

Renewal – Manchester Village School

Independent School Review Report-

General Education & Special Education

Site Review Conducted - May 17, 2022

Submitted by Independent School Review Team Members:

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Site Review Scope of Work and Purpose

Manchester Village School is a special education school in Manchester Vermont approved for first through twelfth grade. The Independent School team conducted a renewal site review on May 17, 2021. The head of school submitted a timely renewal application and the required supporting documentation in compliance with State Board of Education renewal requirements.

Manchester Village School is requesting renewal of general education and special education approval and requesting to add the disability category of multiple disabilities (MD).

General Education

Manchester Village School interviews were conducted at the school's location at 4002 Main Street in Manchester. School personnel present for interviews and classroom observations included the education program co-directors, licensed special educators, current program instructors for English and social studies and an elementary education instructor.

School Philosophy & Educational Objectives

State Board of Education Rule 2225.2, 2225.5

School Philosophy

Manchester Village School's renewal application and website states that:

"The Village School is founded on the principles of mindfulness and seeks to uphold and abide by our core values of compassion, acceptance, and resilience. We believe that a peaceful environment, where the core values are embraced, nourishes learning and expression, allowing academic potential to be realized."

Objectives

Manchester Village School's renewal application and website states that:

"...classes meet state and Common Core standards. Small classroom ratios and individualized instruction minimize distractions and allow kids to focus on their academic classes. Our educators seek to sculpt interesting and motivational lessons, keeping students engaged. All supportive work for each lesson is completed in school, eliminating evening homework struggles. Students collaborate with educators to set their own learning pace. This allows them to make up for ground lost in previous unsuccessful classroom experiences as well as to move ahead of their grade level when ready to do so."

School Enrollment

16 V.S.A. §166(b)(4), State Board of Education Rule 2225.3

Agency review of intake documentation in conjunction with staff interviews, confirmed that student enrollment is completed in compliance with SBE Rules and 16 V.S.A. The school's calendar follows traditional school year. Students may be placed by an LEA or the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

A system for securing enrollment documentation exists and ensures confidentiality of referred student information. Additionally, student records comply with requirements for on-site storage, limiting personnel access to a per-need basis. The Manchester Village School has established an appropriate process to ensure staffing levels meet State Board Rules for serving approved capacity of twenty-five students. Eighteen students were enrolled during the FY22 school year.

Governance

State Board of Education Rule 2225.4

Manchester Village School is a sole proprietary S corporation. Governance of the school is conducted by two co-chairs who collaborate to manage oversight of Manchester Village School.

Minimum Course of Study & Required Assessments

16 V.S.A. §166(b), State Board of Education Rule 2225.5

Manchester Village School's curriculum development and instruction are based upon Common Core State Standards, Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements and Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs). General education curriculum goals include utilization of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and behavioral interventions rooted in trauma informed best practice.

Delivery of Minimum Course of Study

Instructional and support staff employ a variety of techniques for delivery of educational services that includes access to a traditional classroom environment, small group and individualized, one-to-one academic opportunities, as needed. Interviewed instructional and support staff members confirmed class instruction and support services are aligned with the school's mission and stated objectives.

Observations conducted by the review team during English, history and an elementary class demonstrated effective and engaging student-centered strategies to ensure student access to academics by grade and ability levels.

Professional Staff

State Board of Education Rule 2225.8

The Agency of Education's review team confirmed that Manchester Village School's special education staff hold a current Vermont license and are directly involved in providing services to students. Additionally, the special education director, who is also co-director of Manchester Village School's education program, provides supervision with all gen education instructors to ensure curriculum is properly accommodated allowing students full access to FAPE.

All instructional staff, assigned to content area academic areas, are qualified to teach in their respective classes. Instructors and support staff engage weekly in a variety of staff meetings with mandatory attendance by classroom teachers, special education teachers and support staff. Student progress and treatment programing are reviewed for efficacy during both whole staff

meetings and during individual staff supervision held between academic program director and instructional staff members.

All staff members are trained annually on a variety of treatment, academic and social/emotional programming, including strength-based approaches toward discipline of children and youth who have varying degrees of adverse childhood experiences, and complex trauma.

All members of the Manchester Village School staff engage in annual professional development in social emotional learning, positive behavioral intervention training, special education, and content area development.

Staff curriculum vitae and professional development records are up-to-date and readily available for review. All staff files contain copies of annual evaluations which incorporate goal setting, identified areas in need of improvement, a list of staff strengths and professional achievements (including completed professional development work) and conditions of employment (contracts).

Staffing Safeguards:

Background checks are conducted prior to start date for all newly hired employees. Fingerprint- supported criminal records check and VT adult/child registries are checked annually, and both reports are contained in a confidential filing system available for review upon request.

Mandatory Reporting Procedures:

Manchester Village School implemented and has published mandatory reporting procedures and expectations in the staff handbook. Included in the policy are provisions for reporting child abuse and the circumstances in which a case must be reported to school administrators and appropriate authorities. Staff participate in required annual refreshers regarding best practices on policy development, implementation, and compliance with mandatory reporting procedures.

Health & Safety

Emergency Services:

Each month all staff and students practice fire and emergency safety evacuation protocols and staff are currently working on developing a lock-down and shelter in place strategies that are based upon trauma informed practices.

All staff members are either trained annually in CPR and First Aid or participate in refresher programming during August's in-service. Policies are in place for ensuring compliance with blood-borne pathogens and disposal of sharps in designated containers. Parents, guardians, and custodial adults are kept informed of health, medical and program safety protocols, procedures and are provided annually with a copy of all program policies.

Nursing Services, Medications and Immunization Records:

The Manchester Village School does not have a full-time nurse on staff and relies upon 911 Emergency Service responders, as needed. Designated staff members are trained in proper dispensing of student medications, on how to log medication and to ensure medicines are locked securely in the designated cabinet. Student Immunization records are included in each student file and stored in a secure, locked filing system and a secure digital student record system. All files are up to date.

Hazing, Harassment & Bullying Policies

The Manchester Village School's hazing, harassment, and bullying (HHB) policies and corresponding procedures comply with the Agency of Education's required policy. The school's entire staff are required to attend annual in-service training to review HHB best practices prior to the first day of school.

Facilities

State Board of Education Rule 2225.6

Manchester Village School's facility is organized, well maintained, and welcoming. The school building is clean, in good repair, welcoming and prominently displays student work and achievement as part of celebrating student learning.

There is ample safe green space surrounding the school building that students can participate in Physical Education, outdoor education and other academic or therapeutic opportunities.

Manchester Village School has a hard-wired fire alarm and sprinkler system which is inspected annually prior to the start of the school year. Heating and ventilation systems are inspected annually, as well. A current certificate of occupancy was submitted with the school's renewal applications and is on file at the agency.

Financial Capacity

Manchester Village School provided a profit/loss and balance sheet confirming the school has the financial capacity to operate for the period of approval. A signed/notarized letter from the co-owners of the school accompanied the financial documentation.

Special Education Report

Based on the Rules for Special Education Approval for Independent Schools, the special education team finds that Manchester Village School has met minimum criteria for the renewal of their renewal status.

Manchester Village School was visited by representatives from the AOE on May 17, 2022. During the visit, Agency staff interviewed school staff, toured facilities, and observed staff/student interactions in and outside of classroom settings. Subsequently, AOE staff members reviewed student files and IEPs. Comprehensive file reviews were conducted based

on the number of sending LEAs, and the disability categories requested for approval. There were no areas of significant concern highlighted in the visit, and Manchester Village School produced satisfactory evidence, within the file review process, that the school can meet the needs of the students it currently serves.

The following rules were reviewed for compliance:

2228.1 – Related to the categories of disability that the school can support through its provided services: Manchester Village School demonstrated that it has policies, procedures and staff training to appropriately support students in the disability categories of; specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, developmental delay, autism spectrum disorders, other health impaired, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability and multiple disabilities.

2228.3 – Related to the maintenance and implementation of written policies and procedures in Rule-defined areas: Manchester Village School has demonstrated that it is satisfactorily maintaining and implementing written policies and/or procedures in the areas of: (1) admissions, (2) least restrictive environment, (3) discipline, (4) graduation, (5) faculty qualifications, and (6) faculty-student ratios, as required by SBE Rule.

2228.3.1 – Related to appropriate coordination with sending responsible agencies, parents, public agencies, and other service providers: Manchester Village School has demonstrated evidence of (1) minimum maintenance of educational records, and coordination with LEA and parents through data and file review, (2) participation in evaluation and IEP procedures through IEP review, (3) implementation of IEPs through progress reporting and behavioral data, (4) providing prior notice to the sending LEA regarding the need for a change in a child's program or placement.

2228.3.2 – Regarding appropriate licensure for personnel who are responsible for the provision or supervision of special education and related services: Manchester Village School has demonstrated that their Special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists were licensed by appropriate local state agencies.

2228.4 – Regarding required written agreements: Manchester Village School has demonstrated that their policies, procedures, and written agreements outline tuition and establish division of legal and fiscal responsibilities with regards to students on IEPs. The Agency recommends that the agreement also clarify what services are included in tuition, and what additional services (if any) are required to meet student needs.

Approval Recommendation

The Agency of Education's review team confirms that Manchester Village School meets statutory requirements and State Board of Education Rules and recommends a five-year renewal of the program as well as approving the addition of special education disability category of multiple disabilities (MD).