

Belmont School

Haslingden Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 6RX

Inspection dates 30 June–2 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and managers are highly effective in developing all aspects of the school and ensuring that the independent school standards are met. Their work has a strong impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Pupils, who enter the school with much lower levels of attainment than their peers, make outstanding progress. They leave with a range of qualifications that enable them to enter further education or training.
- The proprietors are very well informed about all aspects of the school and are highly committed to maintaining its excellent level of success.
- The school offers staff a wide range of effective professional development opportunities. These helps to improve practice and increase staff's expertise.
- The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Innovative behaviour management techniques promote outstanding behaviour and ensure that pupils with severe behavioural difficulties work well at all times.
- The school works very successfully to keep pupils safe.
- Teachers plan and deliver highly effective lessons which result in pupils making outstanding progress in all subjects.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make helpful suggestions to improve learning. However, pupils' presentation is sometimes not good enough and they are not always shown clearly what they need to do to improve their work.
- An excellent range of vocational courses ensures that pupils achieve qualifications which prepare them well for the next stage of their lives.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspectors carried out a range of activities to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of classes and subjects in both primary and secondary departments. They examined samples of pupils' work and analysed the school's records of pupils' achievement and behaviour. They scrutinised school policies, including the safeguarding policy, as well as other records and documentation.
- Prior to the start of this inspection, the lead inspector viewed the school's website to check that the a full copy of the safeguarding policy was available to parents, careers and others, and that this was compliant with the latest statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education (March 2015)*.
- The inspectors spoke to senior managers, teachers and other members of staff and pupils. They held telephone conversations with a board member of the company which owns the school and with staff from local authorities which place pupils in the school.
- The inspectors considered the responses to 53 surveys completed by members of staff. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey to be taken into account, but the inspectors received a letter from one parent and spoke to another by telephone.
- A request for a material change to the school's terms of registration was considered as part of this inspection. The school had requested a change to enable it to accept pupils from five years of age without changing the overall maximum number of pupils on roll.

Inspection team

Michael Glickman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Rafferty

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Belmont School is a special school for boys with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties located on two sites in Rossendale, Lancashire. Many pupils also have learning difficulties.
- The secondary department is based around a former mansion house, while the primary and vocational education departments occupy a former primary school site one-and-a-half miles away. The school is owned by Acorn Care and Education Ltd, a national provider of special education and residential provision.
- The school is registered for 134 pupils between seven and 18 years of age. There are currently 125 pupils on the school's roll. There have been no students in the sixth form since its registration and this provision was therefore not inspected.
- All pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. There are 31 pupils who are looked after by local authorities.
- The school's vision is that 'every pupil should achieve his potential and develop an understanding of and respect for himself and others'.
- The school uses Accrington and Rossendale College, Achieve Training, North Lancs Training and Rathbones as alternative education providers.
- The school opened in September 1996. It was last inspected in February 2012, when it was judged to provide an outstanding quality of education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy to:
 - improve the standard of presentation of pupils' work in all subjects
 - show pupils the next steps to take in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders and managers provide inspirational leadership. They have successfully created a culture in which good behaviour and teaching can flourish and have ensured that all independent school standards are met fully. They have carried out an accurate self-assessment and produced a realistic school improvement plan. Policies and documentation are meticulously maintained and implemented.
- The staff team is extremely cohesive and loyal to the school. There is a strong sense of unity and shared purpose which promotes the development of the school.
- The senior leadership team includes the heads of secondary and primary, ensuring that there is a uniform approach across the whole school, although it is split over two sites. Middle managers improve teaching effectively by carrying out regular lesson observations and termly supervisions with every member of staff.
- The school offers staff very good opportunities for further training and development. Staff are supported to gain professional qualifications or higher degrees. The school has close relationships with local teacher training colleges and pupil support workers have been encouraged to train as teachers. By developing existing staff members into leaders, the school ensures a continuity of vision as well as retaining staff loyalty.
- The school carries out regular surveys of parents and pupils. These identify high levels of satisfaction. Where issues have been identified, such as the provision of homework, the school has quickly addressed them.
- Two full-time members of staff are dedicated to pupil welfare, including safeguarding and liaison with the 22 local authorities which place pupils in the school. This ensures that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are strong, effective and meet requirements. All staff receive annual training in child protection procedures and there are staff trained to a higher level on both sites.
- Local authorities are positive about the co-operation they receive in completing reviews for looked-after children or those with education, health and care plans and with the efficient way in which the school co-ordinates the many therapists that work with some pupils.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively and tackles discrimination. Many pupils have experienced social problems in their previous schools. They say that they feel happy and included at Belmont. Staff always challenge prejudice and try to introduce pupils to different points of view. The school ensures that extremist views are not promoted within the school. All staff have been trained to identify the signs that a pupil may be at risk of radicalisation.
- The school devotes much effort to promoting British values such as democracy. Both primary and secondary departments have elected school councils. Pupils recently conducted a ballot on a new school uniform and a change to the homework policy. This included campaigning and a polling station supervised by the school council. The school has implemented the decisions, which has shown pupils that democracy works. Local Members of Parliament have visited the school. The fire service recently presented a highly effective car safety course. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It recognises that pupils often have very restricted experience of the world on arrival in the school and tries to offer a wide range of learning opportunities. Pupils learn about different lifestyles and visit places of worship of different faiths. A poet has visited the school and worked with pupils in both the primary and secondary departments. Pupils are taken to the theatre and museums, and mix with pupils from other schools at national sports tournaments.
- The school provides pupils with highly effective careers guidance. An independent consultant works as part of the staff team to develop pupils' ideas about which career they would like to follow. They are encouraged to be ambitious. Older pupils are offered relevant work experience. They are well-supported in these settings and are generally very successful. Some have gained part-time employment as a result. Pupils are guided to further education courses which will enable them to pursue their chosen careers.
- The school closely monitors the performance, behaviour, attendance and safety of pupils in alternative provision. They maintain close contact with alternative education providers and receive regular reports which are well documented. The attendance and performance of some pupils who were less successful in school has significantly improved in alternative provision.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors considered a request from the school to change the terms of its registration to enable it to accept pupils from four years of age without any change in the overall number of pupils on the roll. The Department for Education is recommended to agree to this application.

■ The governance of the school:

The company which owns the school has an Assistant Educational Director responsible for education. He visits the school every half term and reviews school data monthly.

The director chairs termly governance meetings at which the Principal presents a report as to how the school is progressing against a range of key performance indicators. These include teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour and progress, and finance. As a result, the board is well informed about all aspects of the school's performance.

The director monitors the school's safeguarding procedures and reports to Acorn care and Education each month. He is also responsible for managing the performance of the Principal. A proposal to link increases in pay to staff performance will be considered at the next board meeting.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This inspection took place during one of the warmest days of the year. Despite the heat, pupils with severe behavioural difficulties remained focused on their learning throughout the day.
- The school sets high expectations for positive behaviour and communicates these clearly to the pupils. Staff model polite and respectful interactions and the pupils follow suit. Clear rules are backed by rewards for good behaviour and a progressive scale of sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently across both primary and secondary departments. This fosters a setting in which teaching and learning can proceed with little interruption.
- Pupils take pride in their school. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. They all wear school uniform and maintain a neat appearance throughout the day. They recently voted to adopt what they felt was a smarter uniform, including a tie.
- Every class has an assigned pupil support worker who accompanies them throughout the day. As well as providing learning support, the pupil support worker is responsible for monitoring and dealing with behavioural issues. They develop a close relationship with their group, and often effectively defuse potential problems before these develop.
- The school places much emphasis on developing pupils' social skills. Lunch is served at round tables where pupils eat together with staff, who model and encourage appropriate behaviour. Sporting events within the school and between schools foster the development of team spirit and of sportsmanship. Both primary and secondary pupils have the opportunity to attend residential camps where they develop independence. On a recent trip to London, senior pupils demonstrated outstanding behaviour in some challenging circumstances.
- The school deploys creative techniques to encourage positive behaviour. By tailoring behaviour support to the individual pupil's needs, the school has effectively ensured that all pupils are enabled to engage in learning and make progress.
- Parents and carers say that they have seen clear improvements in pupils' behaviour since they joined the school. This indicates that the changes have become embedded and are not just during school hours.
- The school's electronic behaviour monitoring system tracks both positive and negative incidents and supports the identification of trends and patterns. Consequently, effective early intervention and rewards are in place to ensure high standards of behaviour are sustained.
- The outstanding behaviour of pupils in school carries over into alternative education provision. Pupil support workers accompany groups of pupils to ensure continuity of behaviour management. The school receives regular reports from all providers. It has identified that the less formal atmosphere in these settings results in improved behaviour in some students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, with all staff committed to ensuring the welfare of pupils. All staff have received appropriate training. The child welfare manager is a member of the senior leadership team, which ensures that pupils' safety is always a management focus.
- Pupils are exceptionally well supervised at all times. The pupil support workers accompany their groups as they move around the school and extra members of staff are always on duty during breaks. There is a high ratio of staff to pupils.
- The school has carried out risk assessments for all activities. They closely monitor alternative education

providers to ensure that pupils attending courses there are safe at all times.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare and always dealt with effectively. They are confident that they can share any concerns with members of staff. They have learned about online safety.
- The school has set up highly effective procedures to ensure that the arrival and departure of pupils is safe at all times.
- All the independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils are met.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding, which results in pupils in all classes making outstanding progress, including in literacy, reading and mathematics. All the independent school standards relating to teaching are met.
- Teachers in both primary and secondary departments plan their lessons meticulously, using a standard approach. This ensures that teaching takes into account the different abilities of pupils in the class, together with their particular educational or behavioural needs.
- The number of pupils in classes is small, which allows pupils to be given individual attention. Pupil support workers are deployed effectively to support learning, either working with individual pupils or circulating around the class as required.
- The school has chosen to divide classes according to ability, although exceptions are occasionally made for behavioural reasons. Teachers tailor lessons to the particular abilities of each class, ensuring that all pupils make the rate of progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers have high expectations, which they communicate clearly to their pupils. Pupils know what they are expected to achieve and respond by working well to meet these expectations.
- The school offers a wide range of interventions to support pupils' individual learning difficulties. These include one-to-one tutoring and appropriate therapies. As a result, pupils needing additional support are able to keep up with the rest of the class.
- Staff have excellent relationships with pupils. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect within the school, which inspires pupils to work hard. A wide range of rewards are offered to encourage good work. For example, in the primary department, pupils who work well are recognised at a weekly assembly and a certificate is attached to their work to show their parents or carers.
- In addition to subjects leading to GCSE qualifications, the school offers a range of vocational qualifications, including horticulture, construction and motor vehicle studies. These are taught by experienced staff at an advanced level. They allow pupils to find success while gaining recognised qualifications which offer employment opportunities.
- The school works closely with alternative education providers to source courses which cannot be offered within the school, such as childcare and plastering. For some pupils, the less formal environment of these settings is more conducive to learning. The quality of the courses and the progress pupils make are closely monitored.
- The school recently introduced a new homework policy which was requested and voted on by the pupils themselves. Homework packs are sent home to ensure that all pupils regularly complete homework. Pupils earn rewards by completing packs. There have already been positive responses to this initiative.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and helpful comments are often made to support learning. However, this is not done consistently and sometimes the standard of presentation of pupils' work is not good enough. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve the presentation of their work or what the next steps should be in their learning.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress, including in literacy, reading and mathematics. This is because of outstanding teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils often enter the school having missed large portions of their previous schooling. Their behavioural and learning difficulties meant that regular classroom teaching proved ineffective in their previous schools. Soon after starting at the school, staff check pupils' levels of understanding in a number of different areas and put in place effective strategies to improve their learning.
- The school successfully ensures that all pupils leave school with qualifications which will enable them to proceed to further education or employment. Some pupils leave school with good GCSE results and others

achieve useful vocational qualifications such as City & Guilds at certificate and diploma level. The range of vocational courses on offer ensures that, at minimum, they all achieve nationally recognised Level 1 awards.

- The most-able pupils progress at a fast rate because teachers ensure that pupils in each class receive an appropriate level of challenge in their work.
- The progress made by children looked after by local authorities is at least as good as that made by other pupils. In fact, the highest achieving pupils in the last academic year were looked after by local authorities.
- The transition from school into further education is a particular strength. The school recognises that many young people with behavioural difficulties fail to complete their first year in college. It has therefore concentrated on developing the skills that they need to succeed.
- All pupils leave school with Level 1 qualifications. This boosts their confidence and as a result, all pupils proceed to employment and in some cases to higher education. Several former pupils have gained university degrees.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	131025
Inspection number	463003
DfE registration number	888/6029

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Natalie-Jane McDonald
Principal	Mike Stobart
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,614
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