

Sheiling School

Horton Road, Ashley, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 2EB

Unique reference number (URN): 113952

Material change inspection report:

25 February 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.

The school is situated on a 45-acre shared site with Sheiling College, the residential provisions for the school and college and staff accommodation. The school admits pupils aged 5 to 19 with moderate and severe learning difficulties and/or autism. The material change request is for 10 additional day pupils. There is no change in age range, the special educational needs and/or disabilities of pupils the school intends to admit or the curriculum the school intends to deliver.

The proprietor plans to use one additional classroom that is currently used by Sheiling College if the material change is implemented. The college intends to stop using this space in May 2026 when the additional building works at Sheiling College conclude.

The proprietor has a strong track record in ensuring that the school meets regulatory requirements. For example, the school's previous Ofsted inspections show that it has consistently met the independent school standards. The proprietor has also implemented previous material changes successfully.

The proprietor holds the school to account robustly for its performance. Skilled professionals make up the proprietor body. Committees and named trustees oversee the school's work in detail. Trustees use their professional expertise to carry out the comprehensive programme of monitoring and evaluation that the proprietor expects. For example, they check the safeguarding arrangements, evaluate the impact of leadership and management and test the school's capacity to meet the independent school standards continually and consistently. Frequent premises audits help leaders maintain the site well and comply with health and safety requirements effectively.

The proprietor commissions an external organisation to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's actions. These external reports give the proprietor regular insight into how effectively the curriculum and teaching meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These external monitoring visits also include oversight of pupils' personal development and wellbeing, pupils' behaviour and attendance and part 1 to 8 of the independent school standards.

As a result, the combination of internal and external monitoring gives the proprietor an accurate understanding of the school's performance.

School leaders demonstrate high levels of educational knowledge. They provide ongoing training and support so that staff have the detailed subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum, teaching and therapies effectively. The proprietor ensures that all school policies are up to date and that staff understand and follow the policies. School leaders respond precisely to any actions identified through both external and internal evaluation.

School leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards.

The proprietor has ensured that the standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The actions taken by leaders to implement and ensure the arrangements for safeguarding remain effective. There is clear oversight of all aspects of safeguarding and pupil welfare. Staff know, understand and carry out their safeguarding responsibilities diligently. Pupils who currently attend the school feel safe and are kept safe. There are clear and accessible policies and procedures in place to enable all pupils, including pupils who are non-verbal, to know how to access support if they are worried or concerned.

Leaders deliver frequent, relevant safeguarding training and facilitate staff to share effective practice. Leaders maintain detailed safeguarding records. When pupils face being at risk of harm, leaders take timely action to work with external agencies and minimise any further risks for pupils. There is a comprehensive safeguarding curriculum in place that covers all the necessary content.

The school publishes its safeguarding policy on the school's website.

Supervision of pupils

The deployment of staff and supervision of pupils already attending the school is effective. Staff receive a detailed programme of induction and training to ensure that they know how to support pupils well. The proprietor intends to follow the same programmes for any new staff they appoint. The proprietor does not intend to implement the material change until September 2026 at the earliest. The rationale for this is to allow sufficient time so that the proprietor can recruit appropriately skilled staff.

The school has a well-established induction programme for pupils. It intends to apply the same approach for any new pupils. The programme considers pupils' academic, social and emotional needs and the views of pupils and parents and carers. The school works closely with local authority commissioning bodies to ensure that the school can meet pupils' needs as set out in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. The school expects that most new pupils will work one to one with staff, as is the case for pupils who currently attend the school. The school intends to have new staff in place prior to admitting additional pupils.

Health and safety and fire safety

The school has a detailed health and safety policy in place. It is in line with current legislation. There is a detailed programme of checks in place which ensures that the school buildings are kept in good order and suitable for school use.

Each school building has a fire alarm and the required fire safety equipment such as fire extinguishers and fire blankets. The school carries out weekly and monthly fire safety checks for every building, such as testing fire alarms and checking that the fire call points and fire doors are well maintained. Leaders conduct fire drills for each school building. The proprietor ensures that personal evacuation plans are in place for pupils and staff that need them. Each school building has trained fire wardens.

Wiltshire and Dorset Fire Service completed a full site check in February 2026. The report was not available at the time of this material change inspection. The last full site fire risk assessment was completed in 2016. The proprietor has commissioned updated external fire risk assessments for many individual buildings. Where this is not yet in place, the school conducts internal annual fire risk assessments. Combined with regular fire safety checks, this approach minimises risk.

The proprietor recognises the need to secure an updated fire risk assessment for the proposed additional classroom before commissioning it as a classroom for the school.

Risk assessment

The school has a suitable risk assessment policy. There are detailed risk assessments in place, including for specific classrooms such as the design technology building and for the swimming pool. The main site risk assessment covers the full 45-acre site. For example, it includes any associated risks regarding the terrain of the landscape, pathways and road access.

The school keeps educational risk assessments up to date and tailors them precisely to each context, including any adaptations for pupils with SEND.

Many current pupils have individual risk assessments. The school updates these in line with its behaviour policy and pupils' EHC plans effectively. It intends to use the same approach to risk assessing any new pupils to the school, should the material change be implemented. These systems work well for current pupils.

The proposed classroom is in good order. At present, a detailed risk assessment is in place for its use as a college classroom for young adults. The proprietor knows that this risk assessment will need to be updated after the building is decommissioned from the college and it is incorporated into the school.

The proprietor 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

The proprietor has ensured that staff who carry out recruitment checks are highly knowledgeable in safer recruitment practices and follow those practices effectively. The proprietor ensures that all the required checks are in place prior to appointing staff, volunteers and contractors. Detailed procedures are in place when appointing supply staff and followed appropriately.

The school does not currently use alternative provision. However, it understands the requirement to obtain written confirmation that the required safeguarding checks have been carried out on all staff working at an alternative provision should they use such provision in the future.

The single central record of these recruitment checks

The school maintains an up-to-date single central record. Trustees have oversight of the pre-employment checks through their regular visits to review safer recruitment processes. The proprietor also commissions an external body to review the single central record. The internal and external monitoring of safer recruitment practices ensure that the single central record remains up to date and in line with current legislation.

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

There are ample and suitable toilets and washing facilities for pupils at the school. The proposed additional classroom is in good order. It has its own pupil toilets and adequate washing facilities. Drinking water is labelled sufficiently. It is intended that any pupils receiving education in the additional classroom will use the school's main changing rooms and showers, as is the case for current pupils.

Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs

There is a suitable medical room in use for current pupils. This will continue to be in place for pupils should the material change be approved. It includes a bed and washing facilities, and there is a toilet close by. There is a separate building that houses therapy for pupils. This is well resourced and maintained effectively.

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils

The proprietor prioritises health and safety compliance. It ensures that staff who conduct health and safety checks have appropriate knowledge and skills.

The proprietor monitors health and safety checks closely, including the regular testing of water supplies for legionella bacteria, external lighting and fire equipment. When checks identify required actions, the school completes those actions swiftly and effectively.

Lighting and acoustic conditions

Classrooms, including the proposed additional classroom, are well lit and have suitable acoustic conditions. Windows are double glazed and in good order. Emergency lighting operates throughout the site. External lighting is adequate.

Outdoor space

The school risk assesses the school site and keeps it in good order. There are specific play areas for recreation. These are well maintained. The boundaries to the school are also maintained well. This ensures a safe and welcoming space for pupils to socialise and learn.

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

The school's accessibility plan

The school has an accessibility plan. It complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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 inspector spoke with the headteacher, executive headteacher, the school business manager and chair of the proprietor body during the inspection.

All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. Pupils who attend the school have moderate and severe learning difficulties and/or autism.

School places are commissioned from 19 local authorities.

The school uses no providers of alternative provision.

Lead inspector

Julie Carrington

His Majesty's Inspector

About this school

Proprietor	The Sheiling Special Education Trust
Chair of the proprietor body	Jon Freeman
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Walters
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
Capacity	45
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	43
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	0
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Annual fees for day pupils	£111,279
Email address	enquiries@thesheilingringwood.co.uk

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