

Bluebell School Ltd

Gloucester Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke on Trent ST7 1EH

Inspection dates

25 February 2021

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 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)(g), 2(2)(i), 3(i) and 3(j)

- Leaders have a clear vision and ethos for the school. They have high aspirations for the pupils. The school curriculum is based on the national curriculum, but it is not constrained by it. Leaders say that this enables them to focus on the social, emotional and intellectual development of its pupils. Leaders demonstrate clearly how the current key stage 4 curriculum supports pupils' personal development as well as providing a personalised education programme that is matched to pupils' interests and abilities. The proposed post-16 curriculum aims to build on this to further support the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of the students who are likely to attend.
- The key stage 4 curriculum is broad and balanced. It provides pupils with experiences in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. In addition, pupils who follow the core curriculum have a personalised study programme that matches their interests and talents and supports their next steps. The programme includes, for example, pupils being supported in the local community to learn skills such as shopping and how to travel on public transport. Pupils have access to a wide range of qualifications at levels matched to their needs and abilities. These range from pre-entry level to GCSE. Academic and vocational subjects are offered. Leaders say that they also offer qualifications in response to pupils' interests. For example, they offered GCSE geology for the first time.
- Leaders have planned the proposed key stage 5 curriculum to build on the school's current curriculum and it will run alongside the key stage 4 timetable. It is likely to provide a breadth of experience across a range of subjects. All students will continue to study English; mathematics; personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education; citizenship; life skills; social skills and vocational qualifications. Students

may attend work experience placements and/or supported external college placements dependent on their individual needs and interests.

- The planned PSHE education scheme of work for key stage 5 is likely to support students' understanding of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. For example, leaders plan to enable students to study cultural and religious festivals and commemorative days. It is also clear in leaders' plans how they intend to continue to promote fundamental British values. In citizenship lessons, for example, students are likely to develop an understanding of public institutions and services in England.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Paragraph 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h), 3(g) and 4

- The school's teaching and learning policy makes it clear how leaders will monitor the quality of teaching and learning through the use of a monitoring cycle. This cycle will include teacher appraisal, lesson observations, work scrutinies and gathering views of students.
- All pupils have a baseline assessment on entry. Teachers are expected to use both formative and summative assessment to monitor pupils' progress over time. This includes progress in pupils' academic and personal development. All pupils have an individual education plan (IEP). This plan monitors the progress that pupils make towards the outcomes in their education, health and care (EHC) plan. Staff regularly review IEPs. Leaders intend to continue this practice for students who they plan to admit into key stage 5.
- Pupils are effectively supported in making informed choices about a broad range of career options. Pupils begin a career development programme in Year 8. This includes work experience placements in Year 10 and visits to colleges and universities. Pupils are also supported with writing curriculum vitae and making applications to colleges. As a result, most pupils in Year 11 this year have made an appropriate application to post-16 provision. The proposed post-16 careers programme intends to build on this, with a particular focus on further training, higher education, and the jobs market.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f) and 3(h)

- Leaders know their pupils well. The learning environment is effectively adapted to meet their needs. For example, 'pods' around the school enable pupils to be taught individually if they are finding it difficult to learn in the main classroom.
- Two additional classrooms have been added to the premises to provide additional learning spaces. Leaders intend to use these mainly for key stage 4 and 5 lessons. Pupils and students in these key stages, however, will be timetabled to use specialist teaching spaces such as the science laboratory and the home skills room when needed. All teaching spaces are well resourced. Inspirational displays in classrooms and corridors, suitable furniture, classrooms opening out onto appropriate outdoor learning spaces and a range of teaching materials, are hallmarks of the school.

- Members of the proposed teaching team for the post-16 provision are all highly experienced and have good subject knowledge. For example, two of the teachers are quality nominees for BTEC National Diploma qualifications. Leaders plan for the team to work closely with the other three schools in the company to share good practice and moderate students' work. These arrangements are likely to support students' academic outcomes effectively.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1) and 32(1)(c) [Part 6. Provision of information]

- The school's safeguarding policy reflects current government guidelines and is published on the school's website. Leaders have given consideration to potential additional safeguarding requirements for post-16 students. Extra information is included in the safeguarding policy and staff have had appropriate training.
- Leaders undertake all the required safeguarding checks on staff and ensure that safeguarding training is regularly updated.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c) and 10

- In the writing of the behaviour policy, leaders have considered how it will support pupils' SEMH and their ability to regulate their own emotions and behaviour. For example, the creation of 'retreat' areas, where pupils can choose to go for time away from the classroom, is valued by pupils. As a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour and the use of physical restraint have significantly reduced over time. It is intended that this policy will be implemented in the proposed post-16 provision.
- There is an anti-bullying policy in place. Leaders effectively evaluate the information they collect on the rare occasions that bullying happens. This information is used to provide appropriate support to both the victim and perpetrator. Leaders state that this approach will naturally extend into the proposed post-16 provision.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Paragraph 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- A tour of the premises shows that they are well maintained. An action plan summary of the premises indicates that all appropriate checks are carried out. This includes a monthly fire extinguisher check, weekly testing of the fire alarm and the regular testing of portable appliances.
- There is a policy in place that covers health and safety, first aid, and risk assessment policy and procedures. It explains the responsibilities of the business manager and senior leaders. The policy covers a wide range of aspects of keeping pupils, staff and visitors safe. These include the reporting of accidents, emergency procedures and the use of display screen equipment.

- Leaders' records show that the procedures for administering first aid and medicine to pupils are understood and followed by all staff. Emergency care plans are written for pupils who need them. The plans are shared with all relevant staff. This includes chaperones on transport and drivers. Plans are reviewed regularly.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Paragraph 14 and 15

- The school's admissions and attendance registers adhere to government guidelines. For example, the attendance register records morning and afternoon sessions. The admissions register records at least two emergency contacts for each pupil. These procedures will also apply to post-16 students.
- Pupils are supervised at all times. Leaders intend that this arrangement will be the same for post-16 students. The planned increase in the number of staff employed by the school is likely to help in keeping pupils and students free from harm.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 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 school is maintained to a high standard. All rooms are well lit and have good acoustics.
- There are suitable toilet facilities with hot and cold running water and handwashing facilities. The medical room is spacious, well-resourced and includes a wash basin and bed. There is a toilet nearby. This room is also used for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils.
- Drinking water is available in classrooms and corridors. This is either from marked taps or water fountains.
- There is adequate outdoor space for pupils and students to play and socialise. One area of the playground can be separated so that pupils of different ages can play together safely. Leaders, however, intend to have post-16 breaktimes and lunchtimes at different times to those of younger pupils.
- The school has a sports hall and changing rooms for pupils and students to use for physical education lessons. There is also a separate area outside where leaders are developing a forest school.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the independent school standards. They provided extensive evidence to show how they were currently meeting the

standards consistently. They explained how they would continue to do so if the material changes were implemented.

- Leaders are clear about why they want to extend the age range of the pupils at the school. They explained how some Year 11 pupils are not ready to go to college at the age of 16. Leaders are confident that they will be able to support these pupils effectively and give them the confidence to move on when they are ready. In addition, leaders say that an increase in the school's roll would meet the current demand for places. They say it would also give them more flexibility in the organisation of teaching groups according to pupils' needs.
- Leaders have a wide range of knowledge and experience in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are committed to creating a therapeutic community that effectively meets pupils' needs and gives them the skills they need to lead an independent life.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met if the material changes are implemented.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. There is an appropriate accessibility plan in place.

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 that are relevant to the material changes.

School details

Unique reference number	143932
DfE registration number	860/6045
Inspection number	10179186

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material changes that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Bluebell School Ltd
Chair	Dawn Houghton
Headteacher	Mr Craig Barker
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,500–£73,500
Telephone number	01782 987012
Website	www.bluebellschool.co.uk
Email address	cbarker@bluebellschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	26–28 June 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 16	5 to 19	5 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	81	116	116

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	100	116
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	100	116
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	100	116
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	100	116

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	64	70
Number of part-time teaching staff	3	3
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	0

Information about this school

- The school currently provides education for up to 100 pupils aged five to 16. All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils have special educational needs linked to autism spectrum disorder, learning difficulties and/or SEMH. Leaders would like to increase the capacity to 116 pupils across the key stages to respond to the current demand for places.

- Leaders propose to give current Year 11 pupils the option of continuing their education in this school if the material changes are granted. However, leaders will also support pupils with their transition to other post-16 provision if the provision is better suited to meet the pupils' needs.
- Current pupils are placed at the school via referrals from local authorities. These authorities include Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, and Cheshire East.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school does not use, or intend to use, alternative provision.
- An unannounced emergency inspection commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) was carried out in July 2019. The last independent school standard inspection of the school took place in June 2018. The overall effectiveness was judged as outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- This material change inspection was commissioned by the DfE to determine whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented.
- This was the first material change inspection in respect of these particular changes that the school has applied to make.
- As part of the material change the school proposes to cater for key stage 5 students who have an EHC plan. Their special educational needs are likely to be linked to autism spectrum disorder, learning difficulties and/or SEMH.
- Documents were submitted electronically prior to the inspection, which the lead inspector reviewed remotely. The inspection also included an on-site visit. During the visit the lead inspector met with the proprietor, the executive headteachers, the headteacher, other senior leaders and the business manager. She also conducted a tour of the premises.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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