

The Beechfield School

Caretaker's Bungalow - the Nest, Birches Head Road, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire ST2 8DD

Inspection date

16 December 2020

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i), 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j) and 4

- The school has a written policy on its curriculum offer and approach to teaching and learning. Subject-specific plans and schemes are in place for a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, art and design, physical education (PE), design and technology, history and geography.
- These subject plans cover the age range and needs of the pupils that the school intends to admit. The subject plans link with the school's assessment policy. The school has access to external expertise to support any pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Most pupils admitted to the school are likely to have missed periods of education and may have gaps in their learning. Staff intend to use a mix of formal and informal assessments to identify appropriate starting points for pupils' learning when they first start at the school.
- The school has tracking in place to record and monitor pupils' progress and attainment. Staff intend to draw on this information to inform teaching and generate written reports about how well pupils are doing.
- The proprietor aims to set pupils on the right track towards relevant qualifications. Staff have identified several functional skills qualifications that pupils could work towards.
- The school has a personal, social and health education (PSHE) policy and programme of work in place. This includes information about how staff will teach pupils about protected characteristics and fundamental British values. The policy also describes the school's approach to careers guidance.

- The school aims to take pupils out and about on trips, for example to the beach or to a farm, to teach them about the world beyond Stoke-on-Trent. In addition, the school invites visiting speakers, such as the police, into school to talk about their work.
- Classrooms are suitably resourced. Staff provide pupils with access to books and computers.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is a detailed policy and guidance in place for managing pupils' behaviour. This guidance is tailored to the specific needs of the pupils that the school is likely to admit. It is designed to help pupils understand the consequences of their actions and improve their behaviour.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii) and 5(d)(iii)

- The school's primary focus is on helping pupils to manage their behaviour so that they can make the most of their education. As part of this work, there is a heavy emphasis on building confidence, trust, self-esteem and empathy.
- The school provides regular one-to-one sessions. Pupils also have the opportunity to take the school's dog for a walk with staff. These dog-walking sessions are intended to provide time and space for pupils to talk about their feelings and build relationships with others.
- Safeguarding and behaviour policies are up to date and promote responsible and safe behaviour.
- The proprietor is aware of the need to safeguard pupils from the promotion of partisan political views. With this in mind, staff aim to keep a watchful eye on any materials that pupils may bring into school. The school's stated policy is that pupils will only access the internet in school when a member of staff is with them.
- The school's PSHE policy and scheme include a focus on helping pupils learn about themselves and others. The policy provides staff with guidance about activities and lessons that help pupils to understand democracy and respectful behaviour. Staff are well informed about the risks pupils might face. Staff work with agencies such as the police to help pupils see the value of law and order.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The school's safeguarding policy is informed by recent government guidance and sets out clearly what staff need to know and do. The proprietor states that the safeguarding policy and other policy documents will be made available to parents and others on request. The school does not have a website. The proprietor knows what should be on a school website, should they choose to have one in the future.
- The school's behaviour policy is detailed and bespoke to the needs of the pupils that the school intends to admit. This policy is supported by a separate anti-bullying policy,

which provides guidance about bullying, how to spot it and what to do about it. The school's system of record-keeping about pupils' behaviour is well organised.

- Health and safety policies and risk assessments are in place. A fire risk assessment was completed by Staffordshire fire and rescue service in January 2020. Records of communication between the fire and rescue service and the proprietor show that the fire and rescue service is satisfied with the school's fire safety arrangements. The school has established a routine for testing alarms, evacuating the building and keeping records. The proprietor has made an arrangement with the on-site secondary school for fire extinguishers to be checked annually.
- First-aid information and equipment are appropriate. A written first-aid policy is in place, and staff received first-aid training earlier in 2020.
- It is intended that pupils will make use of the school kitchen under the supervision of staff. Appropriate risk assessments for this are in place.
- Cleaning materials are kept behind a locked door.
- The school has an appropriate system for recording attendance at school and following up any unexplained absences. The proprietor has recently created an admissions register to record when pupils start and leave the school.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b) and 21(6)

- The proprietor has ensured that a single central register of employment checks on staff is kept. This register includes the required information and is stored on a password-secured computer, with a back-up file. Other records relating to staff are kept in a similar way.
- The proprietor has checked that staff are not subject to any orders that prohibit them from teaching or holding a management position in a school.
- If a member of staff is absent, the proprietor can call upon other staff employed by Beechfield Education, but not normally based at the school. These staff are on the school's single central register of employment checks.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a) and 29(1)(b)

- The premises are located in a bungalow on the same site as a secondary school. The bungalow used to be residential accommodation for the secondary school's site

manager. The premises have been adapted to provide two small classrooms, a toilet and washroom for pupils, a relaxation room, an office and a kitchen.

- Lighting inside and out is in working order and provides adequate illumination. The rooms used as classrooms are suitable for their intended purpose.
- The toilet and washroom can be used by one pupil at a time and can be locked to ensure privacy. There is no staff toilet in the bungalow premises, but staff can use the adult toilets and washrooms at the on-site secondary school. This is about a 30-second walk away and, as such, is acceptable.
- Similarly, there are no showers in the bungalow. However, the proprietor has arranged for pupils to do PE and exercise at the next-door secondary school, where showers are available. These showers are well maintained and accessible for pupils.
- The basin and sink in the washroom and kitchen are served by hot and cold running water. When tested during the inspection, the hot water was warm enough and did not pose a risk of scalding.
- There is a small area of outdoor space within the school's boundary fencing. Beyond this, there is plenty of outdoor space at the nearby secondary school. This is purpose-built for sports and outdoor play. The proprietor has arranged with the secondary school to use this space.
- Inside the school, there is a small room where pupils can have some quiet, private space. The proprietor had initially identified this as having potential as a medical room. However, it is not ideal. The on-site secondary school has a spacious, purpose-built medical room that would be far better. During the inspection, the proprietor made an arrangement with the secondary school to use this facility. The proprietor intends to formalise this arrangement with a written agreement and a specific reference in the first-aid policy document.
- There is an adequate supply of drinking water from mains taps. It is marked as such.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(f), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(h), 32(1)(i), 32(1)(j), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(b)(ii), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(b), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d), 32(3)(e) and 32(3)(f)

- The school does not have a website. Instead, paper copies of information that would be required to be published on a website, should one exist, are available on request. The proprietor has confirmed that reports arising from any future inspections would also be made available.
- The proprietor intends to ensure that all of the required information in relation to the annual review of a pupil's education, health and care plan will be supplied to the relevant local authority. The school has a system in place for tracking and recording pupils' progress and attainment. Staff intend to use information from this to inform an annual written report to parents and placing local authorities. Similarly, the proprietor intends to provide information about income and expenditure to placing local authorities.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The school has a complaints policy. A paper copy is available on request. This policy outlines the informal and formal stages to hearing and responding to a complaint. It also sets out the timescales involved and arrangements for keeping a written record of complaints.
- Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the school's response, there is a procedure for a complaint to be heard by a panel made up of individuals who are not directly involved in the running or management of the school.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor is informed about the independent school standards and what they mean in practice. Since opening as an unregistered alternative provision in January 2020, the school team has worked towards preparing the school for registration as an independent special school. The proprietor displays an attentive and constructive willingness to get things right.
- The school aims to improve the behaviour and promote the well-being of pupils who have failed to cope in mainstream schools.
- Suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- The proprietor has ensured that all standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an accessibility plan. It sets out the proprietor's intentions and timescales to improve access to the premises, curriculum and information.
- The plan aims to promote equality and accessibility.
- The proprietor's actions mean that the school is likely to meet the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	148131
DfE registration number	861/6026
Inspection number	10173647

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Beechfield Education Ltd
Headteacher	Joanne Talbot-Beech
Annual fees (day pupils)	up to £270 a day
Telephone number	01782 864826
Website	None
Email address	jo@beechfield-education.com
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	8
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who is looked after by a local authority	2
Total hours operating as a school per week	25
Total hours of teaching provided per week	20

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	7 to 14	7 to 14	7 to 14
Number of pupils on the school roll	8	10	10

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	8	10
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	8	10
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	2	10
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	2	10

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	4	4
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	4	4

Information about this proposed school

- The Beechfield School, known locally as The Nest, first opened as a provider of alternative provision in January 2020.
- The school is based in a bungalow in the grounds of Birches Head Secondary Academy. The school also rents a space at The Bridge Centre, which is a nearby conference and community centre.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in relation to their social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have been excluded, or been at risk of exclusion, from mainstream schools.

- The school does not have a religious character.

Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to determine whether the school is likely to meet the independent school standards. This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspection was conducted on site.
- Before and during the on-site inspection, the lead inspector reviewed a range of documents and policies provided by the proprietor.
- During the on-site visit, the lead inspector met with the proprietor and other staff. He discussed the school's plans and proposals. This included the proposed curriculum, health, welfare and pastoral arrangements, safeguarding, admissions procedures and arrangements for communicating with parents and local authorities.
- The lead inspector conducted a tour of the premises with the proprietor and checked the single central register of employment checks on staff. The lead inspector visited a nearby conference centre called The Bridge Centre and the Birches Head Secondary Academy because the school uses some of their facilities.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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