

Inspection of Bettws Lifehouse

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

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 July 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **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 thrive at Bettws Lifehouse. Staff make sure they understand each pupil and their individual needs very well. Consequently, despite having faced significant challenges in their lives before joining the school, pupils' needs are well met from the moment they start. Pupils quickly begin to flourish.

The school's values are a golden thread that runs through all aspects of school life. Relationships are at the heart of the school's work. This is a community that values kindness. Acceptance of others permeates throughout the school. Pupils enjoy school and most attend often. They know who to turn to if they have a concern. Pupils are confident that any concerns will be resolved quickly.

Leaders' ambition for pupils is clear. They know that pupils have, in the past, struggled to communicate their feelings appropriately. Leaders set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. When pupils misbehave, staff carefully and patiently manage this. Over time, pupils learn to communicate their feelings and grow in confidence in doing so. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. One pupil summed up the views of many by saying, 'For the first time, I feel like I've been seen. I'm allowed to be me, and that's celebrated.'

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

The school has created a culture where pupils' personal growth and academic progress are prioritised. There has been a period of significant change and growth at the school in recent months. All involved are galvanised behind the headteacher's ambitious vision. Staff share a strong sense of pride in being part of this caring community that unlocks pupils' potential and reignites their passion for learning.

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) associated with their social, emotional and mental health. Leaders make use of a range of assessments to identify pupils' starting points and therapeutic needs when they join the school. Staff have a secure understanding of the social, emotional and mental health barriers that pupils face. They unravel these barriers to build a detailed picture of pupils' starting points. Staff use this information smartly to create individual curriculum pathways for pupils. These pathways are well matched to pupils' needs.

Recently, the school has prioritised the redevelopment of its subject curriculum. Across each subject, it has made sure that the precise knowledge pupils need to learn is clearly outlined and well ordered. Teachers deliver subjects well. They check carefully that pupils have understood the things that they have been taught and adjust the learning as needed. As a result, pupils, including those in the sixth form, make strong progress through the curriculum. The academic curriculum is complemented by a comprehensive, wider curriculum offer. This includes many opportunities for pupils to learn about how to manage their own needs. The skilful collaboration between staff makes sure that pupils receive the therapeutic support

they need. For example, all pupils benefit from weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions that help to enhance pupils' social and emotional development.

Increasingly, reading plays a central role in pupils' lives. The school has recently implemented a new phonics curriculum. This is helping younger pupils to become fluent readers. However, some staff have not received the training they need to deliver the programme well. This hampers pupils from doing as well as they could. A few older pupils have gaps in their reading; the school is reshaping its approach to supporting these pupils. While this work is at an early stage, it is already helping pupils to become more confident readers.

Pupils joining the school often have very low attendance. The school works closely with pupils and their families to make sure that any barriers to good attendance are identified and overcome. Because the school knows its pupils so well, nearly all pupils soon begin to attend often. However, in some instances, the school does not monitor improvements in pupils' attendance closely enough, and some pupils remain on part-time timetables for too long. Leaders are aware of this and are taking steps to rectify it.

The school's work to promote pupils' wider personal development is a growing strength. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, benefit from well-considered opportunities to broaden their range of social interactions, such as weekly house team meetings and visits to town to purchase supplies for their studies. These help to develop pupils' confidence and independence within their peer group and the wider community. Careers education is effective. The school makes sure that all pupils benefit from a range of encounters with the world of work. These encounters are increasingly well focused on pupils' goals and aspirations. Across the school, pupils go on to make successful transitions into their next stages of education or employment.

Due to the rapid growth and significant pace of change throughout the year, the school does not always track the impact of its work carefully enough. This means that, at times, there is a lack of clarity about which aspects of its work are having an impact and which are not. Consequently, the school's improvement work is not always as focused as it could be.

The proprietor body works hand in glove with school leaders. All involved ensure that pupils are at the heart of decisions and have worked diligently in recent months to improve the provision across the school. The proprietor body has ensured that the school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- The new phonics scheme has only recently been introduced. Some staff who teach early reading have not had the training they need to deliver the programme with fidelity to the scheme. This holds pupils back. The school should make sure that all staff are well trained in the delivery of early reading.
- Some pupils remain on a part-time timetable for too long. This limits the progress these pupils make. The school should refine its systems for monitoring the impact of all part-time timetables carefully and work to ensure any limits on pupils' attendance are removed as necessary.
- The school does not have sufficient oversight over some aspects of its work. This means that leaders' work is not always well connected or used strategically to drive forward some of the improvements needed. The school should ensure leaders carefully monitor and evaluate all aspects of its provisions to ensure their work is having the desired impact.

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	149194
DfE registration number	893/6045
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10342192
Type of school	Independent special school
School category	Independent day 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 the sixth form	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Bettws Lifehouse Ltd
Chair	Kay Jones
Headteacher	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
Dates of previous inspection	10 to 12 May 2023

Information about this school

- Bettws Lifehouse caters for up to 100 pupils, aged between five and 19, with a range of SEND, including communication and interaction, and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes use of two unregistered providers of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school is located near Shrewsbury in Shropshire.
- Places are commissioned by three local authorities.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art, and personal, social health and economic education. The inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also held discussions with leaders about other curriculum subjects taught at the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation.
- Inspectors met with members of the proprietor body, including the chair.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils at social times and in formal meetings. Inspectors reviewed the results of the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Matty

Ofsted Inspector

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