

Bettws Lifehouse

Kingsland Grange, Old Roman Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY3 9AH

Inspection date

7 December 2023

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

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

- The previous inspection, in May 2023, identified weaknesses in the curriculum. The school's curriculum was not well planned across all subjects. In some subjects, leaders had not paid close enough attention to the precise knowledge they wanted pupils to learn. This was leading to some staff selecting activities that were not well suited to the intended curriculum aims. Additionally, leaders were not making sure that those pupils at an early stage of reading were getting the support they needed. As a result, pupils were not making strong progress through the curriculum.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have revised the school's curriculum. The precise knowledge that pupils need to learn has been clearly outlined across all subjects. This has been ordered sensibly so that the knowledge that pupils encounter builds upon the things they have been taught before. Within lessons, the activities chosen by teachers are focused on the intended learning. Together, these improvements are helping pupils to make the progress they should.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. They have ensured that staff have received the training and support they need to deliver this programme well. Because of this, pupils who are at an early stage of reading learn to read with confidence and fluency. Leaders use appropriate diagnostic testing to identify pupils who fall behind their peers across the school. These pupils are well supported to catch up with their peers.
- Leaders have placed a great deal of emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills as well as their love of reading. They provide pupils with a range of opportunities to engage with stimulating and relevant texts, including daily reading, led by a teacher. The books children read have been carefully chosen to provide pupils with a range of interesting and engaging texts to meet their needs.
- These independent school standards (the standards) are now met.

Paragraphs 2(A)(1), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f)

- At the time of the previous inspection the school had not ensured that it had an up-to-date written policy relating to relationships and sex education. Leaders had not consulted parents of registered pupils about the content to be taught within this curriculum.
- Leaders have now produced a separate and current policy relating to the relationships and sex education that pupils at the school will receive. Leaders have taken time to ensure they consult carefully with parents prior to any amendments to the policy.
- These standards are now met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g)

- At the time of the previous inspection, teachers' subject knowledge was not always as secure as it ought to be. And teachers' use of assessment was not always effective. Assessment information was not always used to adapt lessons to help pupils address and rectify any gaps in understanding.
- Leaders have placed a great deal of emphasis on developing teachers' subject knowledge. They have ensured that staff have access to a wealth of subject enhancement training to give staff the knowledge they need to teach the subjects they deliver.
- Leaders have developed a framework to evaluate pupils' performance through the curriculum. They check on pupils' progress carefully and intervene where needed to ensure any gaps in knowledge are closed, or misconceptions are rectified.
- These standards are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is a member of the school's senior leadership team. Leaders are knowledgeable about how to keep pupils as safe as possible. They have a sound understanding of the specific risks posed to pupils, given their vulnerabilities.
- Leaders have made sure that all staff partake in ongoing safeguarding training. This training is extensive and is tightly focused to the individual needs of the pupils at the school. Staff are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff are clear on how to raise concerns about pupils. Records of concern are detailed; these show that leaders act swiftly when they have a concern.
- These standards are met.

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- As a routine part of the inspection, the inspector checked the availability of the school's safeguarding policy. The policy reflects current statutory requirements and can be found on the school website.
- This standard is met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1) and 23(1)(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that all pupils had access to suitable toilet facilities.
- Leaders have worked to rectify this shortcoming. Toilets are all housed in gender neutral blocks. Each cubicle is now separated by floor-to-ceiling walls and is lockable from the inside.
- These standards are now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, it was found that the proprietor did not ensure that all the independent school standards were met.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have successfully addressed the areas of weakness previously identified. They have created, and are following, an appropriate action plan to address the areas of weakness.
- The headteacher has restructured the school's leadership team. Several teaching staff have taken on new responsibilities, including for children in the early years, and for the school's phonics provision. This has created additional capacity for leaders. This has helped them to monitor the quality of the school's provision, and take appropriate action where shortcomings are identified.
- These standards are 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; and
- 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(A)(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2(A)(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b)
 - 2(A)(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e).
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 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 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 23(1)(b) separate toilet facilities for boys and girls aged 8 years or over are provided except where the toilet facility is provided in a room that can be secured from the inside and that is intended for use by one pupil at a time

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.

School details

Unique reference number	149194
DfE registration number	893/6045
Inspection number	10309063

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 special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Bettws Lifehouse Ltd
Chair	Kay Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Nici Jones
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £84,000
Telephone number	01686 651166
Website	bettwslifehousekg.org
Email address	nici.jones@bettwslifehouse.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	10–12 May 2023

Information about this school

- Bettws Lifehouse caters for up to 100 pupils, aged between five and 19, with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including communication and interaction and social emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school is located near Shrewsbury in Shropshire.

- Places are commissioned by three local authorities.
- The school makes use of three unregistered alternative providers.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.
- The proprietor body, Bettws Lifehouse Ltd, has operated a similar school in Wales since 2008.

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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, members of the proprietor body and the school business manager. He also spoke to the teaching staff and staff responsible for leading on the early years, special educational needs and/or disabilities, quality of education, mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and phonics.
- The inspector examined several policies, schemes of work and plans, as well as visiting lessons and looking at work in pupils' books for writing, English, PSHE and mathematics.
- The inspector held meetings with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss safeguarding procedures. The inspector spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector discussed the progress made against the previously unmet independent school standards with the headteacher.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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