

Benjamin College

4 Wren Path, Fairford Leys, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 7AR

Inspection date

13 July 2021

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7–7(b), 9–9(c), 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16–16(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy has been created with the school's particular operational context firmly in mind. The policy takes account of relevant guidance including 'Keeping children safe in education'. At present, the school does not have a live website, but the policy is available on request.
- Staff are well versed in the school's safeguarding procedures. The processes for communicating, recording and acting on any safeguarding concerns are firmly embedded. These procedures are designed to negate any potential challenge posed by the school's multi-site nature.
- Other necessary policies and procedures to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of pupils are in place and fit for purpose. Leaders prioritise the training of all staff in first aid. The importance of careful risk assessment threads through the school's work. An overarching policy statement sets out the principles, expectations, responsibilities and procedures for writing, implementing and reviewing risk assessments.
- Fire-safety risk assessments and associated procedures follow a consistent format across the school, but are rightly written, maintained and reviewed according to each specific site.
- Admissions and attendance registers are in place and show all the legally required information.
- The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies and approaches are grounded in the school's particular context. They set out the required information, for example about possible sanctions in the event of misbehaviour. Predominantly, the aim of the policies is to create a positive culture and enable staff to take consistent approaches to managing behaviour and bullying.

- The school is likely to meet all the requirements of the paragraphs in this part if the material change is implemented.

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

Paragraph 18(2)–18(3), 19(2)–19(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(7)(b)

- A single central record is in place. It shows all the required checks, including of a person's identity, appearance on barred and prohibition lists, enhanced criminal records disclosures, their qualifications and their right to work in the United Kingdom. The school does not make use of supply staff or volunteers, but leaders understand the necessary vetting requirements should this situation change.
- The single central record was updated during the inspection to show the dates of the various checks, rather than just confirming that they had happened. Similarly, the checks already carried out on the suitability of the proprietor and governors were added to the record. This included the relevant confirmation that they have not been barred from being involved in the leadership and management of an independent school.
- All the requirements of these paragraphs are likely to continue to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(2), 25, 26, 27–27(b), 28(1)–28(2)(b), 29(1)–29(1)(b)

- This school is split over nine sites. Each site includes a school room that can accommodate up to four pupils. This is the basis for the school's existing registration and the basis on which the school currently operates.
- Across sites, separate toilet facilities are available for staff and pupils.
- Other requirements of this part are all likely to continue to be met. For example, there are suitable arrangements for accommodating sick or injured pupils. Drinking water is accessible, and there is adequate lighting and acoustics.
- Pupils go off site for physical education, but there are attractive outdoor spaces at each premises for fresh air and recreation.
- The school has a maintenance team on hand and clear procedures for reporting and dealing with any health and safety concerns.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the relevant standards of this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- Through recent inspection cycles, the proprietor and leaders have developed a strong track record of meeting the independent school standards (the standards) and requirements placed upon the school and other registered provisions.

- The school now has a small governing body, a development triggered by a recommendation from the previous standard inspection. Governors bring relevant knowledge and experience to the context and aims of the school. It is early days for the governing body, but it has made a promising start.
- The proprietor and governors have a sound knowledge and understanding of the standards and associated requirements. They have been mindful of some aspects of these in their oversight of the school's work. However, the proprietor and governors recognise that there is scope for closer attention to the detail of the various requirements and to further tighten quality assurance systems. This inspection identified some lapses. Although these were quickly rectified, further issues could call into question the extent to which the proprietor, leaders and managers ensure that the standards are continually met, as required.
- Taking into account all available evidence, including the proprietor's strong track record, the standard contained within this part is likely to continue to be met if the material change is implemented.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- There is suitable planning in place for improving accessibility, which is aligned with the school's specific purpose and admissions criteria. There is a particular emphasis on improving access to the curriculum.

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 change.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 135805 |
| DfE registration number | 825/6042 |
| Inspection number | 10155799 |

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 change that the school has applied to make.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School status | Independent special school |
| Proprietor | Claudette Deysel |
| Headteacher | Mrs Margaret Bond |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £6,500 |
| Telephone number | 01296 483584 |
| Website | None |
| Email address | info@benjamincollege.co.uk |
| Date of previous standard inspection | 30 January–1 February 2018 |

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal | Inspector's recommendation |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Age range of pupils | 12 to 18 | 12 to 18 | 12 to 18 |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 18 | 40 | 36 |

The school is organised in line with a principle of educating up to a maximum of four pupils at each site. There are currently only nine operational sites, making a total potential capacity of 36 pupils.

Pupils

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Mixed |

| | | |
|--|----|----------|
| Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age | 18 | 40 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 | 0 |
| Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities | 18 | Up to 40 |
| Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan | 12 | Up to 40 |
| Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan | 12 | Up to 40 |

Staff

| | School's current position | School's proposal |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff | 8.8 | 10.6 |
| Number of part-time teaching staff | 6 | 7 |

Information about this school

- Benjamin College operates across nine sites. It provides education for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have additional complex needs. The majority of pupils have an education, health and care plan. All are children looked after and are placed by local authorities.
- There were no sixth-form students at the time of the inspection.
- The school uses two alternative providers, neither of which are registered as independent schools.
- The previous standard inspection took place from 30 January to 1 February 2018.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education because the proprietor had applied to make changes to the school's registration. The proprietor wished to increase maximum potential number of pupils on roll.
- This was the first material change inspection.
- The inspector visited each school site, accompanied by the headteacher, and spoke with the deputy headteacher, other staff and pupils. He also had remote discussions with the proprietor, chair of governors, designated safeguarding lead and the well-being lead.
- Before and during the inspection, the inspector checked policies, records and documentation related to the independent school standards that were within the scope of this inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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