

# Inspection of Begdale House School

Begdale Road, Elm, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0AZ

---

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 October 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

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils say that Begdale House is a friendly and safe place to learn. Staff are very caring and supportive. They understand and respond to pupils' social and emotional needs well. Pupils develop positive working relationships with one another and with staff. These contribute strongly to improving pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils socialise happily together at lunchtimes.

Pupils told us that there is no bullying at Begdale House. Pupils recognise and respect others' differences. Staff listen to pupils' views. Pupils asked for the rabbits and guinea pigs that are popular additions to the school. They take responsibility for caring for these animals. Pupils built the hutches and runs for the animals to live in.

While most pupils make strong progress in their personal development, attendance and behaviour, they do not do as well as they should across the range of subjects they learn. Sometimes teachers do not anticipate the gaps that pupils have in their knowledge due to missing long periods of education. Teachers do not always help pupils to build on what they already know to learn new things.

Pupils get advice that helps them to make informed choices about what they want to do when they leave school.

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

Leaders have constructed a broad curriculum. They have ensured that current pupils can study for a wide range of qualifications that suits pupils' differing abilities and aspirations. Several staff members are new. The staff team are still developing. Staff have not had all the training and guidance they need to help them to plan effectively for pupils' learning over time. Some staff lack the subject knowledge and confidence to teach across a range of subjects.

The quality of leaders' curriculum plans in different subjects and the delivery of these plans are too variable. Where learning is effectively planned, staff help pupils to remember important knowledge and build on what they have learned previously. However, some plans do not identify the important subject knowledge that pupils need to learn. This knowledge is not always taught in a logical order that helps pupils deepen their understanding. This means that pupils are not able to make the best progress they can across all the subjects that they learn.

Teachers do not routinely check what pupils already know and can do. Teachers do not consistently identify the content and subject knowledge that pupils need to understand well before learning new things. They do not recognise that some pupils do not have this understanding because there have been long periods out of education for some individuals. As a result, lessons and activities are not always pitched at the right level. When this is the case, learning time is not used effectively.

Staff check on what pupils know and remember in each subject. In some subjects, such as food technology, formal checks on how well pupils are learning at different times of the year are new. Staff do not always use the results of these assessments to adapt their plans or teaching. This means pupils do not revisit some important knowledge that they need to be successful. This slows their progress. In the last academic year, leaders did not report to parents and carers on how well pupils were learning in each of the subjects that they studied.

The new school leaders have increased opportunities for pupils to use their reading and writing knowledge in all subjects. They are providing all pupils with opportunities to read more widely. They have systems in place to quickly identify pupils who struggle with reading and ensure that pupils get the extra help they need to improve.

Leaders ensure that pupils settle in well. Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs. They take great care to ensure that these needs are met.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about issues relevant to them in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils learn important life skills, such as getting on with others, respecting individual differences and making good choices. Pupils get advice about future careers and further education tailored to their interests.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Staff manage behaviour sensitively and well. Staff act as strong role models in helping pupils to develop a can-do attitude to learning.

Leaders, governors and the proprietor body want the best for pupils. They hold school leaders to account well. They have accurately identified the actions that they need to take to improve the school. However, governors and the proprietor body share school leaders' over generous view on the quality of education currently being provided.

Leaders and the proprietor body have not ensured that all the independent school standards are consistently met. Building work to develop more specialist teaching rooms is planned. Buildings are well maintained. Pupils are safe because safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures are followed rigorously. The school complies with the Equality Act 2010. However, there are weaknesses in the planning and implementation of the curriculum. Assessment systems are not fully developed. Staff have not had the training they need to help them to plan effectively for pupils' learning across the curriculum. The most recent annual report provided to parents and carers did not give information about pupils' attainment and progress in the main subjects taught.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work in schools are thorough and accurately recorded. Staff know how to recognise the risks that pupils face. Leaders follow up any concerns swiftly. They ensure that pupils get the help they need. They work closely with external agencies.

Pupils learn about different risks through the PSHE curriculum. Pupils learn about the risks of using social media and working online. Leaders recognise that staff need to keep up to date with developments in this area. A programme of ongoing training and regular updates for staff is in place.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some subjects, curriculum plans are not designed well enough to help teachers teach all subjects effectively. Some plans do not identify the important subject knowledge and content that pupils need to know. Curriculum plans do not always put knowledge in a logical order. As a result, pupils are not building on their learning and deepening knowledge in all subjects as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans are of high quality and identify what pupils need to learn and organise this in a way that helps pupils know and remember more.
- Several members of staff are new to the school. Some staff do not have the knowledge they need to teach with confidence across subjects. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the training and guidance they need to have the expertise needed to implement the intended curriculum in all subjects successfully.
- The school's assessment systems are still evolving. Staff do not routinely adapt their planning to take account of the things that pupils already know and what they need to do better. This means that teachers do not identify some gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should check that the intended programme of assessment is implemented effectively and used to adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs and prior learning.
- The proprietor and governors have not ensured that all independent school standards are met. Not all the requirements for the provision of information are met. The proprietor and governors should ensure that the annual report for parents provides information about pupils' attainment and progress in the subjects taught. The proprietor and governors should use their checks on leaders' work to ensure that they have an accurate view of the quality of education and ensure that all related independent school standards are met.

## **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 information from Ofsted

Parent View 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136236
<b>DfE registration number</b>	873/6028
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10203401
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	8
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Keys Group
<b>Chair</b>	Nicola Kelly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Murray
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£26,000 to £42,510
<b>Telephone number</b>	01945 860055
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.keys-group.co.uk">www.keys-group.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:jo.murray@keys-group.co.uk">jo.murray@keys-group.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 to 28 September 2017

## Information about this school

- Begdale House School is a small day school. It is currently registered with the Department for Education to admit up to 16 pupils.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils are in receipt of an education, health and care plan. Pupils are funded by local authorities. Most pupils arrive having been excluded from school or having missed long periods of education.
- In October 2018, Keys Group acquired the school. The previous proprietor was Direct Care Ltd.
- Following the previous standard inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in 2017. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2021. She is also headteacher of another school, Westfield House School, which has the same proprietor. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The school does not use agency staff. The school does not run any off-site specialist units or provision.
- The school uses Cambridge Equine College as an alternative provision. This enables pupils to study for accredited qualifications in equine care.
- At the time of the previous standard inspection, the school operated from one building. It now operates from the same building and another building on the same site.
- The school's inspection history:
  - The school's first standard inspection was in July 2011. The school was judged to be good.
  - A material change inspection took place in July 2014 as the proprietor requested an increase in capacity and the age range of pupils attending the school. The school was judged as likely to meet the relevant standards if the proposed changes were approved.
  - A standard inspection took place in November 2014. The school was judged to be good.
  - A standard inspection took place in September 2017. The school was judged to require improvement. Two independent school standards were not met.
  - In January 2018, Ofsted evaluated the school's action plan to remedy the aspects of provision which did not meet the independent school standards in the previous inspection. The plan was judged to be acceptable.
  - In August 2020, Ofsted conducted a material change inspection following a request to increase the capacity of the school to 16 pupils. The school was judged as likely to meet the relevant standards if the change was approved.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors held meetings with the regional manager for Keys Group and the chair of the proprietor body, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and other school staff. Inspectors held conversations with representatives of organisations that work with the school, including a telephone conversation with staff from the alternative provider that pupils attend.
- Inspectors looked closely at the quality of education in English, mathematics, food technology and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors visited lessons, checked curriculum plans, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work in a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at policies, documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the single central record. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtimes. Inspectors also reviewed records of behaviour and attendance and other information provided by school leaders.
- There were no responses to the online parent questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, or Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Wendy Varney

Her Majesty's Inspector



## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work
  - 2(1)(b)(i) takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school –
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

#### **Part 6. Provision of information**

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that –
  - 32(1)(f) an annual written report of each registered pupil's progress and attainment in the main subject areas taught is provided to the parents of that registered pupil except that no report need be provided where the parent has agreed otherwise.

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2021