

Inspection of Best Futures

The Stables, Church Lane, Aylesby, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN37 7AW

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 June 2023

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?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are clear that they want to prepare pupils for life beyond Best Futures school. Most pupils have experienced significant interruptions to their education prior to joining the school. Therefore, staff work quickly to identify pupils' interests and plan learning around them. Staff know pupils well. They form positive relationships with them. This helps pupils to manage their social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) effectively. Leaders are determined that pupils should be supported to become more independent. They plan interesting enrichment opportunities which are woven through the curriculum to support learning.

This is a calm school. Staff greet pupils at the door each morning and there is a happy feel to the start of the day. Pupils understand staff's high expectations and value the support they are given to manage their behaviour. There is no bullying here. However, at times, pupils do struggle to follow instructions. When this happens, staff help pupils to refocus through nurture and pastoral support. The school provides a positive environment for pupils to develop.

Leaders are aware that there is more to do to develop the wider curriculum to meet the diverse special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of all pupils at the school. Currently, while leaders take into account pupils' barriers to learning, they do not always sufficiently challenge some pupils to enable them to fulfil their individual academic potential.

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

The proprietors play an active role in the day-to-day running of the school. They have been proactive in strengthening the leadership to make improvements to the curriculum. Since taking up post, the new principal has started to develop the curriculum in several areas, including mathematics. In this subject, staff benefit from having a well-planned structure to follow. They use resources well to plan pupils' learning. Staff use questioning effectively to ensure pupils understand and recall important knowledge learned in previous lessons. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding.

Leaders have introduced a curriculum that links learning across a range of subjects. However, they have not identified the specific subject knowledge they want pupils to remember. Consequently, staff are not sufficiently clear about what they intend pupils to learn. This leads to a focus on activities rather than developing pupils' knowledge or skills. Staff do not have sufficient subject knowledge across a range of subjects. This leads to missed learning opportunities and, at times, incorrect assessment of pupils' work or incorrect written comments in books. Furthermore, leaders do not monitor learning effectively to ensure it makes a difference in pupils' achievements.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. Staff have a shared understanding that reading is vital to developing pupils' confidence and ability to learn. Therefore,

all pupils read daily. Staff model reading, using books which link to wider learning or pupils' interests. Early reading is taught using the school's chosen phonics programme. This is used flexibly to support pupils to focus on developing reading skills. Leaders use information gained from detailed assessments to ensure that staff are aware of gaps in phonic knowledge. The principal works with any pupils who are not making sufficient progress. Staff have received training in the school's approach. They use individual reading sessions to help pupils practise known sounds and develop greater fluency. However, staff do not sufficiently adapt learning to meet pupils' needs. Leaders are aware that staff will benefit from further training to ensure approaches are used consistently.

Leaders recognise the individual needs of each pupil and prioritise the personal development curriculum around them. An example of this could be seen with pupils who find learning difficult in the classroom, so are taken to different settings to learn communication and number skills. All pupils have daily SEMH sessions to learn how to interact with others. This benefits pupils who are finding communication difficult. Staff use the environment well to support pupils to learn. The resident guinea pigs and rabbits provide stimulus for learning about how to care for others.

Pupils benefit from opportunities to promote their wider interests. Leaders utilise specialist support to encourage pupils to try activities which promote independence. These include learning how to ride bicycles or opportunities to go horse-riding. Pupils are taken on farm or café visits to learn how to communicate in social settings. They enjoy weekly swimming, cooking and forest school lessons. Pupils take part in community art projects, with great success. Each experience is celebrated in the school and shared with parents.

Other areas of the personal development curriculum are still being refined. Leaders can identify where concepts such as British values or equality are taught within the curriculum. However, they are not clear about how this learning builds over time or how pupils' knowledge is assessed.

Leaders have a clear vision for the pupils in the school. They work effectively with the local authority to ensure that there is clarity about what they can offer pupils with complex needs. They are determined that pupils placed at the school can be well supported. They will only accept pupils once they have a strong understanding of what the individual pupils need to develop and learn effectively.

Staff are proud to work at the school. There is a shared vision to prepare pupils for the next stage of their lives. All pupils in the school have SEND, and staff work well with a range of external professionals. Staff value the changes that leaders are introducing and are positive about links leaders have made with other schools in the local area.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff place safeguarding pupils at the centre of what the school does. They recognise that due to pupils' additional needs, they are more vulnerable. The designated safeguarding leads are knowledgeable and work closely with families and other professionals to ensure that any concerns are swiftly addressed. Leaders have ensured that all staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training.

Risk assessments are comprehensive and enable leaders to ensure that pupils are safe, both in the school and when undertaking external visits or learning.

The systems that record safeguarding training and some aspects of health and safety are not always accessible enough to ensure that proprietors have strong oversight of school practice. This is an area of the school's work that is currently under review.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In wider curriculum subjects, leaders have not identified the important core learning they want pupils to remember. This means that staff are not sufficiently supported to plan progressive sequences of learning. Consequently, pupils do not develop a secure foundation of knowledge and have gaps in their learning. These gaps are not always detected or addressed. Leaders must ensure that all staff fully understand the sequence of the curriculum and support pupils to learn progressively. Leaders must assure themselves that the intended curriculum is implemented well across all subjects.
- In some areas of the curriculum, teachers' subject knowledge is not secure. In these subjects, staff are not clear about what they are teaching or how to ensure that pupils' learning will build over time. Many lessons are simply a series of activities. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders need to make sure that teachers are given the required support to improve their subject knowledge and teaching expertise.
- In some subjects, leaders are not sufficiently ambitious for all pupils' learning. This results in some pupils having a negative attitude toward learning because they find learning too easy or it doesn't challenge them. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum supports learning for all pupils.
- Currently, some important documents or school information are not readily available. This means leaders do not have sufficient oversight of some important school matters. Leaders should ensure that important documents and relevant information are organised in such a way as to support them to maintain oversight of all important school information.

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	142828
DfE registration number	812/6004
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10267680
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Best Futures Community Interest Company
Chair	Dawn Best
Headteacher	Caroline Seagroatt
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,690
Telephone number	01472 278978
Website	www.bestfutures-school.co.uk
Email address	dawn.best@bestfutures-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 May 2021

Information about this school

- The school is in a rural area of North East Lincolnshire.
- The school is registered to accept up to 12 pupils aged between five and 11 years. Pupils are referred to the school by the local authority and have a range of needs, including SEMH difficulties, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, speech, language and communication needs and communication and interaction needs.
- All pupils at the school have education, health and care plans.
- The current headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- The proprietor board have established a community interest company board that carries out the functions of local governance for the school.
- The school was judged to have met all the independent school standards at the last inspection.
- The school does not use supply staff or 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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the chair of the proprietor board and a telephone discussion was held with a member of the community interest board, which acts as an advisory group for the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders in the school.
- A telephone discussion was also held with a representative of the local authority that commissions places for pupils at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and design and personal, social, health and economic education. For each of these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior leaders, visited a sample of lessons, discussed learning with staff and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff surveys, as

well as Ofsted Parent View.

- Inspectors looked at a range of different documents during the inspection, including records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding. Pupils' education, health and care plans were discussed with leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, alongside the school's single central record. Further safeguarding policy documents and discussions were held with the designated safeguarding lead and the leader for health and safety arrangements in the school.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school's provision is implemented.**

Inspection team

Andrea Batley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tricia Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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