

Life Skills Enterprise

Northdown House, Northdown Park, Margate, Kent CT9 3TP

Inspection date

31 July 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

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g) to 2A(2)

- The proposed school is aspirational for what it hopes prospective pupils will achieve. All pupils who are likely to attend will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They will have a primary need of autism. The school recognises that pupils who will attend the setting may have experienced prolonged disruption to their education. It places building trusting relationships and providing pupils with a nurturing environment at the heart of its work.
- The overarching aim of the school's curriculum is to prepare pupils for the next steps in learning and for adult life. It aims to provide pupils with curriculum content which is meaningful and enjoyable. The curriculum is designed to combine the teaching of a formal curriculum with a programme to support the development of life skills.
- The proprietor aims to base the school's curriculum on the curriculum already used successfully in another school established by the same proprietor. Subjects in the planned curriculum are likely to provide the breadth of learning required by the independent school standards (the standards). Subjects will include English, mathematics, science, design technology, art, music, history, geography and religious education. The proposed curriculum is suitably ambitious. Older pupils will have the opportunity to study nationally accredited qualification courses, such as functional skills, BTEC National Diplomas and GCSEs.
- Curriculum documents and schemes of work set out what will be taught in each subject. The subject content is consistent with content set out in the national curriculum, sequenced appropriately and designed to build on pupils' prior learning. A newly appointed teaching and learning team will support teachers in delivering the curriculum and in making sure that it is adapted appropriately to support pupils' needs.
- The school intends to give the teaching of reading an appropriately strong focus. The school's library is located at the heart of the school building, with an attractive reading area. The library is already well resourced with good-quality books which have been carefully selected to appeal to pupils' potential interests. Further texts will be added as the school grows.

- A suitable phonics programme has been identified to support pupils at an early stage of reading. The proprietor will train all staff to deliver the programme. Pupils will have regular opportunities to read to an adult.
- Physical education will be delivered off site at the proprietor's other school and at local leisure facilities. The school's 'secret jungle' will be used to supplement the curriculum by providing pupils with an attractive space to play, engage with nature and enjoy being in the fresh air.
- The school has identified an appropriate personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. It covers a suitable range of topics to support pupils' personal development. The PSHE curriculum has been planned to include age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education. The RSE policy complies with statutory guidance.
- The school intends to provide pupils with impartial careers advice and guidance which is likely to meet requirements. Pupils will have opportunities to explore a range of jobs and careers. Regular careers workshops will focus on developing key employability skills, independence and resilience.

Paragraphs 3 to 3(j), 4

- The proprietor intends to recruit suitably qualified staff. Those already appointed have relevant teaching experience and expertise in special needs education. The school has suitable arrangements train new staff and those less experienced in special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In the first instance, staff from Life Skills Manor, another school for pupils with special educational needs already established by the proprietor, will be deployed at Life Skills Enterprise. Subsequently, staff will be recruited directly to Life Skills Enterprise.
- The school knows pupils are likely to have significant gaps in their learning due to extended periods of time outside formal education. Leaders have devised a suitable framework for assessing pupils' learning. The school intends to assess pupils' starting points carefully when they join the school in consultation with parents and carers. Pupils' EHC plans will form the basis of targets for individual pupils. The school plans to use ongoing checks on pupils' learning and development and will adapt the curriculum accordingly.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to register.

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

Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The proposed school understands the importance of developing pupils' social skills and building their self-esteem, independence and resilience. It is intended that pupils will benefit from a school culture that promotes respect for others and for themselves.
- Pupils will have opportunities to perform leadership roles such as those of school councillors and prefects. The school intends to give the development of life skills a strong focus. Pupils will have opportunities to follow programmes designed to support personal development such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and gardening projects. They will have regular opportunities to participate in activities in the local

community such as visits to the library or the local shops. Plans to support a local charity are at an advanced stage of development.

- The school will promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through both the taught curriculum and by establishing an inclusive ethos. It will use its PSHE programme as a starting point for this work. This will be supplemented with activities which will be a routine part of school life. For instance, the school's 'secret jungle' will be used regularly for outdoor learning such as nature and gardening activities.
- The curriculum also includes opportunities to promote the importance of respect for diversity. Pupils will learn about equality and a range of different cultures and beliefs. Lessons, tutor times and other opportunities will be used to discuss topical issues and current affairs, promote fundamental British values and develop pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. Through active involvement in the local community, the school intends that pupils will participate regularly in events that deepen their understanding and social responsibility.
- The school's behaviour policy indicates appropriately high expectations of pupils to promote good behaviour. Its approach will focus on helping pupils to recognise and understand their feelings and on teaching them strategies to help them to manage their own behaviour in a range of situations. Pupils will also be supported to understand the impact of their actions on others. Staff will be trained to ensure a fair and consistent approach to behaviour management.
- All staff will be expected to be positive role models for pupils. This includes ensuring that pupils are not exposed to partisan political or religious opinions.
- The proposed school is likely to meet this part of the standards if granted permission to open.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 32(1)(c)

- At the previous pre-registration inspection, these standards were not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor has strengthened the school's procedures for safeguarding. The proposed school's written safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory guidance. It is available on request and will be published on the school's website when it is live. The policy indicates that leaders understand their safeguarding duties and have suitable plans in place to fulfil them.
- The proprietor has appointed a designated safeguarding lead who is suitably knowledgeable about what this role involves and has undertaken relevant training.
- The proprietor and leaders have a great deal of experience in running provision for pupils with similar needs to those likely to attend Life Skills Enterprise. They speak knowledgeably about safeguarding matters.
- The school has suitable plans for training staff, including a safeguarding element in induction arrangements for newly appointed staff and ongoing safeguarding briefings and updates. The school intends to use a centralised online system to record and monitor safeguarding concerns. Staff will be trained in its use. Consequently, these

standards are now likely to be met

Paragraphs 9 to 10

- The behaviour policy sets out the positive ethos and culture which the school wishes to establish. It includes information about rewards and sanctions which are reasonable and fair. A set of clear and straightforward rules will be used to guide pupils' behaviour. Staff will be suitably trained to understand pupils' additional needs.
- The school has a suitable anti-bullying policy in place. For example, it states the school's recognition that 'bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals'. It states the school's commitment to helping to create a 'safe, disciplined environment, where pupils are able to learn and fulfil their potential'.
- The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies are likely to achieve leaders' aim to secure positive behaviour if implemented consistently and effectively.
- The school intends to use positive handling as little as possible and only where a pupil's behaviour represents a risk for pupils or staff or serious damage to property. Staff will be trained in its use, with an emphasis on intervening at an early stage to avoid its use wherever possible. All incidents will be documented, and parents will be notified.
- These standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13 and 16

- At the school's previous pre-registration inspection, these standards were judged as not likely to be met. This inspection found that the school has taken swift action to address previous weaknesses.
- Appropriate health and safety and risk assessment policies are in place. The school has a good understanding of health and safety requirements, including the need for comprehensive risk assessments and ongoing monitoring and action needed to keep the school safe. This includes a range of premises and safety checks such as water checks and gas installation surveys and mitigating actions to manage the presence of asbestos in parts of the building.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. They have responded to the action points identified by an independent fire safety survey. For instance, fire doors have been refurbished or replaced where required, new fire extinguishers have been installed and fire evacuation procedures are in place.
- Arrangements for providing first aid are fit for purpose. A first-aid policy is in place. It is intended that key staff will be suitably trained to deliver first aid.
- These standards are now likely to be met.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

- The proprietor has considered supervision arrangements for pupils carefully. Staffing arrangements are likely to ensure that pupils are properly supervised in lessons and when moving around the school. As the school grows over time, there are suitable plans in place to expand the workforce to ensure the safe oversight of pupils.

- Arrangements for attendance and admission registers are likely to meet requirements.
- These standards are likely to be met.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the proposed school is permitted to open.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c) to 21(6)

- The proposed school knows what checks it is required to carry out on adults employed by or working at the school, including those about medical fitness and relating to safeguarding. Members of the governing body have also undergone the necessary checks.
- A single central record is in place and is likely to meet requirements. All checks completed so far are recorded appropriately. Systems are in place to ensure effective oversight of recruitment and suitability checks.
- The school does not intend to employ any agency or supply staff. However, it is aware of the checks that it needs to carry out should it need to do so.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the standards if granted permission to open.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- At the school's previous pre-registration inspection, these standards were judged as not likely to be met. The school's subsequent actions have addressed these previous weaknesses.
- The proposed school will occupy a large Victorian building which was originally used as a private residence, but more recently as an independent school. The building includes many rooms arranged over three floors. However, the proprietor intends to use the accommodation located on the ground and first floors in the first instance. Therefore, the suitability of the accommodation on the second floor was not included in the premises check as part of this pre-registration inspection.
- There are suitable arrangements in place for pupils to arrive and depart the school safely. The site also has appropriate outside lighting to make it safe for pupils and adults in the evenings.
- The premises have been refurbished to a high standard. All windows have now been refurbished to ensure safe use. These large windows admit plenty of natural light into the building.
- Classrooms and teaching spaces are bright, airy and well equipped. The number and size of rooms are suitable for the number of pupils that the proprietor intends to admit. The accommodation will facilitate dedicated space for groups of different sizes and for different activities.

- There are suitable toilet and washing facilities for staff and pupils. These include running water that is hot but does not present a scalding risk. Drinking water is clearly labelled as such and will be made readily available to pupils. There is also a suitably equipped medical room.
- Physical education will be provided off site at the proprietor's other school and the local leisure centre. Showers and changing facilities will be available for pupils at these premises. The school also has a newly installed shower for pupils' use.
- The building has a commercial kitchen on the ground floor which is not of a suitable standard for use. The proprietor does not plan that this kitchen will be used in the first instance. Once it has been refurbished, it intends to follow the appropriate route to gain permission to use this facility.
- The school accommodation includes an attractive and spacious hall which will be used as a dining hall and for other activities such as assemblies. Toughened glass has been installed in the hall's large floor-to-ceiling windows which look out over nearby parkland.
- The school's premises include an attractive and inviting 'secret jungle'. This garden includes a wide range of mature plants divided by a series of footpaths, borders and paved areas. The proprietor has strengthened the perimeter of this area with the addition of fencing on top of the original garden wall.
- The proprietor intends to install a perimeter fence. In the meantime, a suitable, temporary security fence has been erected.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met should the school be granted permission to open.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f) to 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(c) to 32(4)(c)

- The proposed school's website is still under construction. Leaders are knowledgeable about the requirements of the standards in relation to the publication of information on the website. During the inspection, the school demonstrated how the website will function and shared the key information it will contain. Required policies, such as behaviour, complaints and safeguarding, are easy to locate and are up to date. The school also intends to provide parents with a collection of policies when their children join the school.
- The school intends to activate its website once it has been approved by the Department for Education (DfE).
- The school sees high levels of communication between school staff and parents as a key aspect of the proposed provision. It intends to use termly reports to inform parents of pupils' progress and attainment. Several parents' evenings a year will be used to provide parents with an opportunity to discuss pupils' learning and development.
- The school values parents' views and look forward to working with them to support pupils' progress. It is experienced in managing and overseeing arrangements for annual reviews.

- The requirements for this part of the standards are likely to be met if the proposed school is permitted to open.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)

- The proposed school has a suitable written complaints policy which is informed by guidance provided by the DfE. The policy includes clear explanation of the routes to be followed in the case of a complaint, including where there is a complaint about the proprietor. The policy will be published on the school's website once it is active.
- The complaints policy sets out clear timescales for the management of a complaint. The school aims to resolve complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- The school will keep a written record of all complaints. The proprietor has ensured a suitable format for recording and monitoring complaints.
- This part of the standards is likely to be met if the school is permitted to open.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor, who will also be the headteacher, has extensive successful experience of providing education for pupils with SEND. They have a similar school already established. The proprietor is clearly committed to making sure that pupils can access high-quality provision. It is likely that this experience will ensure that pupils' welfare is positively promoted in the school.
- There is a governing body in place whose members also have an appropriate and broad range of experience and expertise. This places them well to be able to support and challenge the school as it develops. Their understanding of pupils' likely needs is convincing and drives their determined work. Governors have all completed relevant training, including in relation to their safeguarding duties.
- The proprietor and chair of governors are knowledgeable about the standards. They plan to use a range of formal and informal procedures to maintain oversight of the school's work and to ensure that the standards are met consistently over time.
- The proposed school is likely to meet this part of the standards if granted permission to open.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proposed school is aware of its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Furthermore, it is wholly committed to inclusion, equality and diversity. The school's accessibility plan meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

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	151899
DfE registration number	886/6191
Inspection number	10407264

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 category	Independent day school
Proprietor	Life Skills Enterprises Ltd
Chair	Paul Barrett
Headteacher	Paul Barrett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,000
Telephone number	01843 260315
Website	None
Email address	paul@lifeskillsenterprise.co.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	10 to 18	10 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	66	66

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	66
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	66
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	66
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	66

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	18
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	Not applicable

Information about this proposed school

- Life Skills Enterprise intends to cater for up to 66 pupils between the ages of 10 and 18. All pupils will have an EHC plan and their places will be funded by the local authority.
- The proposed school intends to specialise in providing education for pupils with a primary need of autism.
- The school will be housed in a three-storey period building which was formerly used as an independent school. The proprietor intends to use the accommodation located on the ground and first floors in the first instance. The school is located at Northdown House, Northdown Park, Margate, CT9 3TP.
- A governing body has been appointed and will provide a degree of external oversight for the school.
- The school does not intend to have a particular religious character.
- It is not intended that the school will use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to the proprietor's application to open an independent school. This was the school's second pre-registration inspection. The first pre-registration inspection took place on 25 February 2025.
- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Schools must comply with the standards to be registered.
- The inspectors discussed and reviewed all relevant proposals and plans for the new school with the proprietor and other members of staff. The lead inspector also met with the chair of governors and one other governor.
- The inspectors scrutinised a wide range of policies, documents and records presented by the proprietor as evidence of the school's likelihood to meet the standards. They toured the school's premises and checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Payne

His Majesty's Inspector

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