

# Inspection of The Beeches Independent School

218 Dogsthorpe Road, Peterborough PE1 3PB

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Inspection dates: 8 to 10 March 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

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 they feel safe at school. They enjoy productive working relationships with staff. They say that there are adults they can go to if they have concerns. Staff help pupils with understanding road safety when moving across the two sites to attend lessons. However, pupils say that sometimes staff do not do enough to stop bullying or mean behaviour. In some lessons, pupils' behaviour slows the learning of others.

As at the previous inspection, pupils still do not receive a good enough quality of education. Pupils do not learn well as the curriculum is poorly planned and taught. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to learn life skills, such as cooking. They talk highly of their visits to the local farm where they can look after animals. They also enjoy their swimming sessions.

Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors have mixed views about the school. However, they appreciate the additional support that leaders provide for pupils. Leaders access other professional services when necessary, so additional help is timely and not held up while waiting for annual reviews for education, health and care (EHC) plans.

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

While pupils study a broad range of subjects, leaders have failed to plan a curriculum that ensures that pupils learn well. Curriculum plans are not suitably sequenced for pupils to build their knowledge and skills in a systematic way. Pupils study a range of units of work that do not connect with what they know and can do. This makes it difficult for pupils to progress and limits their readiness for the next stage of their education.

Leaders do not have a systematic phonics programme in place to help those pupils who need to learn to read. This means that pupils find it hard to remember the sounds they need to know in order to read well. As a result, pupils lose confidence and enjoyment in reading. Older pupils who can read are not developing effective reading habits. While there is reading time planned during the school day, pupils tend to read a short section of a book and put it back on the shelf rather than reading the full text over time. Leaders do not check what pupils are reading.

Leaders have not focused sharply on training staff to plan and deliver an effective curriculum. Some teachers lack understanding of how to plan an effective lesson. Some do not have sufficient subject knowledge. Sometimes, staff do not realise when pupils make errors or have misunderstandings. This means that pupils' mistakes go uncorrected. Teachers mainly rely on tests to assess what pupils understand. They do not check precisely what pupils know and can do during lessons.

Teachers do not use the information from pupils' EHC plans well when planning learning. Pupils undertake the same tasks and have the same support regardless of their needs. In mathematics, some pupils sit waiting for the next task until all pupils have finished. Pupils are given some tasks to do, such as working out the volume of a cuboid, without having mastered the necessary prior mathematical knowledge to be successful. Pupils who receive home tuition experience varying degrees of success.

Teachers do use pupils' support plans and their EHC plans to help inform their approaches to managing behaviour. Pupils behave well when staff are clear as to what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. Some staff are better at this than others. Leaders analyse behaviour incidents over time so they can see what support is working and what is not. They do not do this for cases of bullying or for sexual violence and harassment. Leaders have not ensured that pupils' attendance is recorded accurately. Some pupils have wrongly been marked as present when they were not on site.

The programme to support pupils' personal development is not well planned. While there is a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum in place, teachers do not revisit learning. This makes it harder for pupils to recall what they have learned and know. Leaders have not ensured that the statutory requirements for relationships and sex education (RSE) are met. Currently, boys do not receive the sex education component of RSE.

Leaders have considered pupils' mental health needs more carefully, such as incorporating mindfulness sessions into the school day. Pupils understand fundamental British values. They enjoy taking part in a range of activities that promote cultural awareness, such as cooking Chinese food for Chinese New Year. Staff provide pupils with impartial careers information, advice and guidance.

Leaders, governors and the proprietor do not have a sufficient understanding of the requirements for independent schools. The school does not meet some of the independent school standards (the standards). For example, the fire safety requirement is not met. Leaders have lapsed with their checks of fire safety equipment and emergency lighting. Some staff do not follow the health and safety policy. Leaders are not implementing the safeguarding policy as they should. The proprietor has not met its legal duty to keep pupils safe.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. However, the monitoring of equalities provision and the effectiveness of the accessibility plan are weak.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Safeguarding processes and procedures are not sufficiently rigorous. Leaders do not keep records confidentially. Their record-keeping is disorganised. Leaders keep

pupils' information in multiple places. This makes it difficult for leaders to keep pupils safe as they do not have a clear overview of the pupils in their care. Staff receive training to keep their knowledge up to date with government guidance. However, training for some new staff is not timely. Some staff are not clear about how to report concerns.

Governors and the proprietor have not ensured that safeguarding requirements are met in the school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Leaders have not ensured that safeguarding is effective. Safeguarding records are not confidential nor organised. Leaders do not keep a record of incidents of bullying and sexual violence and harassment. Training for new staff has not been timely. This puts pupils at risk. Leaders must improve safeguarding arrangements, ensuring that they take full account of the latest statutory guidance.
- Leaders have not ensured that the standards for health and safety are met. Staff have recorded pupils as present when they are not on site. Leaders have not ensured that all fire safety checks have been completed. Some staff do not follow the school's health and safety policy. Leaders should ensure that all the required fire safety checks are completed, in line with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Leaders must ensure that pupils' attendance is recorded accurately, and that staff understand their roles and responsibilities regarding health and safety.
- The curriculum is not well planned and sequenced. It is not clear what pupils need to know in each subject or the best order in which to learn content. Leaders have not determined how pupils will develop their knowledge securely over time. This includes those pupils who are learning to read. As a result, pupils are not building sufficient knowledge over time. Some pupils are not learning how to read. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well planned to enable pupils to develop secure subject knowledge step by step.
- Teachers do not have strong enough knowledge of the subjects they teach. This limits their ability to plan and deliver lessons. Teachers do not adequately consider what pupils know and can do when they plan lessons. Some teachers do not address pupils' misconceptions. This hampers pupils' learning of the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that staff are well trained to deliver the subject they are teaching and to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Some of the RSE requirements are not met. Boys are not receiving the sex education component of RSE, while girls are. Leaders should ensure that this part of the curriculum is delivered as required.
- The proprietor and governors do not check well enough on the quality of education in the school, the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy or on how leaders are meeting the standards. This means that some of the standards have not been met and provision has weakened since the previous inspection. The proprietor needs to ensure that there are systems in place to challenge and

support leaders to bring about improvements to the school's provision. This also includes ensuring that governors' understanding of the standards is strong enough to hold leaders fully to account.

## **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>	139018
<b>DfE registration number</b>	874/6004
<b>Local authority</b>	Peterborough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10220197
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	18
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	3
<b>Proprietor</b>	Silver Birch Care Holdings Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Karim Lalani
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Sutters
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£24,000 to £78,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01733 344448
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.beechesuk.co.uk">www.beechesuk.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@beechesuk.co.uk">info@beechesuk.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 to 12 December 2019

## Information about this school

- The school opened in 2012. The school changed ownership to Silver Birch Care Holdings Ltd on 1 August 2018. The current director of the company joined in March 2021. A governing body oversees the work of senior leaders on behalf of the proprietor. The chair of governors has been in post since March 2021.
- The previous standard inspection took place in December 2019. At this time, the school was judged as requires improvement. There were unmet standards, and the school was served with a notice by the Department for Education (DfE), which required an action plan to be drawn up. This action plan was assessed and found not to be acceptable in March 2020.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an EHC plan. Many have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and/or communication difficulties.
- All school placements are funded by local authorities and admission is through local authority referral. Peterborough City Council is also funding a number of hours for home tuition. This is for pupils who do not currently attend school.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2018.
- The school is based in two buildings, on opposite sides of the road. The addresses are 218 and 301 Dogsthorpe Road, Peterborough PE1 3PB.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the director of operations, the chair of governors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and staff. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also

looked at curriculum plans for PSHE education and RSE and visited PSHE education lessons. Inspectors spoke to leaders about other subjects.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, the director of operations and the chair of governors. They spoke to a range of staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, including those related to risk assessments, health and safety checks and the safer recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors spoke to eight parents by telephone. There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered the views of staff through conversations and scrutiny of the 11 responses to the Ofsted online staff survey. Inspectors spoke to pupils in class and around the school, held meetings with groups of pupils and considered six responses to the Ofsted online pupil survey.
- Inspectors toured the school premises on both sites, checked the school's website, and scrutinised the admissions and attendance registers and a range of other documentation to check that the school complies with the independent school standards.

### **Inspection team**

Liz Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted 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) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
  - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
  - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
  - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
  - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
  - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2).
- 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(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 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(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;

- 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 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
  - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

### **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)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State.

## **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; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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