

# The Beeches Independent School

218 Dogsthorpe Road, Peterborough PE1 3PB

## Inspection dates

20–22 September 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Governors, well supported by independent consultants, provide high-quality monitoring, support and challenge. As a result they hold senior leaders and staff to account for the progress of pupils and support the school in meeting all of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher sets high expectations and leads with a determination to improve the school. Skilled staff follow her example and go the extra mile to ensure good outcomes for pupils. Pupils appreciate these efforts and work hard in response.
- The Beeches is a place where pupils are happy. Considerate staff value pupils and allow them to be the person they choose to be. Staff provide support through which pupils find out about themselves in a safe and caring environment. Pupils are kept safe and benefit from the care and attention that they receive.
- Staff use their knowledge effectively to tailor a well-planned curriculum, which is adapted to meet the needs of individuals. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Staff understand how well pupils learn and shape learning to meet pupils' needs, which enables pupils to make good progress, often from very low starting points.
- Staff and governors have improved their understanding of how well pupils behave and develop social skills. Some of the information is not yet used consistently to record or identify improvements.
- Pupils say that they are well supported by staff who care. This is improving their attitudes to learning and increasing their willingness to engage in activities. Staff are willing to change their teaching in discussion with pupils.
- Pupils attend well and enjoy their learning.

### 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.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- senior leaders' monitoring of the recording of incidents of challenging behaviour is improved to ensure that recording is consistent and informs practice
- leaders and staff use the improved range of information about pupils' well-being to identify specific gaps in their development and address them quickly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Staff, parents and carers agree that the new headteacher leads with conviction and her determination to create a positive culture inspires staff to meet every pupil's needs. They say she is working hard to ensure that outcomes are improving for all pupils. The headteacher's high expectations are endorsed by staff and she leads by example. Staff are willing to make significant efforts to ensure good outcomes for pupils.
- Senior leaders demonstrate good capacity to continue to improve the effectiveness of the school. The headteacher's sharp focus on teaching and learning ensures that members of the teaching team are skilled and enthusiastic about their roles. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils make at least good progress from their low starting points when they join the school.
- Leaders and managers are effective in meeting the independent school standards and have an accurate view of what the school does well and what they need to do to be even better. This view is based on the evidence that they gather through their routine monitoring of the work of all staff and of pupils' outcomes. Analysis provides a focus for improvement and the judgements made are increasingly accurate. The headteacher is clear about the next steps that need to be taken to improve the work of the school and raise further the outcomes achieved by the pupils.
- The individualised curriculum offers breadth of experience and is designed to ensure that the best opportunities are offered to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Through a wide range of well-considered activities, pupils have the chance to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and further their understanding of fundamental British values. They have clear opinions of what is right and wrong and articulate them well.
- Under rigorous direction from the headteacher, knowledgeable staff who have an appropriate range of skills make sure that provision is tailored to individual needs and they review this often. Pupils say that changes are made quickly when they are needed and post-16 students understand that these changes support the different points that they are at in their development; for example, the inclusion of budgeting skills for a post-16 pupil ready to move into supported living. Pupils appreciate the effort that staff make and engage readily in the lessons on offer.

### Governance

- Governors identified that they lacked the expertise necessary to monitor and challenge the work of the school well. They therefore appointed two external consultants with relevant experience to robustly monitor the quality of teaching and learning. While this information is directly informing the developments made by the school, there is a lack of detailed understanding of the impact that the different types of support and interventions have on pupils' outcomes.
- Guided by the appointed consultants, governors are beginning to use their growing understanding of the quality of teaching to inform the performance management systems which are currently in place. Although they know how well each pupil is achieving and are very proud of the progress that they make, they do not yet use this information as part of their analysis of the quality of teaching, or to inform the pay increases that they award.

- Governors and leaders have made representation to placing authorities to access pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. As yet, they are not in receipt of any such funding.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors ensure that all the relevant checks are made when employing new staff. Records of these procedures are thorough.
- Pupils are taught how to be safe when they use equipment, resources and modern technologies such as smartphones and computers. Staff work closely with parents and carers, who feel that their children are very well cared for at school and feel well informed about their child's developing skills for use in the wider community.
- Risk assessments in relation to the needs of pupils and with regard to trips and other activities are rigorous. The specific needs of pupils are considered carefully. Pupils' safety is well protected. Where appropriate, pupils are encouraged to be independent in their travel to and from school. Leaders carefully monitor all these arrangements to keep pupils safe.
- Safeguarding systems are well managed and fit for purpose. All safeguarding-related policies and procedures are in place, published on the school's website, understood and followed by staff. Records are well kept and all staff have a clear understanding of how and to whom they should report any concerns. The safety of pupils is central to what all staff do all of the time.
- Pupils say that bullying happens very rarely and they are confident that any concerns which might arise will be quickly addressed by staff. Pupils could talk about how staff have supported them in their learning about how to keep themselves safe, and how to support those around them when things get difficult. While individuals spoke of how they sometimes find it difficult to manage themselves safely, they are clear that in these difficult moments staff will make sure they stay safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and are kept safe by staff who care and are thoughtful about their needs and difficulties.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The new headteacher has led, and continues to lead, significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the last 12 months. Staff have raised their expectations of what pupils can do and these high expectations are now a part of teaching and learning experiences for all pupils throughout the school day.
- Teachers and support staff have a clear understanding of each pupil's needs and the associated barriers to learning. They use this information and their good subject knowledge, skills and expertise to plan teaching that is interesting and lively, and tailored to the needs of each pupil. Pupils engage quickly and enjoy their lessons, making at least good progress.
- Teachers use their ongoing assessments to plan effective learning activities that meet the needs of each pupil. All aspects of pupils' progress are analysed and valued by staff, including their academic performance and the progress they make in their physical and emotional development. However, the recording of their achievement in less academic aspects is not effectively used to the same standard as that for academic progress. Teachers and support staff do not intervene as quickly when the development of these wider skills, for example resilience, slows.

- Teachers give high-quality feedback to pupils and check their work regularly. They consistently follow the school's marking policy, matching feedback to pupils' needs. Some pupils are given written guidance about how they can improve their work while some have picture communication or are told by adults. This helps pupils to think about their learning in an accessible way and to make further progress.
- An important factor in the improved quality of teaching has been the good-quality professional development for teachers provided as a result of the monitoring of their work. Leaders have developed an accurate understanding of where the best teaching happens. They ensure that teachers' judgements are accurate by making regular checks on pupils' work and by comparing it with the work of other pupils, including those in a local mainstream school.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education or employment through detailed transition planning. Staff involve pupils at every point in the process and pupils' views and needs are central to the decisions made for them. Although these decisions are sometimes challenged by placing authorities, staff work hard to reflect every aspect of pupils' lives in the decisions that they make.
- All pupils make good use of the opportunities offered to learn away from the school site. They attend work experience or other provision which is appropriate to their needs and stage of development. Many of these activities push the boundaries sometimes caused by pupils' difficulties in showing independence, enabling them to work cooperatively with others and to take responsibility for their own actions. They are encouraged, for example, to travel independently to work experience and take responsibility for purchasing their own travel cards.
- Parents and carers value the support offered by leaders and staff in the school. They feel that pupils are thought about carefully and that their needs are met effectively. They are grateful for the individualised opportunities for pupils, which enable placements to be successful. Parents and carers also say that staff take the time to listen to their worries and include them in any decisions taken.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The Beeches School is a place where pupils are happy to be. They say that staff allow them to be the person they choose to be and support them to find out about themselves in a safe and caring environment which values their individuality. Pupils believe that staff make well-being and safety their priority. Staff know pupils really well and know how to best support them. Pupils are kept safe and feel valued.
- Staff liaise closely with a range of agencies, including social care professionals, to make sure that pupils' medical, physical, emotional and social needs are met effectively.
- Pupils are regularly taught about how their behaviour can have an impact on the safety and well-being of others, how to self-manage difficult times and to take ownership of their behaviour. As a consequence, pupils are respectful and mindful of one another and their differing needs and skills, valuing each of their peers, even on the days they may find them difficult.
- Pupils gain effective social and team-working skills from the time staff spend focusing on what it is important to each individual. They have frequent opportunities through

the curriculum, including trips and visits, to make choices, feel valued, take part in, and to sometimes lead, activities. They enjoy and benefit from taking such a full part in their learning.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils move around the school safely with consideration for their peers and the wider community. Although the adults are never far away, many benefit from being trusted to do this independently.
- Teachers and assistants are skilled in using encouragement to help pupils to keep trying hard, even when pupils challenge them directly. Pupils understand what is expected of them and they understand that staff will use the 'natural consequences' of poor behaviour when they are needed. Pupils' high levels of respect and liking for staff mean they want to please them and, therefore, are often successful in gaining their praise.
- Although many pupils find managing their own feelings and behaviour difficult, they behave well in lessons. This is because expectations are high and they enjoy the carefully planned learning activities.
- Pupils who have challenging behaviour have individual behaviour support plans, which are used effectively to help staff manage their behaviour and to support the pupil to move on from any difficult situations. The behaviour policy is consistently applied, and pupils are encouraged to think about how their behaviour affects the learning of others, enabling pupils to learn over time to manage their own feelings and conduct.
- Records show that incidents of poor behaviour are tackled promptly and effectively. Staff are becoming more effective in their management of challenging behaviour as a result of the good training they have received. The reporting and analysis of this information is not yet consistent and is not used to help plan the next steps in managing individual pupils' behaviour.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Good**

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points on joining the school in all key stages. Some pupils make very rapid progress and achieve very well. Regular checks on progress are used to identify ways to improve the achievement of pupils whose progress is slower by introducing new strategies to help them catch up.
- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum, including in their literacy, phonics and mathematical skills. Pupils, including some who have recently joined the school, enter with speech, language and communication difficulties or face challenges in developing their reading and writing skills.
- Pupils do well from widely differing starting points. Disadvantaged pupils and those who are looked after make good progress. This includes when attending off-site learning activities. This is because of the effective support that the school provides for pupils.
- Pupils' work, including that of the most able, shows that they apply themselves well, making efforts to succeed. They learn to have positive attitudes to challenge and overcome many of the barriers they face.

## Sixth form provision

Good

- Students in post-16 provision receive the same good-quality teaching, including in English and mathematics, as they do in other year groups. This teaching is responsive to their needs, and is provided in appropriate learning spaces. For some this will include learning out in the community, such as visits to local supermarkets. For other students, this includes work experience opportunities, such as working in a local café.
- Students are supported to make their own appropriate choices about which courses to study and how to complete them. The choices are well supported by staff, who have a deep and detailed understanding of each student's needs and the barriers they face to being successful in their learning. Staff are willing to deliver new and different courses from those they have taught before, and as a result there is no ceiling to what students can select to learn about.
- Individualised programmes are well structured and build on students' prior knowledge to make sure that their achievements continue. This includes the development of personal and social skills, which is very well managed.
- Post-16 work shows that young people are challenged to achieve well in a broad range of subjects and are offered access to college courses. Students are given a wide range of experiences to prepare them for the workplace, including opportunities for them to try different jobs and to experiment in mock interview situations.
- Transition to the next stage of education or training is well planned and positive. Students who are looked after by their local authority say that they find it very challenging when they have to leave the school and care provision at the same time.

## School details

Unique reference number	139018
DfE registration number	874/6004
Inspection number	10020912

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	Independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	The Beeches UK Ltd
Chair	Quintin Lovis
Headteacher	Kathryn Black
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,400–£86,450
Telephone number	01733 344 448
Website	<a href="http://www.beechesuk.co.uk">www.beechesuk.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@beechesuk.co.uk">info@beechesuk.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	9–10 October 2013

## Information about this school

- The Beeches is registered for up to 21 pupils aged from nine to 19 years who have a range of special educational needs, including social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH), as well as those who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). It began admitting pupils in January 2013.



- Most pupils have histories of disruption to their education, including poor attendance or exclusions from their previous schools. Many attended a lot of different schools prior to admission to the Beeches. Many have also had disruptive home lives and are now looked after by their local authority.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs. Five authorities currently fund pupils' placements at the school. Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, the inspector spoke with the headteacher, other teaching staff and with pupils.
- The inspector spoke to the chair of the governing body and to external consultants who support leaders. The inspector observed pupils in classrooms, at breaktime and as they moved around the school.
- Pupils' work and folders were reviewed. Information about pupils' most recent progress was analysed and discussed. The school's policies and procedures to safeguard pupils were scrutinised.
- The inspector reviewed responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, spoke with a set of parents face to face and others by telephone, and considered the questionnaire responses from 11 staff.

## Inspection team

Mary Rayner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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