

## Statement of Purpose

2023/24

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## 1. Background

[Coram IAC](#), (registered as Intercountry Adoption Centre) is a [charity](#), limited [company](#) and not for profit organisation. For the purposes of this document and operationally we are known as 'Coram IAC' from the 3<sup>rd</sup> July, following our membership of the [Coram](#) Group of charities. Coram IAC was established in 1997 and was formerly a project funded by the Department of Health from 1992. The agency was registered as an Adoption Support Agency in March 2006 and since 2009 has been a registered Voluntary Adoption Agency providing intercountry and domestic adoption services. Domestic adoption services only form a very small part of our service portfolio as a twin tracking option for some approved prospective intercountry adopters. We are regulated by [Ofsted](#), the inspectorate for social care, and the Intercountry Adoption Team at the Department for Education, the Central Authority for [Adoption](#).

Coram IAC is unique in the UK as we are the only adoption agency also accredited abroad by Central Adoption Authorities. These partnerships are known as Coram IAC's Special Programmes.

- In 2011, IAC was enlisted by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), India, as an Authorised Foreign Adoption Agency. This was renewed in 2022.
- In 2012 IAC was accredited by the Intercountry Adoption Board (ICAB) of the Philippines. This was renewed in 2020.
- In 2012 IAC received accreditation from the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA), the central authority for China, to offer the China Special Needs Programme in the UK. This programme is on hold.
- In 2016 the Ministry of Education and Science accredited IAC as an adoption agency in Kazakhstan. This programme will close in 2023.
- In 2016 IAC also entered into a working agreement with a partner adoption agency in Bulgaria. This programme is active, but no children have been placed yet.
- In 2016 IAC also entered into a working agreement and partnership with a charitable adoption agency in Durban, South Africa. This partnership remains active.

In 2017, through DfE funding, an Outbound Permanence Service was established to advise local authorities on care planning for children leaving the country on permanence orders. This service transferred to [Coram BAAF](#) in July 2023.

Coram IAC is also part of the Regional Adoption Agency [programme](#) in England as the lead agency for the Intercountry Regional Adoption Agency (ICRAA) which was launched in 2017. For this arrangement Coram IAC works in collaboration with other voluntary adoption agencies: Adoption Matters, ARC Adoption NE, Nugent Adoption and CCS Adoption, enabling the local delivery of our services.

Coram IAC provides a full range of adoption services for anyone in the UK wishing to adopt from abroad.

This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of Coram IAC, as required by the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (Amendment) Regulations 2005.

This document is reviewed at least annually and approved by Coram IAC's Board of Trustees, who are responsible for the governance of the charity.

The Statement of Purpose, is posted on our website and is readily available to:

- Prospective adopters and adopters
- Birth parents and guardians
- Adoptive children and young people
- Other interested parties and the public.

The purpose of this Statement is to outline:

- The Agency's status and constitution, the arrangements for control of its operation and the terms of its registration
- The Agency's management structure and staffing
- The Agency's aims and objectives and how the services and facilities meet outcomes for children and keep them safe
- The policies and procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving, and supporting both domestic and intercountry adoptive parents
- The procedure for dealing with complaints
- The system used for monitoring and evaluating the provision of services to ensure their effectiveness and quality; and
- The name, address, and telephone number of the registration authority.

## **2. Status and Constitution**

Coram IAC operates within the requirements of legislation, regulations, guidance, standards, and good practice relating to adoption and inspected by [Ofsted](#).

The Agency is a registered charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 1993 and a company limited by guarantee within the meaning of the Companies Act. We are governed by incorporated Memorandum and Articles of Association and regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

Coram IAC is a member of the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies ([CVAA](#)); the Consortium of Adoption Support Agencies ([CASA](#)) and a member of [EurAdopt](#), a membership organisation of accredited adoption agencies in Europe. Our former CEO is Chair of the EurAdopt Council from 2022 – 2024. In April 2024, the UK will host the next EurAdopt conference with Coram IAC acting as the host agency.

### **3. Registration**

Coram IAC (Intercountry Adoption Centre) is registered by [Ofsted](#) as a voluntary adoption agency under Part II of the Care Standards Act 2000 and is inspected by that registration authority. We are registered to provide intercountry and domestic adoption services including adoption support services to children and intermediary services and birth records counselling.

In relation to this registration:

#### **The Registered Provider is Intercountry Adoption Centre.**

The responsibility for the governance of Coram IAC rests with the Board of Trustees, and the Coram Group Board of Trustees. The Coram IAC Board meets at a minimum, four times a year, to fulfil its statutory functions. At least one of these meetings is an in-person meeting in London. Governance is supported by the range of committees with Coram.

#### **The Responsible Individual for the Adoption Agency is:**

Ms. Irene Levine, 120 Cockfosters Road, Barnet. EN4 0DZ

#### **The Registered Manager of the Adoption Agency is:**

Ms. Marie Strydom, 120 Cockfosters Road, Barnet. EN4 0DZ

### **4. Organisational Structure**

Coram IAC is governed by our Board of Trustees, chaired by Barbara Hudson, and managed by our Leadership Team, which is led by the Managing Director, Irene Levine, and Head of Service, Marie Strydom. Coram's Group CEO, Dr. Carol Homden CBE, acts as Secretary to the Board.

Coram IAC operates from Barnet, Greater London and Bloomsbury, Central London. Since 2021 our team have operated Hybrid Working. Work is undertaken nationally and by ICRAA partner agencies based in the North West (Adoption Matters and Nugent Adoption), North East (ARC Adoption) and South West (CCS Adoption), who act as 'spokes' for intercountry adoption work. Coram IAC recruits independent Social Workers, in accordance with [Safer Recruitment](#) practices and regulatory requirements, to enable local service delivery.

These workers are considered an essential component of our workforce and are supported to deliver high quality services through support, consultation, and access to regular training.

The Agency has a properly constituted Adoption Panel central list as required by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, as amended by the Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011, with access to a medical and legal advisor. Two independent Chairpersons oversee the function of the Adoption Panel along with the Agency Panel Advisor. An independent, suitably experienced Social Worker acts as our Agency Decision Maker. The panel central list of membership has been reviewed recently and is made up of a diverse group of people with relevant and suitable experience.

## **5. Workforce**

Coram IAC's professional team comprises Social Workers and Managers experienced in both domestic and international adoption, Case Workers, and Business Support colleagues. Many have personal experience of adoption (domestic and international) and a significant number were born and / or raised abroad and have direct experience of migration.

We seek to have our workforce, in all areas of the agency, reflect the diversity of the children and families we work with and benefit from their lived experiences to help shape our services and delivery. This also includes our Adoption Panel.

The members of the workforce staff and their respective responsibilities are as follows:

- The Managing Director is supported by an Executive Assistant and is responsible to the Coram Group CEO. She oversees the strategic management of the charity. She manages and supervises the Head of Service, Assessment Manager and Post Approval Manager. She is also the public face of the organisation and represents Coram IAC, intercountry adoption matters and more broadly the adoption in this capacity. She is currently Chair of Coram BAAF's Black and Minority Ethnic Perspectives Committee. She is a qualified Social Worker with expertise in children's rights.

- The Head of Service is a qualified Social Worker and supports the Managing Director by specifically overseeing information and advice, contracts, adoption support, training, and domestic adoption. She supervises the relevant Managers, Social Workers, a Project Worker, and Business Support colleagues.
- Adoption Team Managers have lead responsibility for all aspects of the adoption process, including information & advice, assessment, post approval, adoption support and search & reunion. Managers are responsible for the supervision of independent Social Workers. Additionally, the Adoption Team Managers supervise Senior Practitioners who oversee assessments, linking, matching, placements, and support services. They also manage Case Workers and Business Support personnel in their teams, who are responsible for the delivery of services.
- To support employed Coram IAC colleagues, independent Social Workers also deliver advice, training, adoption support and placement supervision, as representatives of Coram IAC.
- All Social Work personnel, at all levels of the organisation have recognised qualifications in Social Work and therapy, have many years' experience in adoption and fostering and are registered with [Social Work England](#). All other members of the workforce have qualifications and experience relevant to their respective roles, which are evidenced through application, interview, and reference processes.
- The administrative support is provided by Case Workers and Business Support teams, each of whom has direct oversight of specific agency functions and reports to the relevant Manager or Senior Practitioner.
- The Agency retains the services of two specialist Medical Advisors who report on Health Assessments for Adults and Children as required.
- The Agency retains the services of a specialist Social Worker for the purposes of research and practice development and publishes an internal paper at least twice each year.
- The Agency has a suitably experienced Legal Advisor and access to a Legal Panel which is convened regularly.
- The Managing Director / Responsible Individual is a qualified Social Worker and has a CQSW and Diploma in Social Work and an NVQ Level 5 in Management. Since qualifying she has specialised in a range of subjects, including child protection training, fostering and adoption and children's rights work. As the Chair of the Children Rights and Advocates (CROA) she was in the forefront of setting up

and supporting Children's Rights Services across England, ensuring the voices of looked after children were heard in the development and delivery of children's services. She has over 27 years management experience in both Local Authorities and Voluntary Agencies, at Team and Senior Management levels; as well as being a Child Care Consultant and Trainer.

- The Registered Manager is a qualified Social Worker and Clinical Therapist, with extensive experience of management and therapeutic interventions for children who have experienced adversity and trauma. In South Africa she was instrumental in advocating for adoption as a safe and supported route to permanence for vulnerable children for whom family reunification was not possible.

## **6. Values which underpin the Service**

As a member charity of Coram Group, Coram IAC is fully aligned and signed up to the [strategic aims](#) of the group and the shared vision and mission for children.

Coram IAC fully embraces the values statement below, contained in the National Minimum Standards (July 2014).

### **Values – children**

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully considered at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- A sense of identity is important to a child's wellbeing. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted, as well as their birth heritage and history.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.

- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, intercountry adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents/guardians and families and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the National Minimum Standards to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, Local Government, other Statutory Agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

### **Values – adopted adults and birth relatives**

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved – adopted adults and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption relation matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that considers the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

### **7. Coram IAC's Mission Statement**

Coram IAC's mission is to place children from all parts of the world, both in the UK and overseas, in loving families and to work in a fair, transparent, and professional manner with individuals who seek our professional services.

## 8. Aims and Objectives

Coram IAC aims to ensure that children who are unable to live with their birth families be that in another country or in the UK, grow up in a safe and nurturing family where they can develop to their full potential. The Agency seeks to do this by:

- 1) Providing high quality intercountry adoption services for prospective adopters and their families and friends, established adoptive families, adopted people and birth relatives, and nominated guardians.
- 2) Working in a way that is professional, non-judgemental, non-discriminatory and anti-racist, to ensure that all children and families that we work with, as well as colleagues, are respected, understood and valued.
- 3) Ensuring that the intake of intercountry adopters reflects the needs of children waiting in the UK or in the States of origin for an intercountry adoption placement and complies with the eligibility criteria both domestically and in the State of origin.
- 4) Ensuring that the information service and advice lines are available and supported by a sound information database and appropriately qualified and experienced advisors and facilitators.
- 5) Offering limited specialist families via domestic adoption for children in the UK who might otherwise wait the longest for a placement.
- 6) Working in partnership with regional adoption agencies, local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies, through contracts and service level agreements to provide specialist preparation and assessment for prospective intercountry adopters, those who are adopting again and kinship intercountry adopters and specialist support to those adopting from countries where this agency is accredited to offer such services.
- 7) Ensuring that the potential life-long needs of children are understood, and that the ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage of the children is fully recognised and positively valued.
- 8) Providing support to local authorities and regional adoption agencies' adoption professionals by annual subscription through a range of dedicated services where children are entering the UK through adoption arrangements. Each subscribing local authority has access to the Information & Advice Line, a Practitioners' Network, which meets to provide for discussion, debate and peer support; and training programmes for adoption professionals and adoption panel members (including legal and medical advisors). Local authorities also receive a regular bulletin.

- 9) Promoting the highest standards of adoption practice, informed by the outcomes of research, by practice wisdom, by the perspectives of all parties to the adoption circle and by training which the Agency provides for its staff. Independent Social Workers are also encouraged and supported in their ongoing learning.
- 10) Lobbying for legislative change, specifically in relation to intercountry adoption, and active involvement in the consultation process of government departments.
- 11) Ensuring that the need to keep all children safe is at the core of everything that we do. Where there are concerns reported we follow the Coram Group Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, which are compliant with guidance issued in [‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018’](#).

## **9. Services and Facilities**

Coram IAC currently provides the following services and facilities.

- a) Information and Advice through our expert Advice Lines and publications to enquirers, prospective adopters, established adoptive families, adopted people, birth relatives resident in the geographical areas of those local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies which either contract to, or have service level agreements with Coram IAC. These services are also available to their professionals and covers matters pertaining to children entering the UK on adoption / permanence arrangements. We also extend our services to British Nationals living abroad.
- b) Information Sessions for people interested in intercountry adoption, or for enquirers who are unsure which “path to go down”. These provide information at an early stage in the process and give prospective adopters the opportunity to consider procedures and requirements both in the UK and States of origin, and the needs of children placed in intercountry adoption, and to hear first-hand the experiences of people who have adopted from abroad or in the UK.
- c) Country specific workshops, relating to the countries where Coram IAC is a recognised foreign partner agency, to build on the Information Sessions and provide more specific information on procedures relating to one country.
- d) Intercountry Adoption Preparation courses for prospective intercountry adopters; those adopting for a second or subsequent time, and for those who are related to the children overseas whom they wish to adopt.

In addition, Coram IAC offers preparation modules for prospective adopters seeking to adopt a child who is racially or ethnically different from themselves; for

prospective adopters wanting to adopt siblings, either through the intercountry or UK adoption route, and for prospective adopters who already have birth children. Courses are also run for those wishing to adopt again.

- e) Preparation, assessment, and support for prospective intercountry adopters, liaising with them regarding proposed matches with children from States of origin and providing post placement and post adoption reports for the State of origin as required.
- f) Preparation (change of country) courses for adopters who have previously adopted through Coram IAC, either domestically or internationally, or for prospective adopters approved as suitable to adopt via the intercountry route but who now wish to change to the UK.
- g) The provision of support for children placed domestically or internationally. Where commissioned to do so, the Agency supports and monitors the child's placement and prepares the report for the English court in cases where the child enters the UK for the purposes of adoption.
- h) A programme of workshops and courses addressing adoption issues for those who are awaiting the placement of a child or who have a child in placement.
- i) Keeping abreast of the profiles of children waiting for domestic adoption and updated on the domestic family finding needs of Regional Adoption Agencies / local authorities across the UK. Prospective adopters approved by Coram IAC are able to express an interest in domestic adoption should there be a valid reason for them to change their country of approval.
- j) Remaining in contact with adopters and their children after adoption, including them in the Agency information mailings and events and providing them with post adoption advice, assistance, and support, on request. Coram IAC's adoption support offer includes consultation and face to face counselling on school related issues and therapeutic Life Story Work with children and adoptive parents as well as a range of courses and workshops covering core themes in adoption open to parents with and without their children. In 2022/23 we successfully launched new in person groups for Tweens and Teens, recognising the changing needs of children as they grow. These services are being actively fund raised for so we can continue to develop them and offer them for 'life', given what we know about the life stages adoptees may experience at any time.
- k) Working in partnership with other providers of services for children and families affected by adoption to ensure they are able to access support outside of Coram IAC as necessary, including from the governments [Adoption Support Fund](#).

- l) Actively supporting prospective intercountry adopters in their transition to domestic adoption, if this is deemed the only suitable way to complete their adoption, which includes; presenting their domestic application to Coram IAC's Panel for consideration and variation in matching advice and assisting all approved domestic adopters in the preparation and dissemination of their family profile, advising on and facilitating their access to the range of matching provision locally and nationally as appropriate including, but not limited to, exchange events, Link Maker, photo-listings and regional adoption exchange and activity days.
- m) Signposting applicants to Coram VAA or their local VAA / RAA where they only wish to consider domestic adoption for a first or subsequent application.
- n) Hosting and supporting Asha, the India Adoption Group, which was formed in 2003, for families who have adopted from India, those who are in the process of adopting and for children and adults adopted from India. We have also supported adopters with children adopted from Pakistan supporting PANUK, the parent support group and are actively supporting the newer Africa Adoption Support Group. These groups aim to provide a supportive network for those touched by adoption from India, Pakistan and Africa respectively, and to provide the basis of a life-long network for the children and adult adopted people. Many of our experienced adopters also act as volunteer mentors to those going through the process.
- o) Offering an advice and signposting service to adopted people and birth relatives whose adoption has an international element and who are seeking their records and/or who wish to re-unite. This may be to authorities and agencies in the overseas countries to determine policies and procedures and to locate records and recognised counsellors. The service is also for adoption professionals in the UK who are engaged in intermediary work of a cross border or intercountry nature. Coram IAC hosts the International Searchers' Group and supports other groups run by adoptees.
- p) Providing advice, information, consultation and training services for adoption professionals, including adoption practitioners and their managers in Regional Adoption Agencies, local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies; members of agency adoption panels; legal advisors; Adoption Support Services Advisors; Children's Guardians and Officers of Children and Family Court Advice and Support Service (CAFCASS). These services, which include specialist training on intercountry adoption and permanence (inbound and outbound) and transracial placements. In addition, peer support is facilitated through Coram IAC's Practitioners' Networks.
- q) Contributing to improving professional practice in the field of intercountry adoption through contribution to [research](#), Practice Papers and conferences and seminars

(both professional and parent led, domestically and internationally).

- r) Offering assessment services to registered and accredited adoption agencies from overseas when working with non-habitually resident prospective adopters.
- s) Supporting the adoption and permanence work of local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies as required through a range of services.
- t) Actively working in partnership with countries who are part of our Special Programmes to ensure that the high-quality care they expect for their children is informed by regulations, practice and research from those countries and Central Authorities for Adoption.

## **10. Policies and Procedures**

Coram IAC's work is informed by, and complies with, current statute, regulations, statutory and good practice guidance, standards and international instruments which provide the legislative framework for domestic and intercountry adoption and for the delivery of adoption support services. The majority of these policies are now provided by Coram.

Coram and Coram IAC's management and Trustees have reviewed and implemented a series of policy documents which cover all the main elements of employment legislation. The Trustees are satisfied that measures are in place to ensure that the Agency deals fairly and equitably with staff in relation to their employment and in relation to their place of work, including objective measures to deal with appeals against decisions made. Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to, employment rights, working time, parental leave, equal pay, minimum wage, pensions, sickness absence, harassment, disability, discrimination, flexible working and human rights.

## **11. Dealing with Complaints**

Coram IAC is committed to resolving [complaints](#) quickly and in a sensitive, thorough, and non-biased manner which enables service users to make a complaint and protects complainants from any reprisal.

Service users and others with a legitimate interest have the right at any time to complain to the Agency about any aspect of our services, if they believe Coram IAC has acted in contravention of adoption law, regulation, guidance, standards or codes of practice, or has failed to adhere to its written policies, procedures or undertakings, and they are helped to do so if this is required.

- The Agency seeks to resolve complaints informally, but if this fails there is recourse to an investigation by a member of the Leadership Team who has had no prior

involvement in the case or where this is not possible by the Chair of Trustees and to a review of the resulting adjudication by other Board members.

- A target timescale is specified for dealing with complaints, and a written record is made of any complaint, its outcome and any action taken. Records of all complaints (and allegations) are clearly recorded on the relevant files for staff, volunteers, children and service users – including details of the investigation, conclusion reached, and action taken.
- After all steps have been taken, should the complainant consider there has not been a satisfactory response, s/he is advised, that s/he can approach the registration authority. Information about complaints is provided to the registration authority on request.
- The Board of Trustees receives regular reports on any serious complaints received at to check that the complaints procedure is operating appropriately in accordance with the Agency's policies and practices and takes appropriate action in the light of the review. The Managing Director includes information about ongoing complaints in quarterly Board reports.
- A system is in place for Reflection and Learning when a complaint has been closed to look at what lessons can be learned and how these can be applied.

## **12. Effectiveness of Services and Quality Monitoring**

Coram's Group CEO and Coram IAC's Managing Director report to the Board of Trustees, providing at each quarterly meeting a written summary of the adoption services provided by the agency and their outcomes, as well as an overview of the group.

- The Agency undertakes an in-house evaluation of all services at least annually and uses surveys to ascertain feedback from recipients of services at key stages. This is then used to review and adapt services as necessary.
- The Agency also undertakes an in-house evaluation of all its information sessions, preparation courses and support workshops. All participants are requested to complete an evaluation form at the end of each information session or day of a course. These evaluations are reviewed as soon as possible after the course, by the relevant Manager.
- Where appropriate the Agency uses independent professionals to review services or cases as necessary, particularly where complexities, safeguarding matters or disruptions are a theme.

- The Agency Decision Maker's role is a key one in identifying issues that may be relevant to case work, policies and procedures.

### **13. Approval, Availability and Review of Statement of Purpose**

This Statement of Purpose was reviewed by the Managing Director / Responsible Individual, and by the Board of Trustees in July 2023. It meets the requirements of Adoption Agencies Regulations and National Minimum Standards and is reviewed and updated at least annually.

The Managing Director ensures:

- that the Agency is conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose
- that the statement is accurately reflected in the Agency's policies, procedures, and guidance to the workforce
- that it is given to all persons working for the purposes of the Agency, provided to Ofsted and a copy is readily available or can be downloaded from Coram IAC's website
- that it is made available on request to any person receiving adoption agency and adoption support services, or making enquiries about receiving adoption agency or adoption support services, from the Agency, namely to:
  - people wishing to adopt from overseas and their friends and relatives and to members of established intercountry adoptive families
  - people who wish to adopt within the UK via a dual plan post approval
  - people who are adopted from abroad
  - birth relatives or former guardians of people whose adoption has an international element
  - any Regional Adoption Agency, Local Authority, Voluntary Adoption Agency, Adoption Support Agency or other relevant organisation
- that it is provided on request, so far as is practicable, in formats appropriate to the sensory and learning impairments, communications difficulties and language of service users and staff, including having it read, translated or explained to them.

#### **14. Details of the Registration Authority**

The registration authority is:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

E-mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

Coram IAC has been judged to be outstanding by Ofsted since 2014. Our most recent [inspection](#) was in January 2020.