White Trees Independent School

13a London Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5NA

Unique reference number (URN): 140655

Material change inspection report:	16 September 2026

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes 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 from 78 to 111 across all three sites.

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 (ISS) 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 ISS first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the ISS 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.

The school is the only education provision run by the proprietor body. There is a clear structure for governance and oversight of the entire provision. This includes various members of the proprietor body with responsibility for areas, including safeguarding and compliance with the ISS. These individuals are highly knowledgeable and show understanding of the independent school standards (the standards). A governing body, led by an experienced chair of governors, keeps robust oversight of the school. Termly meetings are well documented and provide structured challenge and support to leaders. School leaders include well-written and detailed reports to the governing body. This ensures the governing body has a

breadth of information about the provision throughout the year, resulting in robust and secure oversight of the provision.

Structured systems are in place to ensure executive oversight of the school. These include safeguarding recording systems as well as databases that collate daily, weekly and termly health and safety checks. The school completes these checks and records. The proprietor body can always access these records to ensure compliance with statutory legislation, including the standards.

Pupils are at the heart of all actions taken by the proprietor. Pupils have diverse experiences and needs. The proprietor ensures a targeted and responsive approach to meeting pupils' therapeutic needs. The proprietor commissions a range of therapeutic support for pupils, including educational psychologists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. The school puts this support in place rapidly with a clear intent to improve pupils' outcomes. This therapeutic model in place will be suitable with the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

These standards are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is well prioritised by the school and proprietor. Safeguarding leads are well supervised and trained. With three sites, the proprietor already has in place an effective model for safeguarding oversight. This includes a trained designated lead at each site, line managed by a whole school designated safeguarding lead. Further oversight is provided from the executive headteacher and safeguarding leads in the proprietor body. The proprietor is clear that this structure is essential to ensure that safeguarding practices are effective and prompt.

The school keeps detailed and chronological safeguarding records. Staff and leaders complete records accurately. The records show the appropriate and timely action by the school to keep pupils safe. The records also show the close and effective working relationship the school ensures with parents, and carers, care homes and other external agencies. The system in place is suitable for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

Health and safety, fire and risk assessments

The health and safety and risk assessment policies are effective. They provide clarity for staff and leaders on the steps to take when making risks assessments as well as meeting health and safety requirements. Risk assessments are detailed and thorough. Pupils' risk assessments are highly personalised. They identify the precise risks for individual pupils. The supportive measures in place suitably mitigate those risks.

A suitable adult to pupil ratio means that pupils are well supervised. The proprietor has made the decision to overstaff prior to the material change being agreed. This decision was to ensure than any new staff employed to support an increase in pupil numbers, have the time to be acquainted with the school and suitably trained to meet pupils' needs.

The school site is safe. It is well maintained with daily and weekly checks. This includes checks on water, site safety, lighting, fire safety equipment and alarm systems. Staff accountable for these checks are supported by the executive headteacher and the central team. This ensures that all checks are made on time and thoroughly. Consequently, the school meets the relevant standards and fire safety regulations consistently.

These standards are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

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

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

The proprietor ensures that the required pre-employment checks on staff are conducted to make sure that all adults working in the school are suitable and safe to do so. Robust checks, including on those who have lived or worked abroad, are in place. This includes the required checks on those within management positions, including those within the proprietor and governing body.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

The proprietor regularly checks the single central record to verify that all necessary checks have been made and recorded accurately. The single central record is well organised and compliant, reflecting the most recent statutory guidance.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

There is a suitable number of toilets and washing facilities in all three buildings. This includes the provision of a changing space for pupils to use following physical education. The school uses local venues for physical education, all of which have working showers for pupils to access if they wish.

The water supply is regularly checked for flow and temperature. The proprietor has ensured that there is readily available drinking water for pupils to access when needed in all three sites.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

The medical rooms in the buildings comply with the school's first aid policy. Leaders make daily checks that the medical rooms are fully equipped and accessible. They contain a bed, a sink and are close to toilets.

There are suitable rooms in all three sites that provide a therapeutic and wellbeing space for pupils.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

The school sites are well maintained. Regular checks by leaders and the proprietor ensure that the sites are safe for pupils and staff. The school sites all have well-resourced academic spaces.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

The school sites are well lit by a mixture of artificial and natural light. Emergency indoor lighting is well distributed through the school sites. To ensure the outdoor spaces are safe, the proprietor has put in place adequate external lighting.

The design of the sites mean that individual rooms are calm and quiet.

Outdoor space

The sites are all quite different. Two sites have ample external space for pupils to access for recreation and outdoor learning. One site is in the middle of a town and does not have a large outdoor area. However, this is well mitigated as this site is found next to a large park area. With risk assessments in place, the school makes daily use of this space to provide pupils with adequate recreational and outdoor time.

These standards are likely to be met if the request for the material change is approved.

The school's accessibility plan

The school has a suitably written accessibility plan in place for all sites. This is published on the school's website.

About this inspection

The inspector 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.

The Inspector spoke with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, three site leaders and the commercial director who is also the chair of the governing body during the inspection. The inspector also met with the chair of the proprietor body the day after the onsite inspection.

The school is part of Sure Care Residential LTD. This is the only school in the group.

The school operates from three sites: 1) 13a London Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 5NA and Mission Hall, Gaston Green, Little Hallingbury Hertfordshire. CM22 7QS and Purley Farm, Purley Lane, Coggeshall, Colchester, Essex. CO6 1TH.

Pupils who attend the school have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school currently makes use of four unregistered alternative provisions. The school send staff who accompany all pupils when accessing these provisions.

Lead inspector	
Nina Marabese	His Majesty's Inspector

About this school

Proprietor body	Sure Care Residential Ltd

Chair of the proprietor body	Emma Barr
Executive Headteacher	Miss Laura Bull
Type of school	Other independent special school
Capacity	78
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	78
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan	78
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Annual fees for day pupils	£33,500 per 12 weeks
Email address	info@whitetrees-group.co.uk
Telephone	01279658518
Website	https://whitetrees-independent-school.co.uk/

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