

Inspection of Begdale House School

Begdale Road, Elm, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0AZ

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy. They respond well to the clear boundaries and high expectations that staff have of their learning and their behaviour. Bullying is not an issue because pupils trust staff to help them resolve any issues at an early stage. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and positive. Pupils know that staff care for their well-being as well as their achievement. Pupils feel safe, supported and listened to.

Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum that equips them with the knowledge and understanding they need to achieve well. Pupils engage positively with their learning. They can see how their education is preparing them for future study. They take pride in their work and develop the determination to succeed. They grow in confidence and see themselves as successful learners.

Pupils are confident to share their views in a mature way and talk about what interests them. They respect others' opinions. They enjoy exploring ideas and issues through discussions and debates. They contribute to the planning of trips and events for the benefit of the school community.

Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the way staff work with pupils to provide a positive experience of education and develop their aspirations for the future.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders and the proprietor have improved the quality of education. Leaders have put in place a well-planned curriculum across a broad range of subjects. They have carefully considered the knowledge pupils should learn so that pupils can be confident and achieve well in the subjects that they study.

Staff receive the training and guidance that they need to teach the curriculum well. They plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before and to catch up with learning that pupils may have missed. Assessment is used well to check what pupils know and can remember. Staff make sure that pupils have regular opportunities to revisit their learning. This helps pupils secure important knowledge. Staff adapt the curriculum well to meet pupils' academic, social and emotional needs.

Leaders promote reading. Pupils who are less confident readers are given additional support to help them become more fluent readers. Well-chosen texts extend pupils' reading experience and knowledge of literature, including poetry. Pupils learn to analyse texts. They apply this knowledge in other subjects, for example when they are evaluating sources in history.

Leaders have widened the qualifications and accreditation on offer to pupils, especially in English, mathematics, biology and history. Some pupils also access

courses in music, animal care and construction through off-site specialist provision. Pupils are equipped with the core skills and qualifications to prepare them for training and employment. Pupils gain employability skills through an accredited programme. Independent careers advice helps pupils identify training pathways and next steps. However, the range of qualifications and the work experience on offer are not yet fully developed. On occasion, pupils' opportunities are not as closely aligned with their abilities, interests and aspirations as they could be. The curriculum and positive school culture promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn tolerance and respect for different cultures and beliefs. They are well informed about current affairs and the democratic process. Pupils learn to balance different opinions, listen to others and use evidence and examples to justify their own views.

Staff are consistent in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils consider the rules to be fair and are there for everyone's benefit. Staff work with pupils to help them to develop positive attitudes. This includes developing pupils' resilience and persistence in learning, as well as strategies to manage their emotions. This is helping pupils to build the habit of regular attendance. Pupils commit to their learning because they are equipped with the behaviours and attitudes that contribute positively to their achievement.

The proprietor has established clear systems of governance and oversight of leaders' work. Staff feel valued. They are positive about the support they receive to develop their practice and professional expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The proprietor has put in place effective systems for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns. Staff are well trained. They know how to recognise the signs of potential abuse and what they need to do if they have a concern. They are knowledgeable about local safeguarding risks.

Daily staff briefings ensure that safeguarding remains at the forefront of staff's minds. When there are concerns, leaders and the proprietor act promptly. They are responsive and work well with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families can access the help and support they need.

The processes for recruiting new staff are rigorous.

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

- The range of qualifications that pupils can obtain and the work experience opportunities that pupils can access are still in development. Pupils do not have access to some qualifications and work experience in line with their abilities, interests and aspirations. Leaders should develop the qualification and work

experience offer to enable pupils to be very well prepared for their chosen next steps in education, training and employment.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136236
DfE registration number	873/6028
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10267653
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Keys Direct Care Limited
Chair	David Manson
Headteacher	Jo Murray
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,930 to £42,978
Telephone number	01945 860055
Website	www.education.keyschildren.co.uk/school/begdale-house-school/
Email address	jo.murray@keys-group.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 October 2021

Information about this school

- Begdale House School is a small day school. It is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to admit up to 16 pupils. Pupils currently on roll at the school are in Year 10 and Year 11.
- Begdale House School provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are funded by their local authority. Most pupils join having missed long periods of education.
- In October 2018, Keys Group acquired the school. The previous proprietor was Direct Care Limited. Keys Group is the proprietor of 26 schools nationally.
- The current headteacher was appointed in January 2021. She is also the headteacher of another school, Westfield House School, which has the same proprietor.
- The school does not use agency staff.
- The school uses two alternative provisions to enable pupils to study for accredited qualifications in animal care and construction. These providers are not registered or inspected by Ofsted.
- The school operates from two buildings on the same site.
- The school's inspection history:
 - The school's first standard inspection, under the previous proprietor, was in July 2011. The school was judged to be good.
 - A material change inspection took place in July 2014 as the proprietor had requested an increase in capacity and the age range of pupils attending the school. The school was judged as likely to meet the relevant independent school 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 as requires 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 independent school standards if the change was approved.
 - A standard inspection took place in October 2021. The school was judged as requires improvement. The school failed to meet three of the independent school standards.
 - In January 2022, Ofsted evaluated the school's action plan to address the independent school standards that were unmet at the previous standard

inspection. The plan was deemed to be unacceptable.

- In April 2022, Ofsted carried out an additional inspection. The purpose of the inspection was to check compliance with the independent school standards and regulatory requirements that the school was judged not to comply with at the previous inspection. The school met one of three independent school standards that were unmet at the previous inspection.
- In November 2022, Ofsted carried out an additional inspection. The school was judged to meet the two independent school standards that were unmet at the previous inspection.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with representatives of the proprietor body, including the chief executive officer, the director of education, who is also the chair of the governing body, and the regional manager. Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with representatives from Norfolk local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and support staff, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to evaluate the arrangements that are in place to safeguard pupils and staff. Inspectors reviewed records of safeguarding concerns and how these are followed up. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding training and spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of pre-employment checks and reviewed the arrangements that are in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times. Inspectors spoke with pupils to seek their views and experiences of the school. Inspectors reviewed leaders' records of behaviour, including records of

suspensions.

- Inspectors carried out activities to check compliance with the independent school standards. The lead inspector made a tour of the school site. The lead inspector reviewed the information that is published on the school's website. Inspectors considered a range of documentation.
- Inspectors considered the feedback and free-text comments from four parents and carers that were submitted to Ofsted Parent View. An inspector spoke with one parent on the telephone. Inspectors spoke with staff and with pupils to gather their views of the school.

Information about the material change inspection

- This inspection included an application to make a material change to the school's registration. The school is registered to take a maximum of 16 pupils from the age of 10 to 16 years. The material change request is to change the age range of pupils to 11 to 17 years. The proprietor has not requested to increase the number of pupils on the school roll.
- The proprietor's request to extend the upper age range of pupils is to provide for existing pupils who may need additional time or additional support to enable them to access the next stage of their education or training. The proprietor does not intend to admit pupils between the ages of 16 to 17.
- The proprietor does not currently admit pupils to the school below the age of 11, or Year 7. The curriculum and provision are suitable for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides the material change can be implemented.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joanna Pedlow

Ofsted Inspector

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