

Inspection of The Beeches Independent School

218 Dogsthorpe Road, Peterborough PE1 3PB

Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of this small and friendly school. Parents and carers appreciate how staff go the extra mile to support pupils. Staff care for pupils well. Pupils feel safe. Yet, pupils do not receive a good quality of education.

Most pupils behave well. They are kind and polite to each other. Staff build strong relationships with pupils. Adults model good manners and have high expectations. In the school's advent calendar, pupils list the nice things they will do for each other.

Pupils enjoy breaktimes and lunchtimes because they are well supervised by staff. Pupils say that bullying does not happen.

Pupils are mostly taught on a one-to-one basis. Some pupils find it harder to learn. These pupils do not make the progress they should. Their behaviour can spill out of the classroom and slow the learning of others.

Pupils learn skills that will help them in later life. Staff provide them with many activities to do so. Pupils enjoy swimming, football and cooking. Pupils are looking forward to wearing their special jumpers when they sing for the residents of a local care home just before Christmas.

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

Staff are not clear about what pupils need to learn in the longer term. Curriculum plans, including schemes of work, are not matched well enough to what pupils know and can do. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. They do well where staff plan and deliver learning effectively. This is not the case in all subjects.

In some subjects, staff need better subject knowledge, so they can explain concepts more clearly. Some teachers need better phonic knowledge, so they can support pupils' reading and spelling better. Where staff do teach subject content well, pupils build on what they have learned before. In these subjects, pupils listen carefully, work hard and answer questions willingly. They remember what they have learned previously. Pupils are proud of their work, as seen in the 'Paws and Claws' topic in art or their apex predator work in science.

Staff promote pupils' personal development well. They help pupils to build their social, communication and independent living skills. The support and care staff provide help many pupils to respect each other, build good relationships and know right from wrong. Staff stress the importance of eating healthily and staying fit. Pupils congratulate each other when they do well. They are thoughtful towards others. Pupils are taught about how to spend their money carefully. They benefit from a programme of trips and visits, including to local places of worship, that give them a broader understanding of the world around them. While pupils receive some

advice linked to careers they may wish to follow, the information and guidance need to be more structured.

The number of pupils in the school has increased recently. Leaders do not always have up-to-date information for new pupils joining the school. Some newer pupils, often with complex needs, present extreme behaviours. These pupils do not engage with learning consistently, so they do not make the progress they should. Their behaviour can disrupt the learning of others. Staff are often called away from other tasks to support these pupils. While staff manage this well, it adds extra work to their already busy day. Staff find it difficult to meet these pupils' educational needs.

The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. Leaders have not made sure that parents and carers have all of the information they need about the school. This includes the contact details of the proprietor and the policy for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

The current headteacher and deputy are relatively new in post. They know what the school needs to do better and are starting to deliver improvements. However, what they check on a day-to-day basis is not always recorded or analysed closely enough. The record of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour is not up to date. This lack of accurate analysis of current information means leaders' improvement plans are not precise enough.

Recruitment and retention of staff have been difficult. Staff that stay are having to do more. Pupils with particularly complex needs place considerable demands on teacher's workload and well-being. This means leaders cannot improve some areas as quickly as they would like. For future admissions, leaders must make sure they have accurate information on pupils' specific needs. This will help them know whether they are capable of meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of new entrants.

The proprietor has appointed an independent advisor to support the school to improve. Leaders have created a plan, which has been partly implemented, to secure these improvements. Governors get regular updates on how the school is doing. However, their records on how they meet the independent school standards are not sufficiently detailed. Governors do not hold leaders to account well enough in this respect.

The school is not compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, as leaders have not produced an accessibility plan.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work effectively with other agencies. Leaders keep comprehensive safeguarding records. Staff look beyond any changes in pupils' behaviour for any underlying reasons. This helps mitigate dangers to pupils' safety.

Staff are alert to pupils' needs. They provide high levels of support to keep them safe. Pupils can cross the road safely and be safe in water when they go swimming. They know they have to be more careful with people they do not know.

An inspector found that some of the pre-employment checks on staff had not been recorded properly on the single central record. This was rectified during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Leaders and staff do not adapt work to what pupils already know and can do. Some teachers' subject knowledge needs to be better. In some subjects, pupils do not learn as much as they should. Leaders need to ensure that:
 - teachers' long-, medium- and short-term plans are clear about what pupils need to learn and the order in which topics should be covered
 - staff receive appropriate training to make sure they have sufficient expertise to deliver and implement the curriculum effectively.
- Some pupils do not engage in learning. They sometimes present extreme behaviours that staff do well to contain. This can prevent other pupils from learning as well as they could. Leaders need to make sure they have accurate and up-to-date information on pupils prior to admitting them to the school. In this way, leaders can better ascertain whether they can meet pupils' social, emotional and academic needs.
- Some information that parents and carers need is not available. This includes the proprietor's contact details on the website, the accessibility plan and some policy information. Parents and carers need this information to make informed decisions. Leaders need to provide all the information to parents in line with the requirements of the independent school standards.
- Leaders' and governors' systems for checking compliance against the independent school standards are not sufficiently robust. Some monitoring records, including behaviour logs and careers advice and guidance, are not maintained accurately enough. This means leaders do not have a fully accurate picture of the school's effectiveness. Governors need to have more stringent processes in place so that they can hold leaders to account more effectively.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	139018
DfE registration number	874/6004
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10113590
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Silver Birch Care Limited
Chair	Graham Brown
Headteacher	Emma Sutters
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51300 - £85758
Telephone number	01733 344448
Website	www.beechesuk.co.uk
Email address	esutters@beechesuk.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–22 September 2016

Information about this school

- The school was last inspected in September 2016, when all of the independent school standards were met and it was adjudged to be good.
- The school changed ownership on 1 August 2018. The new proprietors are Silver Birch Care Holdings Ltd. The company has two directors. They are looking to set up local governance arrangements.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities . All pupils have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan. Many have a diagnosis of autism and/or communication difficulties.
- All school placements are funded by local authorities and admission is through local authority referral. At the time of the inspection, pupils were funded by local authorities from Barnet, Bedford Borough, Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Central Bedfordshire, Croydon, Hertfordshire, Leicester and Rutland.
- The headteacher has been in post substantively since September 2018. The deputy headteacher was appointed in October 2019.
- The school is based in two buildings, on opposite sides of the road. The addresses are 218 and 301 Dogsthorpe Rd, Peterborough PE1 3PB.
- The school uses one provider for alternative provision, Peterborough Regional College.

Information about this inspection

We 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We visited a range of classes across both sites. We looked in detail at English, mathematics, science, and personal, social, and health education. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils and looked at pupils' work in these subjects. We also spoke with pupils and staff about different aspects of the school. We joined pupils and staff for refreshments at breaktime.
- We spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the head of operations and other staff in the school. One inspector held a telephone conversation with one of the directors from the proprietor body.
- We scrutinised a range of information from the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, development plan, and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records. We spoke to pupils, staff and the designated safeguarding lead about procedures to keep pupils safe.

- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire Parent View for inspectors to consider. We took note of the responses of the nine staff who completed Ofsted’s survey of staff views, and the four responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey.
- An inspector spoke to a member of staff from the alternative provision to check on pupils’ welfare, attendance and achievement.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Vicky Parsey

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet 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;
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
- 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(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(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 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; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ('S') appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ('S'), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
- 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(2)(b)(i) where the proprietor is an individual, the proprietor's full name, address for correspondence during both term-time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietor may be contacted,
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(b) particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language;

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.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has not ensured that the school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have not produced an accessibility plan.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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