

Material change inspection report

20 October 2025

Acorn Park School

Andrews Furlong

Banham

Norwich

Norfolk

NR16 2HU

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Inspection outcome

The school has submitted a material change request to increase its capacity by an additional 20 pupils, to provide a total capacity of 180 pupils.

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school Standards if the material change is implemented. It is recommended that the material change be approved.

Inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 7(a), 7(b), 11, 12, 14 and 16(a), 16(b)

1. The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and reflects statutory guidance.
2. Leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy is implemented effectively and understood by staff. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that safeguarding concerns are reported, recorded, collated and monitored effectively and that appropriate actions are taken to help and support pupils. Safeguarding records are suitably detailed and securely stored. There are effective relationships with local agencies. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding make appropriate referrals without delay. The safeguarding arrangements are reviewed annually by the proprietor with suitable diligence.
3. Pupils know that they can share concerns with staff and that prompt steps will be taken to support them. Staff and leaders understand the importance of early help provision, are aware of what constitutes child-on-child abuse, and take appropriate and timely action when required. Suitable measures are taken to reduce the risk to pupils of radicalisation. There is due regard for pupils' mental health. Pupils feel safe at school.
4. Leaders ensure that training in safeguarding for staff, including all members of the safeguarding team and members of the governing board, is comprehensive. Leaders emphasise the importance of the continuing and frequent provision of relevant safeguarding training. The use of technology by pupils is suitably controlled, including through effective monitoring and filtering of the internet, and pupils are taught how to stay safe online.
5. Leaders understand their responsibility if allegations are made about the behaviour of staff to respond appropriately, making prompt referrals to external agencies, including the local authority. Leaders also understand their responsibility to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service and the Teaching Regulation Agency if necessary. Leaders ensure that staff are confident to report any concerns about the behaviour of adults, including low-level concerns, and to self-refer if they feel it is necessary.
6. There are sufficient leaders with responsibility for safeguarding, with suitable expertise and capacity to maintain the school's effective safeguarding arrangements and procedures if the proposed increase in pupil numbers is approved.
7. The school meets health and safety requirements. The proprietor and senior leaders oversee and monitor health and safety effectively. Staff have an effective understanding of health and safety matters and receive suitable training. Leaders have reviewed health and safety procedures with regard to the planned material change so that current and future additional pupils will continue to be and to feel safe in school.

8. The school's fire risk policy is implemented effectively. Recommended actions from the most recent fire risk assessment have been appropriately prioritised and carried out in a timely manner. Staff receive appropriate fire safety training and demonstrate suitable awareness of risks, prevention and procedures in a fire emergency. Appropriate equipment is provided and maintenance of alarms and other equipment is recorded carefully and effectively. Regular fire drills are held. Staff and pupils are confident regarding evacuation procedures in the event of a fire. Leaders have ensured that fire safety procedures are suitable for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
9. Suitable guidance and procedures are in place to ensure pupils are supervised effectively throughout the school day, including when off site and engaged in outdoor activities. Leaders have ensured that the proposed increase in pupil numbers is being matched by appropriate staffing levels, so that effective supervision can be maintained.
10. There is an appropriate risk assessment policy which provides for systematic risk assessment and pays attention to key areas of risk and pupils' welfare. These include pupils' activities on site and off site. Staff receive relevant training. Completed risk assessments are checked, monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness. Leaders have risk assessed the school's provision regarding the proposed increase in the number of pupils.
11. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

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

ISSR paragraphs 18 to 21

12. Leaders ensure that all pre-employment checks are carried out in line with statutory guidance and are recorded correctly on the single central record of appointments.
13. Leaders' effective safer recruitment procedures are applied consistently in the appointment of any additional staff related to the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
14. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

ISSR paragraphs 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29

15. The current premises provide sufficient and suitable accommodation to meet the needs of the proposed increase in pupil numbers across all age groups.
16. Toilet, washing and changing facilities are suitable in number and quality, particularly regarding pupils' hygiene, personal privacy and dignity requirements.
17. Suitable accommodation is provided for the medical examination and treatment of pupils. Such accommodation is available to pupils in a number of locations across the extensive school site.
18. The school premises are maintained to a suitable standard. Routine and emergency maintenance tasks are carried out efficiently. There are effective means whereby staff can report any concerns regarding the premises.
19. Acoustics, internal and external lighting, drinking water, water supply and outdoor space are each of a suitable standard.
20. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

21. The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. The arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.
22. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraph 34

23. The proprietor ensures that the leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the Standards are met consistently, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.
24. The proprietor, leaders and managers have prepared comprehensively regarding the proposed material change. Leaders have systematically reviewed the school's provision to identify potential risks associated with the requested increase in pupil numbers and have taken appropriate steps to mitigate these risks.
25. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

School details

School	Acorn Park School
Department for Education number	926/6152
Address	Acorn Park School Andrews Furlong Banham Norwich Norfolk NR16 2HU
Phone number	01953 888656
Email address	admin@acornpark.org.uk
Website	www.acornpark.org.uk
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Mr Richard Power
Head of service	Mr Peter Marshall
Age range	4 to 19
Number of pupils	175
Number of children in the early years	8
Date of previous inspection	3 to 4 December 2024

Information about the school

26. Acorn Park School is an independent co-educational special school for pupils with autism. It is situated in the village of Banham, near Norwich in Norfolk. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority. There is a governing body responsible for monitoring the performance of the school.
27. There are eight children in the early years within the pre-school setting.
28. All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
29. There are no pupils in the school for whom English is an additional language.
30. The school states that its aims are to care for and educate its children, empowering them to reach their full potential, to think big and dream bigger.

Purpose of the material change inspection

The inspector carried out this inspection following an application made by the school to the Department for Education to make a material change to the school's provision. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about whether the school is likely to meet the Independent School Standards and Early Years Foundation Stage requirements if the material change is implemented.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 October 2025

31. One reporting inspector visited the school for one day.

32. Inspection activities included:

- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school and information available on the school's website
- tour of the school site to observe the implementation of health and safety, fire safety, supervision and risk assessment procedures
- discussion with chair of governors/chair of proprietorial body
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant Standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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