

Inspection of The Becklands School

Unit 18, Becklands Park Industrial Estate, York Road, Market Weighton YO43 3GA

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils spoken with told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school. One pupil described the school as 'the best school I have ever attended'. Although most pupils joined the school less than three weeks before the inspection took place, their views reflect the calm and welcoming ethos of the school.

Pupils also told the inspection team that no one was bullied at this school. Records kept by leaders agreed with pupils' comments. Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in school and knew whom to talk to if a problem arose.

The school has changed a lot recently. Nearly all of the staff, including the headteacher, are new to the school. Some only started a few weeks before the inspection took place.

Because the school is small, staff have got to know pupils quickly. Staff are already good at understanding the events that trigger pupils' anxiety, and they help them to manage their feelings and emotions.

At the time inspectors visited the school, pupils had just finished their two weeks' induction and were just starting their new curriculum. Unfortunately, planning for the new curriculum had not been completed. This meant that pupils were not able to have physical education (PE) or information technology (IT) lessons as staff had not finished planning learning in these subject areas. This narrowed the curriculum for current pupils and limited their options for further study at the time of the inspection.

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

All staff, including the headteacher, are recently appointed. Therefore, many systems are new to both staff and pupils and have not had sufficient time to become embedded. Despite this, the small number of pupils present have settled well and had largely enjoyed the two weeks' induction and assessment activities provided by staff.

Plans for English and mathematics are well written and reflect the overall high expectations of staff for pupils. The delivery of these subjects engages pupils well. Overall, learning is sequenced and links to the needs of pupils. However, some subjects are not sufficiently well planned or sequenced. The planning and delivery of learning in IT and PE were not in place at the time of the inspection. As a result, the school was not meeting several of the standards in Part 1 of the independent school standards.

Many of the pupils attending the school have been out of education for long periods of time, some for as long as four years. The headteacher and staff have introduced land-based learning as a way of engaging pupils. Learning takes place at a farm a short distance from the school. Pupils were observed visiting the farm for the first

time. Their enthusiasm was clearly reflected in their ideas for building a new tree house.

The headteacher has a vision of how land-based learning will link with local colleges. The headteacher believes this will enable pupils to undertake further land-based courses that will lead to future employment. However, further work needs to be undertaken as soon as possible to identify the key elements of the new course and to plan future learning around these.

Currently, teaching is undertaken in small groups or individually. This enables staff to assess how much each pupil knows and understands. This enables staff to modify learning to ensure that individuals understand and remember more.

Pupils' behaviour is good despite their very high levels of need. They are polite and respectful towards each other, as well as to staff and visitors. If pupils do reach crisis point, often due to the issues they face outside school, staff are skilled at calming them. Most return to learning quickly.

When pupils undertake out-of-school visits, staff complete a risk assessment. This should enable them to accurately identify potential risks and hazards associated with the activity. Currently, staff use a generic tick list containing potential hazards and identify the level of risk. The list provided does not cover all of the potential risks that pupils may encounter away from school, and this weakens the effectiveness of the risk assessment. The chair of governors has recognised this, but action has not been taken by the school to improve the system.

The school has a medical room on site that is currently used as an office. Because of the size of the office furniture, there is insufficient space to erect a bed for sick pupils. The school took steps to reorganise this during the inspection. The standard remained unmet as school leaders had not recognised this problem prior to the inspection.

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum ensures that pupils have a clear understanding of the groups covered by section 6 of the Equality Act 2010. This protects people from discrimination in society. The PSHE curriculum enables pupils to develop a wider view of the world, as well as to develop personal self-esteem and an understanding of the needs of others.

The school's relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum helps pupils to learn age-appropriate content, such as consent. It ensures that pupils are clear about what constitutes sexual harassment and how to recognise 'red flags' in relationships.

The school's request for a material change in order to increase the number of pupils from 10 to 20 was considered as part of this inspection. The school is unlikely to meet all of the relevant independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is published on its website. The policy meets the requirements of current legislation. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for the school is the headteacher. The second trained deputy DSL is a governor at the school. This ensures that there is always a DSL available in school. The DSLs are aware that pupils have extra vulnerabilities and ensure that they receive the care and support they need by working closely with relevant agencies.

Leaders who are involved in school recruitment have undertaken safer recruitment training and are clear about which checks to undertake before new staff join the school. They are also clear about the actions they need to take should a concern be raised.

Any safeguarding records are detailed, and information is recorded effectively. All safeguarding records are regularly scrutinised by the DSL. Online records, scrutinised during the inspection, showed that actions taken are appropriate and demonstrate the school's commitment to supporting pupils and their families when in need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school curriculum is still evolving. Most subject areas are planned and sequenced effectively. However, ambiguity remains in some new subject areas, including land-based studies, where it is not clear what pupils are to learn and when. This hampers pupils' learning and outcomes. As a matter of urgency, the headteacher should ensure that there is clarity and understanding between his vision of the contents of the planned curriculum and that of the staff delivering the subject area.
- Learning in PE and IT is not yet planned. Pupils are not currently accessing these two subject areas. The headteacher has been too slow to take action to ensure that these subjects are on the curriculum. This is affecting pupils' physical health and well-being and is narrowing the curriculum offered to pupils. Action needs to be taken by the proprietor to ensure that a high-quality, sequenced curriculum is planned for each of these subject areas and that pupils are given access to this as soon as possible.
- The school has a risk assessment policy. Staff are aware of the need to evaluate likely risks when taking pupils off site. The pro forma currently in place to identify and measure probable risks does not meet requirements as it does not identify potential risks sufficiently accurately. A new system needs to be put in place that allows staff to identify potential hazards more accurately and ensures that leaders check and sign off each risk assessment before the off-site visit is undertaken.

- Several of the independent school standards were not met during the inspection. Some of these have had a direct impact on outcomes for pupils. The proprietor needs to ensure that leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards and take action to ensure that these are met.

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School details

Unique reference number	148767
DfE registration number	811/6023
Local authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Inspection number	10220895
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	The Becklands School Ltd
Chair	Vicky Simpson
Headteacher	Steven Hobden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000
Telephone number	01430 803126
Website	www.thebecklands.co.uk
Email address	steven.hobden@thebecklands.co.uk

Information about this school

- The school is situated on an industrial estate on the outskirts of the town of Market Weighton.
- The school has been registered for almost one year. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post since May 2022. Nearly all the staff were very new to post.
- The school has been set up to meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and other associated special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school does not have a religious denomination.
- The school does not use alternative education 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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspection team met with the proprietor, the headteacher, members of staff and the chair of the school's governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, land-based studies and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers, spoke to a group of pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders in other subject areas. Inspectors also toured the building to gather evidence for Part 5 of the independent school standards. The inspection team met with the headteacher to discuss the curriculum and RSE.
- The inspectors checked the single central record and met with the DSL to discuss the school's safeguarding provision. Individual pupils' safeguarding records were looked at to check the quality of safeguarding practice in the school.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Penny

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)(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)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 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

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.

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.

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