

# Inspection of The Beechfield School

The Nest, Caretakers Bungalow, Birches head Academy Site, Birches Head Road ST2 8DD

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Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**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?**

Relationships are the cornerstone of this very special school. Staff champion each pupil. They prioritise partnerships with families. They surround pupils with care and belief. Consequently, pupils are achieving more than ever before.

Some pupils start at Beechfield with negative and variable previous experiences. Relationships with previous school staff have often been difficult. Some pupils have attended many schools, while others have had time without school. Their belief in school and themselves has therefore been negatively affected. Beechfield provides all pupils with a fresh and caring new start. The school aims to provide all pupils with a strong foundation to enable them to succeed in their future.

Staff work hard to inspire pupils to become enthusiastic learners who value learning. Leaders and staff work well together to build pupils' self-esteem, raise their confidence and improve their social skills. This creates a calm and purposeful learning community. Incidents of bullying are not common. Pupils have confidence in staff to resolve any issues straight away.

Leaders and staff work together to go 'above and beyond' for their pupils. Daily trips out provide opportunities to enrich the curriculum or moments of calm and reflection. Partnerships with colleges and alternative provisions enrich functional, emotional and vocational learning experiences.

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

Since the last inspection, the proprietors and leaders have strengthened provision. They have a strong and precise understanding of the school's relative strengths and areas for improvement. They know what they need to do to get even better outcomes for pupils. There is a shared tenacity to ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) continue to be met. The newly formed governing body and proprietors use their knowledge to further develop the quality of provision for pupils.

When pupils arrive at Beechfield, many of them have had inconsistent and variable school experiences in the past. Most have social, emotional and mental health needs that have affected what they have learned previously. All have gaps in their learning from time spent away from school or low attendance. Whatever the reasons, leaders endeavour to work with families to understand the barriers to learning so the correct provision can be implemented.

Over the last two years, leaders have rightly prioritised creating sequences of lessons that build pupils' knowledge. Lessons precisely build on what pupils have learned in the past. For example, in English, lessons build knowledge of poetry's different forms, meanings and interpretations before the pupils use their newfound knowledge to create their own works.

Reading is a priority. Some pupils are confident readers but have not yet developed a love of books. Others have not secured a strong enough understanding of phonics so they can decode words and read with increasing accuracy. For all pupils, planned opportunities for reading are provided across all lessons. However, while most staff are confident in teaching reading, others are not as confident. In some cases, phonics is not taught correctly or opportunities to deepen understanding of what has been read are missed.

Leaders and staff are skilful in understanding that sometimes different parts of the curriculum need to be prioritised. For example, when pupils start at Beechfield, relationships and secure attachments are prioritised. From this foundation, staff then work hard to understand the learning and cognition barriers to learning for the pupils. By concentrating on different needs at different times, pupils are calm, focused and often enthusiastic in lessons.

Staff are quick to understand when pupils are learning well or have not learned the intended outcome from lessons. Staff are skilled at asking the right questions to test pupils' understanding. From this understanding they build learning from what the pupils know and understand to the ambitious intention for those lessons. However, in some cases, when pupils have been away from school, they have not caught up on missed learning. This makes the next steps more difficult as pupils must work harder to understand where new learning fits.

Partnerships are a huge strength at Beechfield. Leaders know that sometimes their pupils might be at risk from such things as criminal exploitation, gangs or antisocial behaviour. Consequently, Leaders have established strong relationships with the police, the violence reduction unit and the youth justice service, to not only spot when pupils might be at risk but to provide guidance and support for the pupils.

Daily visits to local parks, leisure facilities and community facilities such as libraries help pupils to develop an understanding of the city. Lessons inspire a knowledge of healthy lifestyles while staff support pupils to visit restaurants and food outlets to use money to make healthy choices. Gym visits, snooker, cricket and skateboarding provide pupils with opportunities to develop personal interests and hobbies.

Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the support and care they receive. They speak candidly about previous experiences and how they found school difficult. They are equally honest about the help and support they receive at Beechfield. Consequently, attendance is very high for most pupils, and when it is lower for others it is rapidly getting better. This is a school where pupils feel valued and cared for.

Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and a suitable accessibility plan is in place.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Ongoing safeguarding training ensures staff have the right knowledge to spot when pupils are at risk. They use this knowledge to act swiftly to report concerns when needed. Leaders work quickly to investigate and put the right action in place to keep the pupils safe. The school's family support officer provides ongoing support and signposting for parents and carers.

Lessons inspire pupils' knowledge about making the right choices to stay safe. Inspectors observed workshops where pupils used virtual-reality headsets to experience the dangers of crime. Consequently, the pupils could talk about safer options to avoid such troubles.

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

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The implementation of the reading curriculum for those pupils who are not yet confident readers is not yet securely embedded. This means that some pupils cannot securely grasp the skills of recognising phoneme/grapheme correspondence, decoding words or understanding what they have read. Leaders need to ensure that all staff precisely embed their training so that all pupils become confident readers as a priority.
- Systems and processes for intervention catch up are not consistently used for all pupils who might have time away from school. This means that some pupils have gaps in their learning as they have not completed key activities to build their knowledge. This puts additional pressure on staff to catch up in the following lessons and makes subsequent learning more challenging. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils who have time away from school catch up quickly and complete key learning tasks they might have missed.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148131
<b>DfE registration number</b>	861/6026
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267705
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	9
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Beechfield Education Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Howard Rowley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Liam Barlow
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£37,620
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 864 826
<b>Website</b>	No website
<b>Email address</b>	jo@beechfield-education.com
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 to 10 June 2021

## Information about this school

- The Beechfield School, known locally as The Nest, first opened as a provider of alternative provision in January 2020 and is now registered as an independent special school.
- The school is based in a bungalow in the grounds of Birches Head Academy. The school also rents a space at The Bridge Centre, which is a nearby conference and community centre.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in relation to their social, emotional and mental health. Some pupils have been excluded, or have been at risk of exclusion, from mainstream schools and some are in receipt of an education, health and care plan.
- The school occasionally uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school's most recent full inspection was in June 2021. Overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement.

## 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.

- Prior to the inspection, the proprietor submitted a material change request to increase the number of pupils from 10 to 30. The proprietor also requested a material change to move from the current site at The Nest, Caretakers Bungalow, Birches head Academy Site, Birches Head Road ST2 8DD to Acorn House, 140 Brownhills Road, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent ST6 4JU. The outcome of this part of the inspection is that the school is likely to meet all the relevant standards if the material changes are implemented.
- The lead inspector held regular meetings with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour, personal development and careers education.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing board.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors completed deep dives in English including reading, mathematics, science, and personal, social, health and economic education. They met with subject leaders and teachers to talk about the quality of education at the school.
- Inspectors made visits to lessons.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences at school. They looked at pupils' work in a range of different subjects to see how well the curriculum is implemented.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises to check their suitability.
- Safeguarding documents were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children prior to employment. Inspectors checked that staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively.
- The lead inspector considered the free-text responses received during the inspection. There was a limited response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which meant it could not be accessed.

### **Inspection team**

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Matty

Ofsted Inspector

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