

# Utopia

The Vikes, 40 Thorsway, Rock Ferry, Merseyside CH42 1NW

**Inspection date**

8 June 2023

**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

*Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(c), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)*

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable, written curriculum policy in place to meet the needs of pupils. The intended curriculum is sufficiently broad. The policy sets out how leaders intend to address pupils' additional needs, including any social and emotional needs. The associated schemes of work clearly set out what pupils will learn in a broad range of subjects. At key stage 4, pupils can study a range of GCSEs, including in English and mathematics, and vocational subjects.
- The proprietor body places a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' personal, social, health and economic education. Leaders have also ensured that there is suitable provision for the development of pupils' understanding of British values.
- The proprietor body has a suitable careers programme in place to ensure that pupils will have access to appropriate careers advice. The proprietor body has arranged for a specialist careers adviser to provide impartial, up-to-date careers guidance. Pupils in key stage 4 will have the opportunity to access work placements with local employers.

*Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(c), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g), 2A(2), 2A(3)*

- The proprietor body has a suitable policy in place for relationships and sex education (RSE). The policy pays due regard to the statutory guidance. The proprietor body intends to consult on the contents of this policy with parents and carers. The planned RSE curriculum is supported by appropriate schemes of work.

*Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)*

- The staff team has appropriate teaching experience and expertise.
- The proprietor body has provided appropriate educational resources, including stationery, whiteboards and computers, to support pupils' learning. The rooms around the school have suitable furniture for the ages of the pupils and the intended purpose.

#### *Paragraph 4*

- The proprietor body has written an appropriate assessment policy. It intends that a range of suitable assessments will be administered on entry to determine pupils' academic knowledge and their personal skills. Leaders' proposed assessment systems should provide staff with the information that they need to adapt their teaching approaches to meet pupils' needs.
- All the independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)*

- The proprietor body has developed an appropriate policy for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including for preparing them for life in modern Britain. The proprietor body intends that pupils will have opportunities to develop respect for and tolerance of others, regardless of any differences. The proposed policies and schemes of work include references to all the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- The proprietor body intends that pupils will participate in discussions to raise pupils' awareness of how to look after their physical and mental health and to keep themselves safe.
- The proprietor body has adopted a scheme of work for religious education that should ensure that pupils will learn about a wide range of cultures and beliefs. The proprietor body intends that pupils' learning will be supported by trips and visits, such as to places of worship.
- The proprietor body is aware of its duty to ensure that there is a non-partisan approach to the teaching of political views at the school.
- The proprietor body proposes that internet access will be filtered by the school's internet provider, and this will be monitored by the headteacher.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- The proprietor body has ensured that the school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy that takes account of the most recent statutory guidance. The proprietor body has set out the necessary arrangements to keep pupils safe and to promote their welfare at the school. Staff have received appropriate training to cover all key aspects of safeguarding.

*Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10*

- The proprietor body has ensured that the policy on behaviour and the anti-bullying strategy pay appropriate attention to the needs of pupils who are likely to be admitted

to the school. It is intended that any incidents of poor behaviour and any sanctions imposed on pupils will be recorded appropriately.

*Paragraph 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- The proprietor body has ensured that suitable policies have been prepared for all the required aspects of health and safety, including fire safety. The proprietor body has arranged for gas and electrical safety checks to be carried out by a competent person. The fire exits are clearly marked. Leaders have ensured that fire extinguishers are regularly serviced to ensure that they are in good condition.
- The proprietor body has ensured that suitable first-aid resources are easily accessible. There are sufficient trained first-aiders in the school who have completed appropriate training.
- The proprietor body has also ensured that detailed, written risk assessments have been drawn up, and appropriate actions have been taken to reduce identified risks.

*Paragraph 14*

- The proprietor body intends to have a high staff-to-pupil ratio. This means that close supervision of pupils will be possible at breaktimes, when pupils arrive at school and when pupils leave the school premises.

*Paragraph 15*

- The proprietor body has appropriate registers for recording admissions and attendance. Leaders intend that any pupil absences will be followed up.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)*

- There is a single central record in place. This includes a record of all the required checks on staff and members of the proprietor body.
- The proprietor body has ensured that there are appropriate systems in place to check that all staff are suitable to work with pupils. These checks include identity checks, checks on staff's right to work in the United Kingdom and enhanced criminal record checks.
- All of the required prohibition checks for members of the proprietor body and leaders have been completed. These include checks under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

- The proprietor body does not intend to use supply staff. However, in the event that additional staff are required, leaders understand the necessary checks that need to be completed before these supply staff begin to work at the school.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)*

- The proposed school is housed over two floors. The building has been refurbished to a high standard. The accommodation comprises at least seven teaching or break-out rooms, adequate toilets, a kitchen, medical room, large sports hall and reception area.
- There are appropriate toilet facilities. These are housed in cubicles that are lockable from the inside. All toilets have an adequate supply of running water. The hot water in the hand basins does not pose a scald risk to pupils.
- The proprietor body has ensured that drinking water is clearly labelled and is available for the proposed pupils throughout the day.
- The proprietor body has provided changing facilities for pupils.

*Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)*

- The medical room is suitably furnished. This room has a bed with a blanket, along with a sink with hot and cold running water. The room has suitable facilities for the safe storage of first-aid and medical items. The room is in close proximity to a toilet facility.

*Paragraph 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)*

- The proposed premises are safe, secure and well maintained. The acoustics and sound insulation, as well as the lighting, are suitable throughout the building. The exterior of the building is well lit so that pupils, staff and visitors can safely arrive and leave the premises in the hours of darkness.

*Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)*

- The proprietor body has ensured that pupils will have access to suitable indoor and outdoor spaces for physical education and play. There is fencing around the grounds to make the site secure. The school also intends to use a local sports centre for physical education. Pupils will have sole use of some of this centre's changing and shower facilities. Leaders have produced suitable risk assessments for these proposed activities.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(1)(j), 32(1)(k), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(c), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f), 32(3)(g)*

- The proprietor body has set up a school website that contains all the required

information, including the safeguarding policy.

- The proprietor body has designed an appropriate format for reporting pupils' progress and achievement to parents. These reports will include information about pupils' academic, personal and social development throughout the academic year.
- The proprietor body has systems in place to track the income and expenditure of funds received from the local authority.
- The proprietor body has ensured that a range of information is available to parents and others on request. This includes the safeguarding policy, complaints policy and admission arrangements for the proposed school.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)*

- The proprietor body has a suitable, written policy in place for the handling of complaints. This policy is available to parents via the school's website. The proprietor body can make hard copies available if this is requested.
- The complaints policy clearly explains the three-stage process that should be followed in the case of a complaint. This includes the appointment of an independent panel member at stage three of the complaints procedure and the right of the complainant to attend this panel hearing. The proprietor body's intended timescales for responding to a complaint, as set out in the policy, are appropriate.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

*Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)*

- The members of the proprietor body and headteacher have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the standards. They are clear about how they will continue to monitor the provision so that the standards are met consistently.
- The members of the proprietor body and headteacher have developed a comprehensive suite of policies that provide for the welfare and health and safety of pupils. They have made arrangements to ensure that pupils will be well cared for and safe while at the school.
- All the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor body's accessibility plan fully reflects the statutory requirements.

## **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	149600
DfE registration number	344/6018
Inspection number	10278560

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 school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Utopia Training Ltd
Chair	Chris Black
Headteacher	Chris Black
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,000
Telephone number	0151 644 1535
Website	<a href="http://www.utopiaproject.co.uk">www.utopiaproject.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@utopiaproject.org.uk">office@utopiaproject.org.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

## Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	26
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	4
Total hours operating as a school per week	15
Total hours of teaching provided per week	15

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	13 to 16	13 to 16	13 to 16

Number of pupils on the school roll	26	20	20
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## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	20
Number of part-time pupils	26	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	17	20
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	4	20
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	4	20

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	4	5
Number of part-time teaching staff	1	1
Number of staff in the welfare provision	4	6

## Information about this proposed school

- This proposed independent special school is located in Rock Ferry. It is housed in a repurposed and refurbished two-storey building. The proposed school is located at 40 Thorsway, Rock Ferry, Merseyside CH42 1NW.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 20 mixed-gender pupils aged between 13 and 16 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater for pupils who are disengaged from mainstream education.



- The school will cater for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and with sensory needs. It is expected that all pupils will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The proprietor body does not intend to use alternative providers.
- At the time of the inspection, Utopia was operating as an unregistered, alternative provision. All pupils attend part time and four pupils have an EHC plan.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to determine whether the school would be likely to meet the standards if the DfE approved the proprietor's registration application.
- This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector held discussions with the chair of the proprietor body, who is also the headteacher, another director and three representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector made a tour of the school to check the suitability of the proposed premises against the relevant standards. The inspector visited some lessons. He spoke to some staff and a small number of pupils. He also looked at a wide range of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour, health and safety, and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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