

Inspection of The Beeches Independent School

45 Thorpe Road, Peterborough PE3 6AN

Inspection dates:

15 to 17 July 2025

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?

Pupils had disruptions to their education or struggled to attend school regularly prior to attending here. This school provides the care and security they need to support them to successfully re-engage with learning. Their attendance significantly improves, as does their overall well-being.

Pupils enjoy the different subjects they are taught and know the school wants them to do well. They learn key life skills ready for adulthood, such as in food technology. Leaders have high expectations for pupils. However, the work pupils are currently set often does not deepen or extend their understanding. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could.

The school provides a high level of pastoral support. It is overall a calm place in which to learn. Pupils build warm and positive relationships with staff and the proprietor body. Staff successfully settle pupils who are feeling worried or anxious. Pupils value being in small classes and close adult attention. Pupils trust adults to help them. However, pupils would benefit further from the proprietor body checking in more detail the quality of provision to ensure the high standards leaders intend are consistently achieved.

Pupils develop their interests in 'enrichment' sessions, such as in art, design and cooking. They enjoy visits from the sports coach, learning about different festivals and going on nature walks.

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

The school successfully settles pupils back into school routines, ensures they attend frequently and improves their self-confidence. Parents and carers are very appreciative of this. The school works closely with its residential settings to support those pupils who live there with a smooth transition into school.

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum to engage pupils' interests. It has carefully considered how pupils' learning will dovetail with their specific education and health care (EHC) plan targets. However, this curriculum is still in its infancy. In some subjects, the order in which knowledge is taught is not yet clear enough. This limits how well pupils build knowledge over time. The school checks pupil's ability on arrival at the school to identify their starting points. However, staff are still getting to grips in ensuring learning activities are accurately matched to pupils' exact needs and abilities. Therefore, pupils are not progressing quickly enough through the curriculum as they should.

Pupils secure post-16 college placements or stay at this school to complete their education and secure key knowledge in mathematics and English. However, some pupils are capable of following more advanced qualification pathways earlier and having their knowledge extended further. Currently, this means some pupils are not achieving as highly as they could.

The school checks that all pupils can read fluently and independently. Pupils practise reading and learn subject-specific vocabulary. Books are matched to suit pupils' reading ability. However, the few pupils who find reading tricky do not catch up quickly as checks on their reading do not inform next steps in learning robustly enough.

Pupils are taught behaviour expectations for social situations. They are shown ways to manage their feelings and anxieties safely. If pupils need additional help with this, staff use their training and expertise well to help pupils calm. There are seldom instances of unkind behaviour. However, when this does occur, leaders intervene swiftly to successfully address this. Pupils appreciate this. If incidents occur that could risk pupil safety, the school takes prompt action. However, the proprietor body recognises that de-briefings they give staff are not always sufficiently clear, and this results in some staff not being aware of how aspects of pupils' care have been addressed.

Pupils follow a well-thought-out personal development programme. They learn about safe and healthy relationships and lifestyles, about personal risks they may face and the dangers of substance misuse, such as vaping. The school fulfils its statutory duties regarding relationships and sex education (RSE) as pupils learn about consent, puberty and contraception, for example. Pupils are taught about respecting difference. There are rarely discriminatory incidents. Pupils give their views to leaders at their personal education plan meetings and through informal discussions. Pupils are listened to by staff. Pupils receive useful careers guidance to help them make decisions about their futures. The school is currently working on improving work experience opportunities.

There has recently been a new governing board appointed. New governors are working at pace to ensure they hold leaders effectively to account, including for safeguarding. The proprietor body acknowledges it has not overseen aspects of the school's provision or supported leaders with sufficient rigour. This is being addressed. However, this work is still in its early stages.

The proprietor body and governors are mindful of leaders and staff well-being. They encourage staff supervision meetings. However, several staff are not at ease sharing their worries with leaders at all levels. Staff are concerned that they are not supported enough to fulfil their roles.

The proprietor body has ensured compliance with all the independent school standards. They also meet requirements under schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2010. The new building is well maintained. There are adequate risk assessments in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Several staff feel they are not well supported to fulfil the expectations of their role. This impacts on how well the school's vision can be realised. The proprietor body needs to work constructively with staff to ensure staff can carry out their roles effectively.
- The proprietor body's checks on some aspects of the school's work are not as thorough as required. This impacts how well they understand the effectiveness of their systems for improving the provision. The proprietor body needs to strengthen their oversight of the care and education pupils receive to be fully assured processes are understood by staff and followed as intended.
- Some of the work set for pupils is not well matched to their needs. This means pupils are not achieving as highly as they could. Staff need to ensure that they use checks on learning to inform their teaching more accurately, adapt learning and raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The ambitious curriculum is in the early stages of development. This means the order and detail of the knowledge to be taught is not yet clear enough. The school must ensure that what to teach and when is explicitly signposted to staff and that it is then taught as intended.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	139018
DfE registration number	874/6004
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10342084
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Special School
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Beeches UK Limited
Chair	Karim Lalani
Headteacher	Abigail Brown
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,000 (average fees)
Telephone number	01733 215204
Website	www.beeches.co.uk
Email address	info@beeches.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 to 6 July 2023

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an EHC plan. Many have a diagnosis of autism, social, emotional and mental health and who need support with their communication and language.
- Around half the pupils who attend are children that are looked after. They live in children's homes overseen by the proprietor.
- All school placements are funded by local authorities. School admission is through a local authority referral.
- Since the last inspection, the school has moved premises and is now based on one site. This address is 45, Thorpe Road, Peterborough, PE3 6AN.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- This is the school's sixth standard inspection. The school was judged as requires improvement overall at the previous standard inspection in July 2023.

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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, food technology and personal, health, social and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at other subject curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, teaching staff and support staff.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the chair of the proprietor body, the chief operating officer and the head of operations.
- The lead inspector spoke to the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor.

- The lead inspector spoke to the local authority designated officer and to local authority leaders responsible for commissioning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan and governance minutes. Inspectors also scrutinised a range of school policies and processes.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the staff survey, pupil survey and spoke to several pupils across all year groups. The inspectors spoke to staff members collectively and individually.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jessie Linsley

His Majesty's Inspector

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