

The Belsteads School

Back Lane, Little Waltham, Essex CM3 3PP

Inspection dates

27 September 2018

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

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The previous inspection, in March 2018, found that the curriculum was not fully developed, most notably in subjects other than English and mathematics. The range of qualifications and accreditation available to pupils was too narrow.
- The provider had not ensured that a written curriculum policy was in place, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work. Limited planning at that time did not take sufficient account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an education, health and care plan. Inspectors also found that there were too few opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills.
- The school's action plan outlined the steps that would be taken to meet the unmet standards. School leaders and staff aimed to review the school's curriculum. In addition, they planned to map curriculum plans across subjects to ensure continuity, flexibility and the capacity to meet the diverse needs of pupils.
- Leaders agreed to secure a wider curriculum offer, with suitable accreditation opportunities, and to enrich pupils' personal and social development.
- Since the inspection in March 2018, the curriculum has been strengthened through themed opportunities in science, humanities, design and technology, cookery, art, physical education, music and drama. Personalised programmes are devised for older pupils to gain work-related qualifications through partnership work with a local college.
- Effective use is made of social time, with a strong focus on the acquisition of skills to support pupils' positive interaction with others. One example of stronger focus is the 'family' style lunch, where pupils take turns to help to prepare meals, or to set up the dining space. During the inspection, it was notable how well the pupils behaved as they ate lunch together and chatted sociably with visitors and school staff.
- Learning is carefully planned to provide opportunities for pupils to think about important values alongside other topics. Governance and democracy in humanities, for example, is carefully linked to pupils' work on Macbeth in English. In turn, this offers pupils

appropriately staged access to learning about Britain's literary heritage. During the inspection, pupils were observed discussing the social and moral implications of Macbeth's state of mind and acting out scenes from the play.

- A revised curriculum policy is in place and is published on the school's website. Pupils have access this year to a wider range of accredited qualifications. Over time, as they move into key stage 4, and in line with their ability, the plan is for some pupils to work towards GCSE examinations in mathematics and English by the end of Year 11.
- Plans are underway to develop closer links with secondary schools, with a view to extending further the range of options available in areas of learning where pupils have the ability to succeed.
- Links with colleges help to provide careers information, advice and guidance for older pupils and to prepare them for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h)

Paragraph 4

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection, because teaching, learning and assessment did not support sufficient challenge for pupils when they were ready to achieve more. Assessment information was not always used effectively to plan learning that was appropriately matched to pupils' different abilities. Teachers' expectations of pupils' progress were not consistently high enough.
- School leaders proposed several appropriate actions to address the concerns. These included the recruitment of additional teachers, further staff training linked to a revised programme of regular checks on pupils' progress, and closer monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time.
- Because of the changes already implemented, teachers, including new staff appointed, now have a better understanding of pupils' needs. New systems for planning learning are offering more regular challenge to pupils in lessons. Consequently, most pupils are positive about, and well-focused on, their work.
- While arrangements for tracking pupils' personal and social development are increasingly well established, leaders know there is still more to do to fully implement a system for tracking academic progress. Some staff training has taken place and there are appropriate plans for further training.
- Inspectors' observations and information from the school's now regular monitoring and review programme show that expectations of what pupils can achieve are generally higher. Overall, teaching is improving. Leaders have a better understanding of what is working well, and of the aspects of teaching that need to improve.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection, because the school's recruitment systems were ineffective in making all reasonable and statutory checks, and in the recording and monitoring of these checks. Records relating to concerns about pupils

lacked precision.

- In the school's action plan, the proprietor proposed to agree to and implement safer recruitment processes, to clarify specified responsibilities for carrying out checks and to ensure that induction processes enable administrators to carry out the checks. In addition, school leaders committed to reviewing records to ensure suitably detailed content, with clear chronologies.
- Since the inspection in March 2018, the school has appointed a business manager, who is responsible for carrying out pre-employment checks. All the required statutory checks are now completed. Roles and responsibilities are clear. Further training has been undertaken that is linked to the most recent guidance for keeping children safe.
- Child protection records are well-kept and appropriately detailed.
- The routine monitoring of the school's safeguarding arrangements is carried out by the headteacher, with further checks planned through an external adviser and termly visits from the local authority. A designated safeguarding governor will oversee this work once the embryonic governor team is established.
- Attendance monitoring is rigorous, including through the supervision arrangements for older pupils who attend part-time courses away from the school site.
- Close attention is paid to helping new pupils to settle in as quickly as they can. School records and pupils' conduct around the school show some significant improvements in individual pupils' behaviour, attendance and progress over time.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Paragraph 9, 9(b)

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection, because the school's behaviour policy was not implemented effectively. Consequently, some pupils' progress in managing their own behaviour slowed. Leaders were still developing strategies to support the complex behavioural needs of some pupils. Staff had not completed training in how to use a range of behaviour management strategies effectively.
- In the school's action plan, the provider proposed to identify triggers for individual pupils' behaviour and to update pupils' profiles and risk assessments regularly. Leaders also indicated that good practice information would be disseminated across the school team.
- Staff training has now been completed. Staff now have a better understanding of individual pupils' needs, including for those pupils who might be at risk of harm. The behaviour policy is implemented more consistently. The school is typically calm and orderly.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Paragraph 11

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection because the proprietor had not ensured that relevant health and safety laws were complied with. Concerns were raised in relation to the fire regulations.
- The school's health and safety policy has been updated. Suitable records are maintained of any incidents arising. These records are monitored to check if there are lessons to be

learned or follow-up action to be taken.

- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met

Paragraph 12

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection because fire risk assessment documentation had not been suitably updated. Fire safety checks had not been completed or recorded. The location of some fire safety equipment was not known and some of it was not accessible.
- In the school's action plan, the provider proposed to undertake a fire safety audit and fire risk assessment with the support of an external adviser. Proposals aimed to provide training for caretakers to ensure that checks were undertaken routinely and suitably recorded.
- The plan also covered proposals for the repositioning of fire safety equipment and recognised the need for clear indication of its location. Further training was to be put in place for staff on the management of risk and the action to take when fire equipment is damaged.
- Staff training has taken place with the support of specialist providers. An audit and suitable risk assessment has been conducted. Appropriate checks are undertaken weekly and systematically recorded. Fire extinguishers are accessible, signed and have their locations recorded centrally.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Paragraph 15

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection, because attendance registers and the admissions register did not contain all the required information.
- In the school's action plan, the provider proposed to review the admissions register and add the information required.
- The admissions register now contains all relevant information. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that it meets requirements consistently. Pupils' absences are also recorded appropriately in the attendance registers.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- This standard was not met at the time of the previous inspection, because risk assessments were not up to date or precise enough about pupils' needs and the actions to take to address risks.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor proposed to use external support to develop and implement a risk assessment policy incorporating the most recent guidance. Leaders also proposed to ensure the central storage of risk assessments and make them accessible to all staff.
- A suitable risk assessment policy was completed in March 2018. This policy is subject to annual review. Individual risk assessments are appropriately detailed, routinely updated and centrally stored.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(e), 18(3)

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection, because leaders were not precise enough in checking, when they were employing staff, that all reasonable precautions were taken. In addition, leaders had not ensured that all statutory checks were carried out, including checks on staff who have lived or worked overseas, medical checks and section 128 checks on leaders and managers.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor proposed to improve safer recruitment training for relevant staff. In addition, to ensure the completion of all required checks and the compliance with statutory guidance of associated documentation, including the single central record of employment checks (SCR) and personnel files.
- Since the March 2018 inspection, the SCR has been updated and is now compliant with statutory requirements. Personnel files contain all necessary documentation.
- All the required training has been completed in line with the most recent guidance.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Paragraph 21(1), 21(3), 2(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b)

- This standard was not met at the time of the previous inspection, because the proprietor had not ensured that the SCR accurately recorded all the checks undertaken for staff who had previously lived or worked overseas, medical checks, or section 128 checks on leaders and managers.
- In the school's action plan, the provider proposed to provide relevant training to ensure that all checks were carried out and that documentation was compliant.
- Since the March 2018 inspection, all the required actions have been completed.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)

- This standard was not met at the time of the previous inspection because the accommodation assigned as a medical room did not have suitable washing facilities.
- In the school's action plan, the provider proposed to relocate the accommodation, and to install a washbasin with a supply of hot and cold water.
- Since the March 2018 inspection, a suitable location for the medical accommodation was identified. A contractor completed the work on 10 April 2018. The new area is more spacious and fully equipped with the required facilities.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(j), 32(2), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f)

- At the time of the previous inspection, this standard was not met, because the school had not published the required information for parents and carers, including: the school's ethos and aims, information related to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils,

an outline of pupils' academic performance, a statement about the effectiveness of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and the number of complaints received in the previous year.

- In the school's action plan, leaders committed to making certain that all relevant information was published in line with the requirements.
- The school now has a suitable safeguarding policy published on its website and provides parents and others with a range of information to meet the requirements of the standard.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous inspection, senior leaders had not ensured that all the independent school standards were met.
- There was no secure system in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders' roles and responsibilities in meeting the independent school standards were not clear, especially in relation to compliance with routine fire safety requirements and the maintenance of appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical needs.
- The information provided for parents and carers was incomplete.
- Arrangements for accurately assessing the school's effectiveness lacked rigour. The curriculum provision was underdeveloped, and pupils had limited access to accredited learning routes.
- Since the March 2018 inspection, improvement planning is now focused on the right priorities. Plans for the introduction of a governing body are at an early stage of development, with a view to supporting the regular monitoring that is now in place.
- Welfare health and safety standards meet statutory requirements. Safeguarding arrangements and safer recruitment practices are now effective.
- Suitable curriculum plans and associated schemes of work are in place. Teachers have a better understanding of pupils' starting points and improved access to information to help them plan to meet pupils' individual learning needs.
- The monitoring of teaching learning and assessment is more regular. Leaders have a much clearer insight into where teaching is working well and what needs to improve.
- The issues raised at the March 2018 inspection have been addressed, but some actions are at a relatively early stage of implementation.
- Leaders know that they need to continue to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that all pupils are challenged to achieve their very best.
- Effective action has been taken to ensure that this independent school standard is 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

- The proprietor must ensure that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, is drawn up and implemented effectively and takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an education, health and care plan, and does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (*paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that provision for the full-time supervised education of pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996) gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education (*paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that teaching at the school:
 - 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
 - fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils and ensures that these are considered in the planning of lessons
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and that information from that assessment is used to plan learning so that pupils can progress

(paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents and national norms, or to both, is in place (*paragraph 4*).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school, and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (*paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that good behaviour is promoted among pupils by ensuring that the behaviour policy is implemented effectively (*paragraph 9, 9(b)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the

drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (*paragraph 11*).

- The proprietor must ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (*paragraph 12*).
- The proprietor must ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. (*paragraph 15*).
- The proprietor must ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy, and that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. (*paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that no person at the school 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. The proprietor must carry out appropriate checks to confirm the person's medical fitness and, in the light of the information from the checks referred to in paragraphs (c) to (f), the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the position to which the person is appointed (*paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(e), 18(3)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that, in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State, including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained (*paragraph 21(1), 21(3), 2(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils (*paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)*).
- The provider must ensure that the information specified in the standard 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, and that particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request (*paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(g), 32(1)(j), 32(2), 32(2)(d), 32(3), 32(3)(e), 32(3)(f)*).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent standards are met consistently, and that they actively promote the well-being of pupils (*paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 31(1)(c)*).

School details

Unique reference number	144378
DfE registration number	881/6067
Inspection number	10056692

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	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Proprietor	Peter Adams
Headteacher	Joanna Burdon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54, 978
Telephone number	07917 402 000
Website	www.thebelsteadsschool.com
Email address	littlebelsteads@yahoo.com
Date of previous standard inspection	13–15 March 2018

Information about this school

- The school opened in April 2017, catering for pupils with severe or moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and the associated challenging behaviour.
- The headteacher has operational responsibility for the school, reporting directly to the proprietor.
- The school provides education for up to 12 pupils aged 10 to 16 years.
- Admission to the school is through local authority. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and an education, health and care plan.
- The school supports a very small number of pupils to access work-related qualifications off-site. These pupils are accompanied by school staff while they are away from the site.

- When Ofsted conducted the school's first standard inspection in March 2018, the overall effectiveness of the school was judged inadequate and 14 of the independent school standards were not met.

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.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since the school was judged to be inadequate in March 2018. This inspection was conducted without notice.
- Following the previous inspection, the school was required to prepare an action plan. This was evaluated by Ofsted on 30 May 2018 and did not meet requirements.
- The inspector observed teaching, learning and assessment in the school. The inspector also looked at pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, the proprietor and staff. The inspector spoke with pupils in lessons about their learning, and at lunchtime in the dining room.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, safeguarding records, recruitment information, risk assessments, pupil-progress records and school policies and procedures.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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