

Inspection of The Beechfield School

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

Inspection dates: 8–10 June 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

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and settled at this small school. Pupils respect the staff and enjoy talking to them. Staff listen carefully to the pupils' concerns. Leaders have high expectations of pupils and teach them to be respectful to each other and everyone they meet.

There has been bullying in the past, but pupils said that the staff dealt with it well. Now bullying is very rare. Regular morning walks with the school dog help pupils to get ready for lessons. Pupils behave well in lessons and get on with their work.

Teachers do not consistently plan learning that helps pupils gradually gain more knowledge and skills. Pupils also say that they would like to do more science, art and other languages. Parents and carers spoken to overwhelmingly support the school. A typical comment was: 'This is the first place he has ever settled. He doesn't miss a day. They handle his emotions really well.'

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

Learning in some subjects is better than in others. In physical education (PE) and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), the order of learning is clear. What pupils have learned in the past helps them with what they are learning now. In this way, pupils' knowledge and skills build well over time in these subjects.

However, pupils do not make as much progress in English and mathematics. This is because leaders have not considered the order of pupils' learning well enough. Pupils find it harder to remember what they have learned before to help them with their new learning. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn some other subjects, such as science and art. This limits the development of their knowledge and skills in these subjects. There are schemes of work for these subjects, but they are yet to be fully developed and used.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff make accurate assessments of what pupils know and can do. They use the assessments to help them identify what they think pupils should learn next. This enables pupils to make strong progress in subjects where the curriculum is well developed, for example in PE and PSHE.

Teachers understand pupils' social and emotional needs well. They plan learning carefully to meet these needs. For example, some pupils need to be active and often cannot sit still for very long, so teachers plan active learning that will interest and engage them. Teachers also provide pupils with a range of opportunities to learn outdoors. Teachers work one to one with individual pupils, providing them with the support they need to engage in learning. This effective support has helped pupils to have a more positive attitude to learning. For example, pupils now more readily engage in reading, writing and mathematics, which is helping them to make better progress in these subjects.

Phonics is taught well. Teachers have good subject knowledge. This helps pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read to be able to read more fluently.

Teachers and education engagement specialists are highly skilled in behaviour management. They understand pupils' needs very well. They provide pupils with effective support to enable them to learn in a calm environment. Pupils listen to the teachers because teachers respect them and care about their concerns. Staff's support has helped pupils to understand how to better manage their own behaviour so that they are ready to learn. The support has also helped pupils to develop more positive attitudes to learning. Pupils conduct themselves well and show concern for others at playtimes and on visits outside school. The school's strong pastoral support is effective in encouraging pupils to attend school more regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved dramatically from their attendance in previous schools.

All staff place pupils' personal development at the heart of what they do. They have high aspirations for pupils and provide them with a range of ways to enhance their personal development. They achieve this well. Staff take every opportunity to support pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils know about, and understand, British values and why these are important. For example, pupils understand why laws are made. Visits to a variety of different places, such as the beach and Trentham Gardens, stopped during the pandemic. However, the visits are restarting again. For example, leaders are planning to take pupils to Manchester on the train. Pupils will plan the trip themselves, which will help them to develop teamwork and decision-making and leadership skills. Pupils will also plan a visit to a restaurant to develop their understanding of eating healthily. Pupils are encouraged to develop their talents and interests, such as developing skills in art, or in football by belonging to a local football team. Careers education is effective and leads to full, valuable discussions with pupils about the choices they will make about their lives.

Leaders have high expectations of where they would like the school to be. They know that there is inconsistency in how some subjects are planned and taught. Leaders have begun to provide training and support for teachers to help them better understand how to plan the different curriculum subjects so that pupils can build on their prior learning more successfully. Staff's skills in curriculum planning are now developing, but further training is required to enable all staff to have a secure and deep understanding of curriculum planning. Staff value the training they have received for the pastoral care and management of the pupils they teach. This training has enabled staff to become skilled in behaviour management. Staff love working at the school and have only praise for the headteacher and curriculum leader, whom they feel support them well.

Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The school meets all the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders are diligent in caring for pupils and recording concerns. They attend all safeguarding meetings and are prepared to challenge external agencies if they feel that pupils do not receive the right support. All staff know and understand the safeguarding procedures well. New members of staff are recruited safely and benefit from a detailed and supportive induction programme to enable them to understand the school's safeguarding procedures. The site is safe and secure. Staff teach the pupils to keep themselves safe both online and in the community. Pupils say that they feel safe.

The safeguarding policy meets current government requirements and is given to parents on request.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not focused sufficiently on ensuring that all subjects are planned and sequenced so that pupils can build successfully on their prior learning. Subjects such as PE and PSHE are planned well and pupils make strong progress in these subjects. However, pupils make less progress in other subjects, such as English and mathematics, because these curriculums are less well developed. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are planned and sequenced effectively, so that pupils can make strong progress across the whole curriculum.
- Leaders have provided staff with highly effective training and support in behaviour management. However, leaders have not ensured that staff have had sufficient training to enable them to understand how to plan a well-sequenced curriculum in the subjects they teach. Leaders should ensure that staff have the necessary support to enable them to develop well-planned curriculums in all subjects.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about subjects such as science and art. As a result, they make limited progress in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that pupils have more opportunities to study subjects other than English, mathematics, PSHE and PE to enable them to make progress in all subjects.

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

Unique reference number	148131
DfE registration number	861/6026
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10192414
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Beechfield Education Ltd
Headteacher	Joanne Talbot-Beech
Annual fees (day pupils)	Up to £270 per day
Telephone number	01782 864826
Website	None
Email address	jo@beechfield-education.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this 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 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 SEND 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

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.

- At the time of the inspection, three pupils were enrolled at the school, while five pupils from other schools were attending part-time alternative provision at The Beechfield School. Although the school caters for both girls and boys, no girls are currently on roll. All pupils are in key stage 3.
- Inspectors conducted their inspection on site, but also visited The Bridge Centre for a PE lesson. One inspector accompanied pupils on their morning walk and on their visit to the park.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the business partner, the curriculum leader and all other members of staff.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors focused on the following subjects: English and reading, mathematics, PSHE and PE. They spoke to pupils about their work and more generally about their school life and whether or not they felt safe.
- Inspectors visited lessons. On two occasions, these visits were made jointly with either the business partner or the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised schemes of work, plans and a variety of other documents and policies about the curriculum.
- Documents related to safeguarding were checked, including the checks that leaders make prior to employment on staff's suitability to work with children. Inspectors checked that the safeguarding policy and procedures are implemented effectively.

- The lead inspector considered behaviour records and records of sanctions, as well as scrutinising the accident reports.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school accompanied by the headteacher and made checks of health and safety documents. She also visited facilities at the Birches Head Academy that are used by the school: the shower room and changing area and the first-aid room. She perused the agreement that the school has made with Birches Head Academy.
- The lead inspector considered the four responses to Ofsted’s survey for staff. There were no responses on Ofsted’s Parent View questionnaire and no free-text responses.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to four parents, a social worker and the lead educational psychologist for Stoke-on-Trent local authority.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Sims

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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