

The Beeches Independent School

218 Dogsthorpe Road, Peterborough PE1 3PB

Inspection date

15 November 2022

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i)

- At the school's standard inspection in March 2022, the requirements in this independent school standard were not met. This was because leaders and the proprietor body had not put an effective curriculum in place. Curriculum plans did not help ensure that pupils would build their knowledge and skills in a well-ordered way. Teachers did not use the information from pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans) to plan pupils' learning.
- Leaders have given significant thought to how the curriculum is organised across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Detailed long-term plans are in place for English, mathematics, art and design, computing, food technology, history, geography, science and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. The curriculum for music is currently under review. Leaders refer to this as the interim curriculum. As the curriculum is being implemented, leaders and staff continue to review the curriculum content and how this supports pupils to build their knowledge over time.
- Leaders have reviewed their systems for updating pupils' individual education plans (IEPs). Leaders ensure that IEPs are reviewed regularly and accurately reflect the information that is in each pupil's EHC plan. Leaders monitor the curriculum to ensure that lessons and learning activities are adapted appropriately to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The requirements in this independent school standard were not met at the standard inspection in March 2022 because the curriculum was not supporting some pupils to connect their learning and make progress. Pupils receiving home tuition were experiencing varying degrees of success. Leaders had not put in place a structured approach to support pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. The curriculum for PSHE was not planned well to support pupils' personal development.

- Leaders are ensuring, through their monitoring and regular checks, that pupils who receive home tuition are accessing the same curriculum and making progress as they would if they were in school. Leaders have adopted a systematic phonics programme for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. Leaders have put in place an appropriate curriculum for PSHE that sets out what pupils will learn and when. This is designed to strengthen pupils' personal development.

Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(b)

- This independent school standard was not met at the full standard inspection in March 2022 because leaders had not ensured that the statutory requirements for relationships and sex education (RSE) were met. Boys did not receive the sex education aspect of the RSE curriculum.
- The weaknesses in RSE provision have been addressed as set out in the revised school action plan. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum for RSE. Leaders have adopted a curriculum that reflects the statutory guidance from the Department of Education (DfE). Leaders are qualified to teach RSE and are able to support staff to deliver the RSE curriculum effectively. The provision is in place for all pupils to access their entitlement to RSE.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g)

- The requirements of this independent school standard were not met at the standard inspection in March 2022 because staff had not received the appropriate training to plan and deliver an effective curriculum. Some staff did not have sufficient subject knowledge. Teachers were overly reliant on tests to check what pupils knew and did not check precisely what pupils could remember from their lessons. Teachers were not making effective use of the information in pupils' EHC plans to plan learning well. Teachers were not using the strategies that were set out in pupils' support plans to help them manage their behaviour in lessons.
- Leaders are providing suitable training and guidance for teachers and support staff to teach the curriculum that leaders have planned. Staff are developing their subject knowledge and confidence in teaching the planned curriculum. This is improving the quality of education that pupils receive.
- Leaders provide clear and detailed information so that staff are able to plan lessons and activities that are better matched to individual pupils' learning needs. Staff have received relevant training in how to make effective use of assessment. Leaders are checking that staff are putting this into practice during lessons. Teachers routinely check pupils' understanding at the start of lessons. They revisit knowledge to help pupils remember what they are learning. Leaders check that teachers plan sequences of lessons that help pupils build on what they have learned before.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who are not confident and fluent in their reading are given the help they need to catch up. This includes regular practice to help pupils to secure and apply their phonics knowledge.
- Leaders have reviewed how classes and lessons are organised across the two sites. Leaders have reduced the need for pupils to move classrooms within the school buildings or between the two school sites. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere across the school on both sites. This, together with a curriculum and teaching that is better tailored

to individual pupils' needs, is helping pupils to manage their behaviour more positively in lessons.

- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The safeguarding requirements relating to this standard were not met at the previous standard inspection in March 2022, because the safeguarding processes and procedures were not sufficiently robust. Records were disorganised. Leaders did not have a clear overview of how to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders have worked swiftly to address the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. There is a clear and well-organised system for maintaining safeguarding records. Leaders ensure that staff receive the appropriate training so that staff's knowledge is kept up to date. This includes training for the designated safeguarding leads. Staff know how to identify the signs of potential abuse and what to do to raise a concern. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- The school's safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance from the DfE. The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

Paragraph 9, 9(b), 10

- These standards were not met at the inspection in March 2022 because staff did not implement the behaviour policy well. Staff did not communicate their expectations of pupils' behaviour consistently or clearly. This meant that not all pupils behaved well. Staff were not doing enough to prevent bullying. Leaders did not analyse behaviour incidents (including bullying) over time to identify what was working and what was not, to support pupils to behave well.
- Leaders have changed how they organise the provision to better meet the needs of pupils. This includes reducing the number of times pupils move class or change teacher during the school day. This has led to a calmer atmosphere in the school.
- Leaders have provided training and guidance to ensure that all staff are confident in implementing the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour positively. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. Pupils are polite and participate well in lessons. Pupils say that behaviour around the school is now much better. Staff support pupils to learn strategies to help them when pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour in school.
- Leaders and staff have worked with pupils to help them recognise when unhelpful or unkind behaviours become bullying. Pupils say that bullying does happen, but staff now deal with potential bullying incidents quickly. Pupils say they trust staff to do this because adults in school listen and act promptly to follow up pupils' worries or concerns.

Paragraph 11, 12, 25

- This standard was not met at the standard inspection in March 2022 because leaders did not ensure that all staff follow the health and safety policy. Leaders had not ensured that the statutory health and safety checks were carried out systematically. Some statutory checks, such as fire and safety, had lapsed.

- Leaders have addressed the weaknesses in relation to the school premises and the implementation of the health and safety policy. All the required health and safety checks are now carried out and recorded systematically. This includes regular fire safety checks. The school has been redecorated and the environment is maintained to a high standard. It is welcoming and calm.

Paragraph 15, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- This standard was not met at the standard inspection in March 2022 because leaders had not ensured that pupils' attendance was accurately recorded. Leaders were not implementing the safeguarding policy to ensure that pupils were kept safe. This included the arrangements for assessing and mitigating risk.
- The admissions register is up to date and contains all the necessary information for each pupil on the school roll. Pupils' attendance is now accurately recorded in line with statutory guidance.
- Leaders have reviewed the school's risk assessment policy. Staff have received training and guidance to ensure that risks are appropriately assessed. Risk assessments are in place for each individual pupil. Staff use their understanding of pupils' individual needs to inform and regularly update the school's risk assessments.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(h)

- This standard was not met at the standard inspection in March 2022 because leaders did not complete a regular funding report for income and expenditure nor presented this to the local authority for each pupil wholly or partly funded by that local authority.
- The proprietor has put in place a system for the financial reporting to the local authorities for all pupils who are registered at the school. The reports to local authorities demonstrate financial transparency.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- This standard was not met at the full inspection in March 2022 because leaders had not demonstrated good skills and knowledge to ensure that all the independent school standards were consistently met. Leaders had not made good enough checks on the quality of education at the school or the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy. The inspection also identified that the monitoring of the equalities provision and effectiveness of the accessibility plan were weak. Alongside the quality of leadership and management, the unmet standards included those relating to the quality of education provided, the welfare, health and safety of pupils, the premises of and accommodation at schools, and the provision of information.
- Leaders have addressed the weaknesses in their original action plan that were identified in the September 2022 action plan evaluation report. Leaders have worked with an

independent school improvement adviser to revise and improve the school's action plan. The revised plan is detailed and sets out appropriate actions with clear and reasonable timescales for improvement. Leaders are well underway with implementing the revised action plan to improve the school's provision.

- The local authority safeguarding and commissioning teams have worked with school leaders to carry out a safeguarding audit and a review of the provision. Leaders have acted on the local authority's recommendations to ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietor body has appointed a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher. The proprietor has put in place more rigorous systems to check and hold leaders to account for their work to improve the school. This includes addressing weaknesses in the arrangements for health and safety and safeguarding. The proprietor body and school leaders are taking appropriate and robust action to bring about the necessary changes to address the weaknesses identified in the standard inspection in March 2022.
- The proprietor body and school leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets 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.
- 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.
- 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.

School details

Unique reference number	139018
DfE registration number	874/6004
Inspection number	10259540

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Silver Birch Care Holdings Ltd
Chair	Karim Lalani
Headteacher	Abigail Brown
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,000 to £78,000
Telephone number	01733 344448
Website	www.beechesuk.co.uk
Email address	abrown@beechesuk.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	8 to 10 March 2022

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 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 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.
- The previous standard inspection took place in March 2022. At this time, the school was judged as inadequate. There were unmet standards, and the school was served with a notice by the DfE, which required an action plan to be drawn up. This action plan was assessed and found not to be acceptable in September 2022.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2022. The current deputy headteacher joined the school in November 2022.
- The school's inspection history:
 - In June 2012, a pre-registration visit was carried out and registration was not recommended.
 - The school's first standard inspection was carried out in October 2013. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good.
 - In November 2014, a material change integrated inspection took place. At this inspection, it was judged that some standards were unlikely to be met if the material change was implemented.
 - In March 2015, the school submitted an action plan setting out how it would address the unmet standards. An evaluation of an action plan was carried out and the proposed action plan was judged to be acceptable.
 - At the progress monitoring inspection in June 2015, some of the independent school standards were judged not to be met.
 - In August 2015, the school submitted an action plan setting out how it would address the unmet standards. An evaluation of an action plan was carried out and the proposed plan was deemed not to be acceptable.
 - In November 2015, the school submitted a revised action plan setting out how it would address the unmet standards. An evaluation of an action plan was carried out and the proposed action plan was deemed acceptable.
 - A standard inspection took place in September 2016. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good.
 - A standard inspection was carried out in December 2019. The overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement and some of the independent school standards were not met.
 - In March 2020, the school submitted an action plan setting out how it would address the unmet standards. An evaluation of an action plan was carried out. The proposed plan was deemed not to be acceptable.

- At the standard inspection in March 2022, the overall effectiveness was judged inadequate. Several independent school standards were not met.
- In September 2022, the school submitted an action plan setting out how it would address the unmet standards. An evaluation of an action plan was carried out. The proposed plan was deemed not to be acceptable.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This is the first progress monitoring inspection since the full standard inspection in March 2022. At the standard inspection, the school did not comply with all the independent school standards.
- This progress monitoring inspection was carried out with no notice.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead. The inspector also spoke with the deputy headteacher and the school administrator. The inspector met with the director of operations on behalf of the proprietor body. The inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone. The inspector spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their learning and their experience of school, including aspects of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. The inspector looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects.
- The inspector visited both school sites with the headteacher. The inspector reviewed documentation in relation to health and safety, including fire safety and compliance checks.
- The inspector reviewed the financial information that is shared with each local authority annually. The inspector reviewed leaders' updated action plan.
- The inspector reviewed the information and policies that are available on the school's website. The inspector reviewed documentation in relation to safeguarding, including the single central record of pre-employment checks. The inspector discussed arrangements to safeguard children with the designated safeguarding lead, the school administrator and the director of operations. They looked at records of safeguarding and incidents of pupils' behaviour, including bullying. They reviewed records of staff training. The inspector reviewed a sample of risk assessments.
- The inspector looked at curriculum plans, schemes of work and how these are adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. The inspector discussed the revised school action plan with the headteacher.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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