

Hummingbird Learning Lab

The Old School, Plox, Bruton BA10 0EB

Unique reference number (URN): 152501

Pre-registration inspection report:

22 July 2026

Overall outcome

The school is unlikely to meet all the independent school standards if it is registered.
It is currently operating without registration

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 (the 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 proposes to open an independent school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It has designed a specialist curriculum that is rooted in neuroscience and learning through projects.

The proposed school is on the site of King's Bruton independent school in the town of Bruton. It is on a main road. The school is in a 2-storey listed building. A public footway runs directly from the road down the side of the proposed school and past the main entrance door to a bridge. This leads onto the High Street.

The proprietor is currently operating an alternative provision (AP) in the proposed school building. There are 16 pupils attending, including those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. All pupils attend for 18 hours or less per week across

no more than 3 days. The proprietor intends to provide places for these pupils should the school be registered.

The headteacher of the proposed school is the headteacher of the AP. Staff currently employed at the AP are likely to become staff at the proposed school. The proprietor proposes a specialist curriculum that has an emphasis on wellbeing and neuroscience. The proprietor has appointed new staff to deliver the additional subjects required should the school be registered, for example GCSE English.

The proprietor has one director with significant control. The proprietor has appointed an advisory board. It intends to meet at least 4 times a year. The proprietor has constructed a detailed cycle of evaluation intended to hold school leaders to account for implementing the curriculum. An external consultant will check that relevant health and safety requirements are met.

The proprietor has appointed staff who understand the requirements of parts 1 and 2 of the standards. The proprietor has ensured that schemes of work are in place to provide a suitable full-time education for pupils aged 11 to 16. However, it has not ensured that the standards in relation to risk assessments and the statutory requirements for restrictive physical intervention are likely to be met.

The standards in this part are not likely to be met if the Department for Education (DfE) registers the provider as an independent school.

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Curriculum, teaching and assessment

The proposed school has a curriculum policy. This is displayed on its website. This policy was amended during the inspection to remove references to the early years and primary age range.

The process of 'explore, plan, do, discover and share' is central to the proposed school's curriculum. It is intended to develop pupils as leaders of their own learning.

The curriculum has 2 distinct pathways. The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 focuses on inquiry and project-based learning. Leaders have schemes of work that incorporate all areas of learning required by the standards. In addition, detailed schemes of work are in place for pupils to receive separate English, mathematics, science, physical education (PE), personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education and the arts. Leaders have draft timetables that confirm how these schemes of work will be implemented.

Leaders propose a process to identify pupils' gaps in learning in mathematics and English. This will allow for teaching that meets the age and aptitude of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is at an early stage of researching a suitable programme to teach phonics knowledge should any pupil have gaps in this aspect of their learning.

The 14 to 16 curriculum will culminate in pupils taking a Level 2 Integrative Education Diploma. Schemes of work cover all aspects required by the standards. Pupils will be assessed through a portfolio of work. Pupils will also study for GCSEs in mathematics and English and receive regular teaching of PE, PSHE and RSHE.

A detailed assessment strategy has been drawn up for both curriculum pathways. Assessment rubrics identify pupils' progression through the curriculum. This aims to ensure that staff teach pupils from their varied starting points, assess learning over time and diagnose pupils' misconceptions. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their personal accountability for learning will also be assessed.

The school's PSHE and RSHE curriculums are comprehensive. Schemes of work are age appropriate. The school plans to interweave fundamental British values within PSHE and project work. For example, pupils will learn about marriage, equality and diversity and the law in modern Britain.

A scheme of work exists for what the proprietor calls 'Neuro labs'. This focuses on how the brain works, including emotional regulation and strategies to help pupils learn how to learn well.

Appropriate plans are in place to provide impartial careers education. Leaders have identified future refinements to include work experience opportunities. The curriculum incorporates learning opportunities with professionals from workplaces outside the school as part of their project work.

The proprietor is committed to provide pupils with consistently high-quality PE. PE will take place at the sports facilities of King's Bruton independent school. Some outdoor activities will take place at a local outdoor education centre.

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

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

The proposed school has suitable plans to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. This is intended to provide education that

develops pupils' character and enable pupils to gain an understanding of themselves. For example, the school's 'Neuro lab' approach is intended to provide pupils with a range of knowledge about their own interactions and self-awareness.

The proprietor has considered how it will support pupils to take responsibility for their actions and promote tolerance and respect with consideration of the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The proposed school is likely to meet the standard in this part if the DfE registers the provider as an independent school.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The proprietor demonstrates sound knowledge of how to create a positive culture of safeguarding. As the proposed school is already operating as an AP, an inspector reviewed current safeguarding arrangements. Designated safeguarding leaders hold the required safeguarding training. Staff who work at the AP receive relevant safeguarding training. This ensures that they have the appropriate knowledge needed to fulfil their responsibilities. Safeguarding records are sufficient. Staff take appropriate action when pupils may be at risk of harm. They work with external agencies, as necessary. This demonstrates that the proprietor has the capacity to build a positive safeguarding culture at the proposed school.

The proprietor intends that all staff who are appointed will complete a robust induction process including safeguarding training. Leaders are knowledgeable about contextual safeguarding risks and in spotting low level concerns about staff.

The proposed school is likely to meet these standards in this part if the DfE registers the provider as an independent school.

Behaviour, anti-bullying and supervision of pupils

The proposed school's behaviour policy is suitable. It sets out the sanctions to be applied for serious misbehaviour. There is a detailed anti-bullying strategy in place. As the proposed school is already operating as an AP, an inspector was able to discuss the implementation of the behaviour policy and review behaviour records.

The proprietor aims to use the same systems at the proposed school should it be registered. This provides evidence that the proprietor has secure knowledge of leading a behaviour strategy and ensuring that staff follow it.

The proprietor has appropriate plans in place to supervise pupils and to meet the requirements set out in pupils' EHC plans.

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

Health and safety, fire and first aid

The proprietor is likely to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. An external fire risk assessment has been completed by a competent person. Fire safety equipment is installed around the building and is checked regularly. There are trained fire marshals. Fire doors, emergency lighting and the fire alarm are checked routinely. At the time of the inspection, one part of the building was not connected to the emergency lighting. Works to reconnect the emergency lighting had been arranged prior to the inspection but had not been completed.

There is a first-aid policy. It provides appropriate guidance for staff to administer first aid. The proprietor has ensured that multiple members of current staff hold up-to-date first-aid training. First-aid boxes are well stocked. There is a detailed policy in place to administer medicines and lockable storage for medicines.

The proposed school is likely to meet these standards in this part if the DfE registers the provider as an independent school.

Admissions and attendance

The school has a detailed admissions policy and admissions process. It includes a school visit so that parents and carers and prospective pupils fully understand the specialist curriculum on offer.

It is intended that all pupils will attend full time. The proprietor does not intend to admit part-time pupils should the proposed school be registered.

The proprietor has ensured that an admissions register is in place. The proprietor is knowledgeable about the requirements set out in the current legislation 'Working together to improve pupils' attendance' 2024.

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

Risk assessment and restrictive physical intervention

The school has a suitable risk assessment policy. However, the proprietor has not ensured that the policy is implemented effectively.

Risk assessments relating to the area around the school do not provide sufficient detail. Some control measures set out in the school's risk assessments are not in place. There is no prominent signage at the entrance to the car park, for example. At the time of the inspection, the car park was open to the main road with nothing to demarcate the boundary of the car park and the main road. Risks associated with an open area over the bridge behind the school have not been adequately considered.

Risk assessments of the school building do not identify risks adequately in each area. For example, the risks posed by 3 windows in teaching spaces and an exit door that opens directly onto the main road were not adequately assessed. Some risk assessments are too generic or incomplete. For example, 2 risk assessments relating to specific subject areas have empty columns that should contain explanations of how identified risks are to be mitigated.

During the inspection, the proprietor and senior staff were unaware of the statutory requirements for restrictive interventions and reasonable force that came into place in April 2026. The school has a positive handling policy. However, it does not meet the current statutory requirements. There was no record-keeping system as is required for restraint and seclusion.

The proposed school is not likely to meet the standards in this part.

Overall, the proposed school is unlikely to meet the standards in this part if the DfE registers 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 and the single central record (SCR) of these recruitment checks and staff suitability

The proprietor has carried out all the required checks for staff. They are recorded accurately in a single central record. Safer recruitment practices are followed. Relevant checks are made to ensure that adults who work or volunteer at the school are suitable. For example, appropriate checks are completed for those in leadership and governance roles.

The SCR is compliant with current legislative requirements. Staff who have oversight of the SCR are knowledgeable.

The proprietor has appointed staff with proven knowledge and understanding, many with qualified teacher status. The proprietor intends for all staff to complete

a comprehensive induction programme. This will include gaining background knowledge about the specialist curriculum and training in neuroscience.

The proposed school is likely to meet these standards in this part if the DfE registers the provider as an independent school.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Toilet and washing facilities, water supply, changing accommodation and showers, medical room and outside space

There are no changing rooms or showers within the proposed school. However, pupils will be able to use the sports and changing facilities of King's Bruton independent school. This is included in the proprietor's lease agreement.

There are suitable separate toilets and washing facilities for boys and girls. There is an appropriate staff toilet. Suitable drinking water is available. Regular health and safety checks are in place, for example to ensure that water does not present a scalding risk and external lighting is working.

There is a multipurpose room that is designed to accommodate pupils who are sick. When operating as a medical room, there are suitable signs to indicate this. The room includes a bed and there is a toilet close by. There is a temporary washing facility that provides a sink and water. Although this is a temporary measure, a permanent washing facility will be fitted soon to ensure a long-term solution.

The proposed school has no outdoor space apart from the car park. The proprietor intends to use a local public park for outdoor recreation. This park provides extensive space for recreation, along with a basketball court and skate park. While this is a public space, boundaries and fencing are clearly demarcated. The proposed school also has use of sports pitches and fields at King's Bruton school.

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

Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils including lighting and acoustic conditions

There is a detailed health and safety policy in place.

The proprietor has refurbished the building to a high standard. The 2 main classrooms, on the first floor of the proposed school, are known as 'the lab' and 'the studio'. They are well decorated and both include a sink with running water attached to mains supply. There is enough space for 18 pupils in each room. There

is ample furniture in the lab. Furniture for the studio is on order but had not arrived by the time of the inspection.

The windows in the lab and the studio are part of the listing of the building. These large windows have stone mullion surrounds. The windows provide suitable ventilation. Some windows have a metal bar in front of them to limit their opening for safety. However, 3 of the windows do not have this safety feature. These windows open widely and could be a risk to pupils' safety. During the inspection, the proprietor confirmed that similar window bars would be fitted to these windows. However, this was not identified as a risk on the school's site risk assessment and the work was not complete at the time of the inspection.

The proposed school is typically well lit and has suitable acoustic conditions. In one space, known as the 'lamb chop' corridor, electricity and emergency lighting was not working during the inspection. The proprietor has arranged for this to be fixed urgently.

The cove is a flexible working space for staff. It is well furnished and suitable for its purpose. One space, called the 'old shop', is still subject to decoration but does not form part of the proposed school.

Downstairs, there is a small office space. One wall is not in a good state of repair. The landlord has inspected this area and found a leak in the coping stones outside, which has caused water damage. The proprietor confirms that the landlord will repair the coping stones prior to the school opening should it be registered.

There is no kitchen area. All pupils will bring packed lunches.

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

Part 6. Provision of information including the website

The proposed school has a website. It includes all the information it should. For example, it already includes policies describing the proposed school's approach to managing behaviour, reducing bullying, admission arrangements and its safeguarding and child protection policy. The proprietor knows to include the number of previous complaints on the website.

The proprietor intends to work closely with appropriate external agencies to review pupils' EHC plans as needed. The proprietor intends to hold the proposed school to account for providing parents with information about their children's progress.

The proprietor made some changes to the website during this inspection to remove reference to the admission of pupils below the proposed school's age range.

The proprietor's long-term aim is to provide education in an all-through school with the age range of 5 to 18. The proprietor knows that it must apply to register any changes to the age range before admitting pupils below or above the proposed age range.

The proposed school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

Restrictive intervention and reasonable force

The proprietor and leaders of the proposed school were unaware of the statutory requirements for restrictive intervention and reasonable force that came into place in April 2026. They do not have a system to record each incident in which a member of the school staff secludes, restrains or immobilises a pupil. This includes the requirement to communicate incidents to parents.

The proposed school is unlikely to meet the standard in this part.

Overall, the proposed school is unlikely to meet the standards in this part if the DfE registers the provider as an independent school.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school has a suitable complaints policy in place. The policy sets out clear time scales for the management of a complaint. It allows for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis. It identifies procedures for establishing a formal complaint clearly. If a panel hearing is required, one panel member would be independent of the school.

The proposed school is likely to meet the standard in this part if the DfE registers the provider as an independent school.

The school's accessibility plan

There is an accessibility plan in place. The school is likely to fulfil its responsibilities under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 if it opens.

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.

About this inspection

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Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the chair of the proprietor body, the headteacher and various staff at the AP who will be employed at the proposed school. Inspectors also reviewed relevant documents, toured the school site, visited the local recreation area and visited an area over a stone bridge at the back of the school.

At the time of the inspection, 16 pupils attended the AP from the age of 10 to 14. The AP opened in September 2025. Inspectors did not see the teaching or the supervision of pupils at social times during the inspection because the inspection was conducted outside of term time.

The proposed school building is owned by King's Bruton independent school and is located at Plox, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0ED. There is an adjoining cottage to the school. This is used for a member of staff to reside in. Pupils have no access to this cottage.

Teaching will take place on the proposed school site. It is also intended that PE will happen using facilities at King's Bruton independent school and the Mill On The Brue Outdoor Activity Centre at Trendle Farm, Tower Hill, Bruton.

The proposed school intends to cater for pupils aged 11 to 16 through 2 curriculum pathways. The 11 to 14 curriculum is a project-based curriculum. The specialist 14 to 16 curriculum is through a Level 2 Integrative Education Diploma.

At the time of this pre-registration inspection, the school's website indicated that it is recruiting pupils beyond the age range for which it is registering.

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

Lead inspector

Julie Carrington

His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector

Wendy D'Arcy

His Majesty's Inspector

About this proposed school

Proprietor

Beautiful Mind Learning Lab Limited

Headteacher

Dave Strudwick

Type of school

Other independent school

Capacity

36

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll

Provider's current position: 0

Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll

Provider's proposal: 40

Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll

Provider's current position: 16

Number of pupils on roll who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority

Provider's proposal: 0

Provider's current position: 2

Provider's proposal: 2

Age range of pupils

Provider's current position: 2

Provider's proposal: 2

Provider's current position: 10 to 14

Provider's proposal: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils

Provider's current position: mixed

Provider's proposal: mixed

Total hours operating as a school per week

Provider's current position: 18

Total hours of teaching provided per week

Provider's proposal: 32.5

Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff

Provider's current position: 18

Provider's proposal: 32.5

Number of part-time teaching staff

Provider's current position: 3

Provider's proposal: 5

Provider's current position: 3

Provider's proposal: 4

Annual fees for day pupils

£15,500 – 16,500

Email address

dave@hummingbirdlearninglab.com

Annex. Independent school standards and national minimum standards

Independent school standards that the school is unlikely to meet

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 16A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 16A(1)(a) ensures that a procedure is in place for recording each use of force incident in accordance with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006;
 - 16A(1)(b) ensures that a procedure is in place for recording each incident in which a member of the school staff secludes, restrains or immobilises a pupil for whom education is being provided at the school (a "seclusion or restraint incident"); and
 - 16A(1)(c) takes all reasonable steps to ensure that both procedures are complied with.
- 16A(2) The procedure under sub-paragraph (1)(b) must require that the record is made in writing as soon as practicable after the incident.
- 16A(3) The procedure under sub-paragraph (1)(b) need not provide for any action to be taken in relation to a seclusion or restraint incident that also constitutes a use of force incident within the meaning of section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and therefore falls to be recorded under the procedure referred to in sub-paragraph (1)(a).

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 32A(1)(a) ensures that the procedures for recording use of force incidents and seclusion and restraint incidents referred to in paragraph 16A(1)(a) and (b) include procedures for information about each such incident (except where the pupil concerned is aged 20 or over or provision made under sub-paragraph (2) applies) to be provided to each parent of the pupil as soon as practicable after the incident; and
 - 32A(1)(b) takes all reasonable steps to ensure that those procedures are complied with.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

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Store Street
Manchester
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