

Begdale House School

Begdale Road, Elm, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0AZ

Inspection dates

26–28 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- Financial constraints have slowed the pace of improvements.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the quality of education the school provides. They have not maintained the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.
- The range of examination courses on offer to the oldest pupils is narrow, which restricts their achievement.
- Leaders have not fully developed systems for tracking the progress of pupils in all areas of learning.
- Teachers are not using the information from assessment well enough to match learning tasks to the different needs of pupils.
- Teachers' expectations for learning and behaviour are not consistently high enough.
- A few pupils do not always behave safely and the attitudes to learning of some pupils are not good enough. As a result, a significant number of pupils are not making enough progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Nearly all pupils successfully transfer to college or employment on leaving school.
- Most pupils make good progress in their personal development, behaviour and attendance.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all of the independent school standards are met and fully understood
 - leaders at all levels ensure that self-evaluation is accurate and based on the outcomes of rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the school's work
 - the range of academic and vocational examination courses available to the oldest pupils is increased
 - leaders develop systems for recording and tracking the progress of individual pupils across all subjects offered within the curriculum.
- Improve learning, progress and behaviour by ensuring that teachers:
 - establish a strong ethos for learning and good behaviour in lessons
 - consistently set high expectations for learning and behaviour
 - regularly track and record the progress pupils are making across all subjects
 - use the information from assessment to match learning tasks to pupils' different abilities.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the school has suitable accommodation in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of all pupils, including for the medical examinations and the short-term care of sick or injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet (paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are consistently met (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The proprietor and school leaders have overseen a deterioration in the school's overall effectiveness since the previous inspection and have failed to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met. Consequently, some of the standards relating to the premises and accommodation and leadership and management are not met.
- The proprietors were not able to ensure that the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection were fully met. They had insufficient funds available to develop the practical areas to enable pupils to develop skills in woodwork and metalwork. Nevertheless, teachers ensured that pupils developed experience of clearing the school grounds and designing and building an attractive picnic area and seating area for all to enjoy. Leaders have developed close links with two local secondary schools and made good use of an allotment to develop pupils' horticultural skills. The school improvement plan shows that the school intends to complete the development of three practical areas to widen the range of vocational subjects on offer by January 2018.
- The proprietor and leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's work. Their evaluation of the impact of the school's work, especially the quality of teaching, assessment and the curriculum, on pupils' outcomes is not based on rigorous monitoring.
- Leaders do not check pupils' work rigorously enough to gain a view of the progress they make. Neither are they using this information together with their evaluations from lesson visits and from reviews of individual education plans to ensure that learning improves. As a result, they have an inaccurate view of the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning and progress over time.
- The school does not provide a wide enough range of academic and vocational examinations to enable all pupils to achieve their potential. Nevertheless, the curriculum ensures that pupils have a wide range of experiences in all the required areas of learning and benefit from a range of enrichment activities, such as fishing, the use of an allotment and visits to places of interest.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for the transition to college or work through effective careers guidance and work experience.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including fundamental British values, effectively. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain through well-chosen topics within the programme of personal, social, health and economic education and religious education. For example, pupils consider the impact of knife crime in communities and develop tolerance and understanding of different cultures and world religions. They carefully consider the issue of female genital mutilation and learn about sexual orientation and gender.
- The new headteacher is developing new systems of assessment to record and track progress across the full range of subjects but these are not yet fully in place. Nevertheless, there are some good systems in place to track and record progress in basic skills in pupils' personal education plans. Leaders also ensure that parents and social workers receive a written report with details of the progress individual pupils are making across a range of subjects every term.

- Professionals, including social workers, who work with the pupils are generally pleased with the provision in improving pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance.
- Staff morale is good and this is reflected in the positive responses in their questionnaires.
- The school liaises closely with the virtual headteacher of the local authority.

Governance

- The chief executive, area manager and regional manager have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- They hold regular meetings to hold the school to account for its work and have facilitated a smooth handover of leadership to the new headteacher. However, they have not provided the new headteacher with enough support to ensure that the independent school standards are met and that the process of self-evaluation is rigorous.
- Nevertheless, during this inspection, they worked closely with the headteacher to produce a well-conceived school improvement plan to drive improvements forward.
- Although the school does not have a website, the proprietors are ensuring that parents and social workers receive up-to-date copies of policies, including those for safeguarding and information about the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders accurately record the thorough checks they make on the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils.
- Leaders carry out regular assessments of any potential risks to pupils while participating in activities in school or while they are on school trips.
- Leaders implement the safeguarding policy effectively and ensure that all staff are familiar with the most recent guidance on keeping children safe in education. Leaders have ensured that all training is up to date.
- Leaders work with staff, parents and social workers to strengthen the school's culture of safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Pupils' work, information about pupils' progress and visits to lessons over time show that there is not enough good teaching in the school to ensure that pupils make rapid and secure progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils' work over time shows some gaps in learning and that expectations for learning and behaviour are sometimes too low. Occasionally, a few pupils write obscenities in their books, which is not dealt with effectively. Teachers have not fully developed a climate for learning and good behaviour and their expectations are often too low. There were few examples of pupils' work on display and, in some lessons, a few pupils displayed negative attitudes to learning.

- Teachers are not using assessment information enough to ensure that pupils are given tasks which they find neither too hard nor too easy and yet which challenge their learning and deepen their thinking. Teachers often give the same tasks to pupils of different abilities to complete. In discussion, a few pupils said that they wanted their teachers to set harder work for them.
- Teachers are not recording and tracking progress regularly enough over time. As a result, they do not have a clear enough idea of the progress pupils are making. However, they use the information from baseline assessments well to set targets for achievement, which are based on predicted grades in public examinations. They share this information with parents and social workers in the helpful termly reports.
- Teaching assistants and additional teachers provide effective support in lessons by refocusing pupils with disruptive behaviour on their learning. Pupils usually respond well to this support, listening to the teacher, following instructions and completing the task set.
- The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. These basic skills are also promoted well in other subjects, such as personal, social, health and economic education, science and technology.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils do not demonstrate an understanding of the importance of good behaviour to their learning and progress and choose not to follow the rules. Occasionally, their behaviour is unsafe.
- Most pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their work shows that they are developing a deepening awareness of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, tolerance and mutual respect. They build their confidence and self-esteem over time as they begin to develop success in learning. They reflect on the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse and on how to avoid online bullying. Pupils deepen their awareness and appreciation of diversity by comparing different cultures and world religions to their own culture and beliefs.
- Pupils benefit from good guidance and support for the transition to colleges or work placements. Teachers and social workers work closely together to ensure that most pupils successfully transfer to college or work when they leave school.
- There are few recorded incidents of racism or prejudicial behaviour. Pupils say that bullying is rare and teachers deal with any such incidents effectively.
- The school provides a safe and secure environment. Most pupils said that they felt safe in school. Staff provide high levels of supervision throughout the day to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils learn how to use the internet and social media sites safely. Care managers and social workers recognised that pupils are safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Records of disruptive behaviour over time confirm that behaviour requires improvement. In lessons, over time and during the inspection, some pupils were disruptive and this affects the quality of teaching and learning.
- A very small number of pupils show little improvement in their attitudes to school, which is reflected in their poor attendance and persistent absence. However, nearly all pupils make good progress over time in their behaviour and attendance.
- Although overall attendance is below the national average, most pupils attend regularly.
- Many pupils develop good attitudes to learning by the time they leave school, which prepares them well for college and the world of work.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment due to their previous experience of disengagement with learning and histories of poor attendance. Pupils' work, termly reports on progress over time and outcomes of reviews of personal education plans show that pupils' progress from their different starting points is variable over time and therefore requires improvement.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the oldest pupils to take a wide range of examination courses, including GCSEs, in academic and vocational subjects in Year 11, which limits their progress. Most pupils leave with at least two recognised qualifications to enable them to transfer to college.
- Nevertheless, all pupils have good opportunities to experience a wide range of subjects, including science, art, humanities, physical education, French, English, mathematics and technology, which enables them to make progress. This was seen in samples of pupils' work across the school.
- The small number of pupils of different abilities, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able, make the same progress as other pupils with similar starting points. They all benefit from one-to-one support in lessons. Their progress is sometimes limited when staff do not take sufficient account of their prior learning and provide them with tasks which they find too difficult or too easy.
- The majority of pupils make good progress from their different starting points in the core subjects of reading, writing, mathematics and science, as seen in their personal education plans.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives, with most successfully transferring to college or employment on leaving school.

School details

Unique reference number	136236
DfE registration number	873/6028
Inspection number	10038908

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Direct Care Limited
Chair	Candy Shaw
Headteacher	Christopher Henton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,000
Telephone number	01945 860 055
Website	none
Email address	christopher.henton@directcareltd.com
Date of previous inspection	25 November 2014

Information about this school

- Begdale House School is a small day school owned by Direct Care Limited. It is situated in a rural location in Cambridgeshire and caters for the needs of up to eight pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, who are looked after by their local authority.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils, nor does it run any off-site units.
- Approximately half of the pupils have an education, health and care plan and most have histories of poor attendance in their previous schools. Some have not attended school for

two years. Pupils are admitted to the school at various times during the year and their length of stay varies from three months to two years.

- The school aims to ensure that pupils reach their full potential within a safe, supportive environment.
- The school received its last standard inspection in November 2014, when it was judged to be good. At that time, there were very few pupils on roll.
- Since its last inspection, the numbers of pupils in the school has increased and there are currently seven pupils on roll. There have been significant staff changes since the last inspection. A new headteacher and an additional teacher have recently been appointed and have been in post since September. The previous headteacher works as a part-time teacher at the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited parts of six lessons jointly with the headteacher and looked at samples of pupils' work over time.
- The inspector also examined the school's information about the progress pupils were making, including the destinations of the oldest pupils.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and the proprietors, including the chief executive, the regional director and the area manager of Direct Care Limited. There were no responses from parents on Parent View. The inspector received reports from the managers of the children's homes, a few social workers and the virtual headteacher of the local authority to seek their views. He also examined the responses in the four questionnaire returns from staff.
- The inspector looked at the school premises and accommodation and scrutinised a wide range of documents. This included the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding, information provided to parents and social workers, records of behaviour and attendance, the curriculum policy and schemes of work.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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