school has set out clear curriculum aims and ambitions for its intended pupils. The curriculum has been developed so that pupils can progress through to key stage 5 successfully. It takes into account the age and stage of pupils.
- There is ambition for pupils to achieve a range of recognised qualifications, including entry level certificates, functional skills and GCSEs. The curriculum has been developed to complement this from key stage 2 through to post 16. Leaders have ensured that staff have the subject knowledge and expertise to provide this. The breadth of accredited outcomes will support pupils to enter further education, employment or training successfully.
- The proprietor and leaders have extensive experience of working with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have a sound understanding of EHC plans and the requirements placed on schools within the EHC plans.
- The school has a progressive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The curriculum and its resources are adaptable to meet the bespoke needs of pupils with SEND.
- The school does not have the facilities to support the physical education (PE) curriculum on site. It intends to provide the requirements of the PE curriculum using off-site providers and the extensive outdoor opportunities that the local area offers.
- The school intends to offer a well-considered careers education programme. As well as links across the curriculum, pupils will be supported, as is appropriate, to take up work experience as they move through the school. The school will strengthen its links with the local community and beyond to help pupils understand the world of work, as well as the world around them more generally. The school plans for regular, impartial

careers advice to support pupils to successfully transition to appropriate and aspirational destinations.

*Paragraphs 2A(1), 2A(1)(a) to 2A(1)(g), 2A(2)*

- There is a relationships and sex education policy (RSE) in place that meets statutory requirements for both primary and secondary pupils. It reflects the needs of pupils who will attend the school.

*Paragraphs 3, 3(a) to 3(j) and 4*

- The school has carefully considered how any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding will be identified. It has an approach in place to check and monitor pupils' academic, pastoral and SEND achievements. The ongoing assessment resources that staff will use are clear and include the provision set out in each pupil's EHC plan.
- The curriculum, through its 'roots, shoots and fruits' pathways, will enable staff to adapt learning and development to the needs of each pupil in a bespoke way. A thorough transition process will inform pupil's individual 'implementation plan'. Staff will use this to build on what pupils know and can do. This should enable pupils to make progress from their starting points. The curriculum will likely enable pupils to make progress and work towards qualifications as appropriate. Staff will report on pupils' progress to parents and carers on a termly basis.
- The school prioritises building positive, nurturing, safe and trusted relationships. It has carefully considered the help that pupils may require to repair and recover from any previous experiences of education that they may have had. The approach is designed to support pupils regulate their emotions and develop strategies to communicate through their actions more positively. The school has ensured that pupils will receive the pastoral and therapeutic provision that they need to be successful in this.
- A comprehensive professional development offer enables staff to access training suited to the school and its pupils. The proprietor and the school plan to offer professional development opportunities bespoke to the needs of individual staff as needed.
- The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)*

- The proprietor has identified how it intends to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development in order that pupils are prepared well for life beyond school. The 'wheel of independence' curriculum and proposed enrichment offer provide relevant opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development. For example, the school intends for pupils to go on visits beyond the school, promoting increased social interactions and strengthening resilience and independence across a breadth of experiences. Woven through each pupil's curriculum offer are opportunities to ensure that pupils understand the importance of not discriminating against those with protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

- The proposed school's policies and schemes of work specify how the school will promote fundamental British values. The curriculum for pupils' PSHE education is well developed. It outlines how teaching will support pupils in taking responsibility for their actions.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

#### *Paragraphs 7, 9 to 16*

- The school's safeguarding and child protection policy is up to date with the latest statutory guidance and takes account of the particular needs of the pupils who will attend the school.
- Leaders have made sure that safeguarding is a high priority. Staff roles and responsibilities are clear. Staff have had recent relevant training. A daily debrief is planned to ensure that staff receive relevant contextual information, including about safeguarding and welfare. Leaders have relevant previous experience and have completed suitable training. The school is highly aware of the increased vulnerabilities that pupils, who will attend this school, may have faced or be experiencing. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is knowledgeable and understands how to keep pupils safe from harm.
- Systems to record and track incidents relating to safeguarding are in place and will be underpinned by an online reporting system. Online recording will enable the DSL to take prompt action and monitor the welfare of pupils.
- Through its currently operating school, the proprietor and school leadership team have strong links with external agencies to support pupils' wellbeing and welfare.
- The 'behaviour for communication' policy sets out how the school will support pupils to manage and communicate their emotions and needs with increasing success. It is underpinned by the school's clear ethos of behaviour as a form of communication. The policy outlines the intended approach and staff response which is grounded in sensitivity, understanding and flexibility. The school will maintain close oversight of the support it puts in place for pupils.
- The anti-bullying policy is clear and covers different types of bullying, including online and those relating to people with protected characteristics.
- There is a health and safety policy in place. This is well matched to the school site. The buildings are maintained well.
- The school is not operational, but the first-aid policy, alongside the health and safety policy, make clear how injuries will be dealt with.
- The school complies with requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Firefighting equipment is well maintained through regular checks. There is clear oversight of this, along with other health and safety checks through a detailed tracking system. The proprietor has designed a programme of daily, weekly and monthly checks to help ensure that all aspects of the building are as safe as possible.
- The school has systems in place for completing the admissions register and attendance registers as required.

- Pupils will be supported by high levels of staffing. Leaders have ensured that staff will have the expertise in and knowledge of pupils' individual needs to manage this effectively. This will ensure that pupils are appropriately supervised from arrival to departure.
- The school has an appropriate risk assessment policy in place. Individual support and risk assessments that pupils require to keep them safe will be addressed through the use of pupil 'safety plans'.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraphs 18 to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(6)*

- Leaders have completed training to help them know and understand the requirements for checking on the suitability of new members of staff. The proprietor has a suitable staff recruitment policy. This has been implemented appropriately for all staff appointed and currently working at the proprietor's other operating school. Some staff will be shared across the school sites. This will be dependent on the needs of pupils on the school's roll.
- Details of all required checks on staff and the proprietor body are entered onto a single central record.
- Leaders do not intend to use supply staff. Nevertheless, they know what checks to make if they decide in future to use supply staff.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraphs 22 to 23(1)(c), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25 to 29(2), 31*

- The proposed school is situated in four buildings, two of which will be used as designated learning spaces. The other buildings on the school site will be used as storage, drying facilities and office spaces. This is clearly outlined in relevant risk assessments and policy documents. These other buildings will be kept secure through locked doors.
- The school has set up learning spaces, which can flex to the needs of the pupils. There is a more communal space with a well-resourced kitchen area to support social development and opportunities for developing life skills and group interactions, such as during breakfast and lunch times.
- There is access to outdoor space around the school buildings which will be used by pupils on site. There is a plan in place to ensure that these spaces, and access to them, are free from potential slip hazards such as leaf debris.
- There are separate toilets for pupils and staff. The supply of hot running water is maintained at an appropriate temperature. There is no risk of scalding.
- The medical room is located close to a toilet and washing facilities. There is a lockable cupboard for the storage of medical equipment.

- Pupils will arrive at school using school transport services or through staff transport. There has been consideration to how transport to and from school will be managed to minimise impact on local residents and access to the school site.
- Classrooms and shared spaces are well lit. There is external lighting in place.
- Pupils have access to drinking water in shared spaces. This is clearly labelled. Water that is not to be used as drinking water is clearly labelled.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(i) to 32(3)(g)*

- The school's website provides parents with access to required school policies and other information, such as contact details for the principal and chair of the governing body.
- The school is aware of its responsibilities to add further information as it becomes available and the school is established. Leaders plan to provide termly reports for parents on pupil progress and achievement.
- The school will ensure that appropriate agencies and commissioning local authorities have access to relevant information. Funding will be accounted for and reported accordingly to commissioners. The school intends for all places to be commissioned by a local authority.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33 to 33(k)*

- The school has an appropriate complaints policy. It stipulates the time frames and how complaints will be handled. This includes the involvement of an independent panel member when needed.
- The school is clear on how complaints will be reported and how records of complaints are kept.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

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

- The principal, senior leadership team and governing body have strong knowledge of the standards and experience of leading specialist independent education provision. They have already established robust quality assurance of necessary systems and processes at the proprietor's currently operating other school, to ensure that the independent school standards are likely to be met consistently at the proposed school.

- The buildings that will be used by the school are in good order. All health and safety checks of the school site are in place. There is strong oversight of this work, which includes a rigorous process for checking, maintenance and risk assessment.
- Staff have already been recruited. They are currently working at the proprietor's other operating school. Staff are employed across both school sites to meet the needs of the pupils who will attend each individual site. A detailed and established induction programme alongside a secure understanding of the school's values, culture and ethos is in place. This ensures that staff have the specialist knowledge and skills needed to support the pupils who attend.
- The aims of the school and the provision in place will actively support the wellbeing of pupils.
- The school has a well-thought-through approach to grow pupil numbers to full capacity. This will secure the quality of the provision for, and successful impact on, pupils as they join the proposed school.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- An accessibility plan is in place. The school has considered the potential accessibility challenges that pupils and staff may face. Where practicable, the school has put in place actions to overcome potential accessibility issues to the curriculum, the physical environment and in the provision of information.
- The proprietor has ensured that the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 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	152336
DfE registration number	878/6095
Inspection number	10433113

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 school
Proprietor	Mime Heuristics CIC
Chair	Michael Rees-Lee
Headteacher	Michael Rees-Lee
Annual fees (day pupils)	£85,000
Telephone number	01392 692212
Website	<a href="http://www.thewildingslovaton.co.uk">www.thewildingslovaton.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@thewildingslovaton.co.uk">admin@thewildingslovaton.co.uk</a>

**Pupils**

	<b>School's current position</b>	<b>School's proposal</b>	<b>Inspector's recommendation</b>
Age range of pupils	not applicable	7-18	7-18
Number of pupils on the school roll	not applicable	10	10

**Pupils**

	<b>School's current position</b>	<b>School's proposal</b>
Gender of pupils	not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	not applicable	10
Number of part-time pupils	not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	not applicable	10
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	not applicable	10
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	not applicable	10

## Staff

	<b>School's current position</b>	<b>School's proposal</b>
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	not applicable	7
Number of part-time teaching staff	not applicable	1

## Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located at: Lower Lovaton Cottage, Lovaton, Devon PL20 6PT. It is situated in a small Dartmoor hamlet in a group of four buildings, one holding Grade II listed status, which has previously been used as an off-site, rural education centre.
- The proposed school intends to provide education for pupils who have struggled to engage with education or who have spent significant time out of full-time education.
- Pupils are likely to have an EHC plan and SEMH needs.
- The proprietor operates one other independent special school.
- The proposed school does not have any religious character.
- The proposed school does not intend to use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education. The purpose of the inspection was to determine if the school is likely to meet the independent school standards prior to opening as a registered school. This is the first pre-registration inspection for the school.
- The inspection was conducted with two days' notice.
- The inspector met with the principal, who is also the chair of the proprietor body and the chair of governors. The inspector also met with members of the leadership team and some staff. The inspector also received communication from a representative from a local authority and the virtual school intending to commission places at the proposed school.
- The inspector reviewed documents and policies associated with the independent school standards. The inspector toured the premises, accompanied by the principal and the chair of governors. Documents and policies relating to the school's safeguarding procedures were reviewed.

## Inspection team

Leanne Thirlby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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