

Inspection of Best Futures

The Stables, Church Lane, Aylesby, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN37 7AW

Inspection dates:

5 to 7 May 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small school and staff are friendly and approachable. Pupils feel safe at this school and bullying is very rare. Pupils attend well and settle confidently into lessons at the start of each day. Pupils are respectful and do not disrupt the learning of others.

The school's mission is to help pupils towards a successful future. Pupils may come to Best Futures after struggling to cope in their previous school. Staff understand the needs of their pupils well. They plan activities that develop pupils' confidence and social skills. For example, pupils might have drumming lessons at a local community centre or visit a local farm park.

School leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious. However, staff struggle to cover some subjects in sufficient detail. This happens when staff have less time to give to a particular subject or when they lack subject expertise. Staff deliver English and mathematics well but are less confident in subjects such as history and science.

School leaders recognise the importance of reading and make sure every pupil has a daily phonics lesson. Staff use books and resources from a mix of different reading schemes. This can be confusing for pupils.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders have designed a curriculum that aims to cover all subjects in the national curriculum. Staff also deliver lessons that directly support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs.

Staff teach English and mathematics well. They have organised the long-, medium- and short-term plans for these subjects in a way that helps pupils learn. Staff cover these subjects in stand-alone lessons, as well as within cross-curricular topics. Staff are confident in the content they are teaching in these subjects. They can assess and identify gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly and adapt teaching when needed.

Staff teach subjects other than English and mathematics through topics. For example, the topics 'Predator' and 'Tribal Tales' have content linked to science and history. Pupils enjoy the topics and are keen to share what they have learned from them. Staff do not have time in the timetable to cover the topic subjects in depth. Also, staff have gaps in their subject knowledge and when assessing pupils they do not always pick up misconceptions that pupils have.

School leaders collect a lot of information about pupils when they join the school. They recognise the importance of identifying the range of needs that pupils may have. Once pupils have settled into the school, staff check what pupils know and can do in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff also assess pupils' social and emotional development. School leaders use all this information to design a personalised plan for each pupil. Staff implement these plans well and monitor

pupils' progress against agreed targets. School leaders review these plans at least termly.

Staff said that previously some pupils did not have a daily phonics lesson. School leaders have addressed this and now all pupils at the early stage of reading have phonics every day. There are resources for teaching phonics and books that match the sounds that pupils know. However, there is no fidelity to a unified reading scheme. Some staff deliver phonics effectively, but some staff struggle with the mix of resources and lack of recent training. The proprietor had plans to buy a new reading scheme and train all staff in how to use it. This has not happened. This is partly due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic as leaders had to focus on other training and resources over the past year.

Staff are aware of the individual needs of the pupils in their care. They are skilled at helping pupils regulate their emotions. As a result, pupils are generally calm and behave well.

School leaders have threaded pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) through the curriculum. The taught topics include PSHE lessons and there are themed weeks to add to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. There is a school council and staff encourage pupils to share their views. Staff help pupils to understand diversity and equality. For example, one topic on human rights introduced pupils to Nelson Mandela and his contribution to equality in South Africa.

School leaders help pupils into the next stage of their education well. They teach pupils how to manage in a larger school. They provide practical support to help pupils settle into their new school.

Staff contact parents when they need to follow up a child's absence and when a child has had a successful week. Staff meet with parents at annual reviews of education, health and care plans. Parents are also invited to end of term celebration events. Parents told us that they would welcome more frequent and detailed information about how their child is doing at school.

The proprietor has ensured all the independent school standards continue to be met. The proprietor has a clear, strategic mission for the school. Staff share her vision for the school and feel well supported by school leaders.

The proprietor oversees the well-being of pupils and staff at the school effectively. Staff know what the school's health and safety procedures are and how to keep pupils safe. The headteacher makes sure risk assessments are complete and that staff know how to implement them.

The school's safeguarding policy is on the school's website. The headteacher has ensured that this policy is compliant with current statutory guidance.

The proprietor is aware of the importance of the Equality Act 2010 and ensures it is implemented fully by school leaders.

The proprietor has established a community interest company board. The members of this board fulfil the role of governors. They meet regularly and have the skills and experience to support and challenge school leaders. The proprietor collects termly performance reports on the school. These reports provide board members with detailed and accurate information on the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff recognise that pupils have additional needs which can make them more vulnerable. Staff teach pupils how to understand their emotions and communicate their feelings. The use of trips out into the wider community contributes to pupils understanding of how to behave safely in a range of situations.

The proprietor knows about safer recruitment. She completes all required checks on any adult who works or volunteers at the school.

The proprietor has provided training for staff in safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and her deputy have received enhanced training. The DSL knows how to identify pupils who may need help from external agencies. She is quick to make referrals when these are necessary. The DSL keeps an accurate record of any referral made to the local authority and the outcome.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

School leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum so that pupils cover the national curriculum and an enriched programme to support pupils' personal development. However, staff do not teach all the national curriculum subjects effectively. This is particularly the case for the foundation subjects. This is limiting what pupils learn and remember in these subjects. School leaders should make sure that staff have sufficient subject knowledge to deliver all the subjects that are in the planned curriculum effectively.

School leaders have not allocated enough time in the timetable to cover all subjects in the planned curriculum. Pupils do not have the time to study subjects in depth. School leaders should review the planned curriculum and ensure all subjects are given sufficient teaching time.

School leaders recognise the importance of reading. However, they have not made sure that staff have the resources or skills to deliver phonics effectively. This means that some pupils are not gaining phonics knowledge securely. School leaders should ensure staff have access to a resourced, sequential reading scheme. School leaders should review staff's phonics knowledge and provide appropriate training.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 142828 |
| DfE registration number | 812/6004 |
| Local authority | North East Lincolnshire |
| Inspection number | 10192278 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 11 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Dawn Best |
| Headteacher | Dawn Best |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £28,500–£38,500 |
| Telephone number | 01472 278978 |
| Website | www.bestfutures-school.co.uk |
| Email address | principal@bestfutures-school.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 21 to 23 May 2019 |

Information about this school

- The school is in a rural setting in North East Lincolnshire.
- The school is registered to accept up to 12 pupils between the ages of five and 11 years. Pupils are referred to the school by a local authority and have social, emotional or mental health difficulties or have an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. Most pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher. At the time of this inspection, the proprietor was in the process of recruiting a new headteacher.
- The proprietor has established a community interest company board. This board functions as a governing body.
- The school was judged to be inadequate at the last standard inspection in May 2019. There was a progress monitoring inspection in January 2020. The school was judged to have met all previously un-met standards at that inspection.
- The school's mission is to 'offer positive learning experiences within a safe and caring environment that will enable pupils to develop their full potential'.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to carry out this standard inspection earlier in the cycle than was previously planned. This was because of a concern received by the DfE about the safety and well-being of pupils and staff.
- This inspection was carried out with no notice. This is because this was a standard inspection combined with an emergency inspection due to the concern received by the Department for Education. We phoned the school shortly before going onto the school's site to ensure compliance with the school's COVID-19 protocols.
- We met with the proprietor and senior leaders including the DSL. We also met with a range of other staff. We held an online meeting with members of the governing body.

- We undertook a tour of the school and visited all classrooms and social areas. We checked the school buildings and grounds against the independent school standards.
- We did deep dives into reading, mathematics and history. The deep dive for each subject included a meeting with curriculum leaders and a review of subject documents and plans. The deep dive also involved lesson visits, meetings with pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- We visited lessons of other subjects taught at the school and looked at pupils' work from these subjects.
- We observed pupils' behaviour at the start of the school day, at lunchtime and in lessons.
- We scrutinised school documents and the arrangements to safeguard pupils. This included checking the school's safeguarding systems and the single central register, meeting with the DSL and speaking with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- We spoke with pupils and observed them reading to their teacher.
- We had contact with parents through written comments sent in during the inspection. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We considered questionnaires completed by nine staff and 11 pupils.
- We sought the views of local authorities who commission places at the school.
- We spoke to a headteacher from a local school where pupils had moved to after being at Best Futures School.
- We visited venues in the local community which the school use for teaching and enrichment activities.

Inspection team

Patricia Head, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Suzette Garland-Grimes

Ofsted Inspector

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