

# Hemlock Stone School

Campus, 3 Isaac Lane, Stapleford NG9 8GA

Unique reference number (URN): 152341

## **Pre-registration inspection report:**

11 February 2026

### **Overall outcome**

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered

The purpose of this inspection was to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the proposed school's likely compliance with the independent school standards and associated requirements that are required for registration as an independent school.

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

When we carry out pre-registration inspections of proposed independent schools, we report on the provider'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 proprietor has extensive experience of successfully leading and managing independent special schools and has established systems to quality assure their work across all areas of the independent school standards (the standards).

Systems and structures for overseeing the quality of provision are already in place. The proprietor body is clear about its statutory duty to ensure that the school maintains effective safeguarding arrangements, promotes the wellbeing of pupils and staff, and complies with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor group will use the expertise in the organisation to hold the proposed school to account, including for the quality of the curriculum and teaching, health and safety, safeguarding and behaviour.

The proprietor has ensured that there is a clear and consistent focus on staff and school leaders fully understanding its expectations for routines and systems, as well as the processes through which these will be reported back to the organisation.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to register the provider as an independent school.

## **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

### **Curriculum**

The school has established a well-conceived and coherent curriculum that reflects its ambition for all pupils. The curriculum policy sets out a broad, balanced and ambitious offer that is tailored to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils will follow a carefully planned curriculum pathway. This may be an informal, semi-formal or formal route. It will align closely with pupils' developmental stages and support progression towards increasing independence. It will ensure the requirements and expectations for pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan needs are met. A variety of clinical professionals will support teachers in understanding pupils' needs and in reducing barriers to learning.

Clear curriculum plans demonstrate well-sequenced knowledge across subjects. The curriculum is underpinned by a strong focus on early literacy, numeracy and communication. The proposed school has an appropriate approach to teaching reading, including phonics.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and relationships and sex education programmes are appropriately planned. They will provide age- and stage-appropriate content that supports pupils' development and understanding of diversity in modern Britain. Parents and carers will be informed of the content of these curriculums.

The proposed school's careers advice and guidance offer will begin from key stage 2. Pupils will learn about different professions and the world of work. Older pupils will develop their understanding through structured lessons and practical experiences. The proprietor and leaders are committed to preparing pupils for the next stage of education or training.

### **Teaching**

Teaching at the proposed school will reflect the proprietor's clear vision for high-quality, inclusive and adaptive practice, ensuring that all pupils can access

learning successfully. Staff will model the values of modern society, including respecting and tolerating different viewpoints.

Teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy will be strengthened through a structured programme of professional development and ongoing quality assurance. Staff will receive professional learning to help them understand effective teaching strategies. This will help them to understand the components of knowledge pupils need to recall. It will enable them to plan learning that is adaptive and responsive to pupils' needs and starting points.

Expectations for classroom practice, such as maintaining calming environments, establishing clear routines and using communication and sensory supports, will ensure that pupils can access learning successfully.

Leaders plan to ensure that the curriculum is implemented as intended by undertaking a series of ongoing quality-assurance activities. This will enable them to understand the progress pupils are making through the curriculum.

### **Assessment**

The proposed school has developed an assessment approach that is coherent and purposeful. It is aligned with pupils' EHC plan processes and outcomes. Staff will identify pupils' starting points through a range of checks on entry, including assessments of core learning, communication, personal development and readiness for learning. This will give staff a holistic understanding of each pupil's strengths and needs from the point of admission.

Regular checks will help teachers ensure that pupils' personalised curriculum pathways remain appropriate and that learning is ambitious and well sequenced. Pupils will receive regular feedback based on ongoing teacher assessments. The checks will enable teachers to understand what pupils know, remember and can do and how well they are progressing through the curriculum.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

The proposed school plans to deliver a rich and well-structured programme for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development that prepares them for life in modern Britain and supports their growth at every stage. Leaders have identified and mapped opportunities to promote SMSC systematically across the curriculum, as well as through assemblies and a wide range of wider activities.

Pupils will learn about law, morality, responsibility and different belief systems through real-world experiences, including visits to justice settings, places of worship and local community organisations. Enrichment opportunities such as participating in sports leagues, specialist music tuition, theatre and gallery visits will enable pupils to broaden their cultural experiences, develop their interests and strengthen their confidence in new situations.

The proprietor has ensured that the proposed school's curriculum helps pupils to consider a balanced range of views and how these fit into British values.

The curriculum will promote character development, resilience and self-confidence, with pupils contributing to the wider community through events, fundraising and engagement with local institutions and organisations.

Pupil voice will be central, with opportunities to vote, participate in a school council and influence aspects of school life. They will learn about how to stay healthy physically and mentally.

The proposed school will organise a programme of trips and visits to enhance pupils' cultural awareness and provide practical opportunities for developing life skills. This will include travel training and structured experiences that help pupils learn and practise essential social skills. Staff will draw on advice from the clinical team to understand each pupil's specific social, cultural and moral needs so that appropriate support can be planned.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

#### **Safeguarding**

The proprietor has established stringent safeguarding arrangements, supported by a comprehensive safeguarding policy that reflects the group's expectations. The proposed school will have a knowledgeable team of safeguarding leads, all of whom have completed appropriate and up-to-date training. There will be strong oversight from the proprietor, including the safeguarding and quality-assurance leads in the wider organisation.

All safeguarding concerns will be recorded on a secure online system. Staff will be trained to complete factual and appropriate records when raising concerns and will receive a rigorous programme of safeguarding training. This will include annual updates linked to Keeping Children Safe in Education, alongside regular briefings and professional-development sessions throughout the year.

Safeguarding leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of the contextual risks pupils may face. These risks have been addressed through planned learning in the PSHE curriculum. Should concerns arise, they will be addressed through responsive conversations and targeted interventions.

Pupils will learn how to keep themselves safe in the community and online. They will learn about different types of relationships, particularly what makes them healthy or otherwise.

### **Behaviour and supervision of pupils**

The proprietor has put in place an appropriate behaviour policy. It sets out the school's therapeutic and proactive approach to supporting pupils' regulation and engagement. Staff will promote positive behaviour through developing secure relationships with pupils and implementing consistent routines. The clinical team will advise staff so that strategies can be tailored to individual pupils, alongside their personalised plans.

Staff will also receive training in accredited safe-handling approaches. However, the school's ethos places a strong emphasis on de-escalation so that situations are resolved calmly and the need for physical intervention is avoided wherever possible.

The proprietor will make systematic checks on the school's behaviour records. This will help the group to identify patterns and trends in pupils' conduct and to evaluate how effectively the school is responding to emerging needs.

### **Anti-bullying**

The anti-bullying policy clearly outlines how concerns will be identified, recorded and addressed, including incidents of online bullying. Staff will receive regular training so they understand expectations and know how to report concerns. Through the curriculum, pupils will learn about respectful relationships, equality and protected characteristics. Leaders will review behaviour and bullying information routinely and report this to those responsible for governance to ensure appropriate oversight.

### **Health and safety, fire and first aid**

The proprietor has put in place appropriate arrangements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Clear responsibilities have been allocated for managing health and safety, with routine checks, monitoring systems and oversight from senior leaders and the proprietor body. Fire safety procedures, including risk assessments, evacuation routes, staff training and maintenance schedules, are established and reviewed regularly. First-aid provision is suitable.

Staff will have the necessary first-aid training. First-aid provision and equipment are suitable, and there are clear procedures for administering medicines and recording accidents.

### **Admissions and attendance**

Admissions and attendance procedures meet the requirements of the standards. Clear systems are in place to support pupils' safe arrival, registration and the follow-up of any absence. The proprietor has ensured that suitable staff-to-pupil ratios will be maintained across the range of activities the school intends to provide.

### **Risk assessment**

Risk assessments for the site, pupils and educational visits follow a consistent format and will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective. An accessibility plan will be in place in line with the Equality Act 2010, with leaders committed to identifying and reducing barriers so that all pupils can access the full curriculum.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

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

Leaders understand the principles of safer recruitment and apply these consistently in their practice.

The proposed school has established robust systems to check the suitability of adults, with all required pre-employment checks completed in line with statutory expectations.

The proprietor's policy sets out clear procedures to check the suitability of staff and safer recruitment. All staff involved in recruitment have completed safer-recruitment training, supported by oversight from the wider organisation.

### **The single central record of these recruitment checks**

An online single central record is already in place and contains the necessary information to demonstrate that all required checks have been completed for current staff.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

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

Suitable toilet and handwashing facilities are provided. Each facility secures from the inside and is designed for single-pupil use, ensuring privacy and safety. There are suitable washing facilities with hot and cold water available. The hot water does not pose a scalding risk.

Labelled drinking water is readily available. The school provides water fountains so that pupils can refill their bottles throughout the school day.

Suitable changing accommodation is provided on site. The school also intends to use local leisure facilities for secondary-age pupils in order to broaden its sports offer, making use of the changing and washing facilities available at these venues. Appropriate risk assessments will be adapted to ensure that these arrangements are safe and meet the personal needs of pupils.

### **Medical room and accommodation for pupils' therapy needs**

The premises include a suitably equipped medical room for the treatment of sick or injured pupils. There is a toilet nearby.

### **Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils**

The proposed school has systems in place to monitor and maintain the premises to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff. The proprietor has ensured that the school building complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Learning spaces are suitable and provide adequate room for the number of pupils the school intends to admit. Leaders have considered carefully how the environment and resources can create a sensory-friendly setting that meets pupils' needs. They have also developed areas where pupils can rehearse real-life social situations and learn practical skills, including cooking or social situations in the immersion room. Sensory gardens and spaces for growing plants and herbs will further enhance the environment. This well-considered approach aims to promote pupils' wellbeing.

## **Lighting and acoustic conditions**

The proprietor has ensured that the building materials used throughout the school support the acoustic needs of the pupils the school is likely to admit. Lighting can be adjusted to increase or reduce brightness as required. Indoor and outdoor areas are well lit, and emergency lighting is installed in appropriate locations. All lighting is subject to regular checks and maintenance to ensure it remains fully operational.

## **Outdoor space**

There is a well-considered outdoor area for pupils to use for recreation, physical education and outdoor learning. Parts of this space will be designated as quiet areas, while other sections will be planted to create green spaces. Pupils in the primary phase will also have access to a separate outdoor space.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

## **Part 6. Provision of information**

The proposed school provides the required information for parents and carers, with key policies and contact details available as paper copies and on its website.

The school has clear aims and an ethos centred on valuing every pupil and supporting them to achieve well.

Leaders have appropriate systems in place for reporting to parents on pupils' progress and for supplying local authorities with the information needed to support annual reviews for pupils with EHC plans. Leaders understand their responsibilities to publish statutory information, including inspection reports, performance information and contact details for the school and the proprietor.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

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

The proposed school has a formal complaints procedure to guide parents should they wish to raise a concern. The policy sets out a clear, staged process, beginning with opportunities to resolve matters informally wherever possible. Should a complaint progress through the stages, the proprietor will ensure that the school is compliant with statutory requirements.

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part if the DfE decides to register the provider as an independent school.

## The school's accessibility plan

There is an accessibility plan in place in accordance with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor has been proactive in implementing the plan, particularly in relation to the environment, where many features of the building support access for pupils with a range of protected characteristics.

### About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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, the deputy headteacher and representatives from the proprietor board during the inspection. The inspector toured the proposed school premises to check its suitability.

The proprietor expects that all pupils that attend this school will have an EHC plan. Most are likely to be placed by a local authority. The school intends to cater predominantly for pupils with autism. In addition, pupils may also have the following SEND needs: cognition and learning needs; social, emotional and mental health needs; speech, language and communication difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. The school is also accessible for pupils with physical disabilities.

The school is located in Campus, 3 Isaacs Lane, Stapleford NG9 8GA. It comprises 3 separate buildings. Currently, the school only intends to use one of the premises. At the point of this inspection, the other buildings have not been restored for usage.

The proposed school does not intend to use any alternative provision.

### Lead inspector

Shaheen Hussain

His Majesty's Inspector

<b>About this proposed school</b>	
Chair of the proprietor body	Richard Power
Headteacher	Rachel Tunney
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
Capacity	66
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	<b>Provider's proposal: 66</b>
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	<b>Provider's proposal: 0</b>
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll	<b>Provider's proposal: 66</b>
Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	<b>Provider's proposal: 66</b>
Age range of pupils	<b>Provider's proposal: 5 to 16</b>
Gender of pupils	<b>Provider's proposal: Mixed</b>
Total hours operating as a school per week	<b>Provider's proposal: 45</b>
Total hours of teaching provided per week	<b>Provider's proposal: 30</b>
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	<b>Provider's current position: 4</b> <b>Provider's proposal: 47</b>
Number of part-time teaching staff	<b>Provider's current position: 0</b> <b>Provider's proposal: 0</b>
Number of staff in the residential provision	<b>Provider's proposal: 0</b>
Annual fees for day pupils	£64,000 to £94,000
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