

The Beeches Independent School

URN 139018

Inspection dates	9–10 October 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Good leadership and management is ensuring that all aspects of the school's work are consistently good.
- The quality of teaching is good. The school thoroughly checks each student's abilities and interests on arrival. Staff use this information well to plan individual learning programmes to re-engage students with learning and ensure that they make good progress. This is reflected in the outstanding improvement students make in their school attendance.
- Students are prepared well for the next stage of their lives. They have good opportunities to gain relevant qualifications to prepare them for further education. There is a well-conceived programme of work-related learning and life-skills programme.
- There are good arrangements to ensure students' welfare health and safety. These enable them to stay safe and make good progress in their behaviour and attitudes to learning

It is not yet outstanding because

- Marking does not show students their next steps in learning and how they can improve their work.
- There are missed opportunities to deepen students' thinking through questioning in lessons.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets all the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations')

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place at one day's notice. The inspector examined various school documents and policies, and observed seven lessons jointly with the headteacher. All teaching assistants were seen teaching.
- Students' behaviour was seen in lessons, at lunchtime, around the school and during outside activities.
- The inspector looked at a sample of students' work and scrutinised a range of documentation, including policies, records, teachers' planning and the tracking of students' progress.
- The inspector took account of the five questionnaires returned by staff. None were returned by students or the local authority. The inspector telephoned all parents to seek their views.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is the first inspection of this small school which caters for both resident and day students. It is registered for up to nine students from 10 to 19 years with behavioural emotional and social difficulties (BESD) or autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). It began admitting students in January 2013.
- Most students have histories of disruption to their education including poor attendance or exclusions in their previous schools.
- All teaching is carried out by a team of five experienced teaching assistants under the leadership of the headteacher, who is a qualified and experienced teacher.
- Three students have a statement of special educational needs. One is in care of the local authority. Two authorities currently fund students' placements at the school. All students are of White British heritage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise students' achievements further by:
 - always providing questions to deepen students' thinking in lessons
 - informing pupils of how to improve their work when their books are marked.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students' achievement is good. All students have made good progress in the relatively short time they have been at the school. Students enter the school with below average attainments due to histories of disruption to their learning. They make good progress over time from their starting points because teaching and support for their learning are good. Individual education plans (IEPs) focus sharply on targets designed to narrow the gap in their attainment in English and mathematics and overcome barriers to their learning. Pupils of all abilities make equally good progress. The very few students with more complex communication needs and severe learning difficulties made rapid progress in a mathematics lessons because the task, methods and resources were matched closely to learning needs. These were precisely specified in the IEP and accurately reflected in the provision specified on the statement. More able students also do well with one younger student already working towards GCSE foundation level in mathematics. His parent praised the school for meeting his needs so well and stretching him academically so that he now wants to learn and looks forward to coming to school. One student who entered the school part way through Year 11 has gained eight unit awards so far and is now working on entry level qualifications as well as developing his football skills through sports coaching. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education through a well-conceived programme of work related learning and practical activities designed to develop independence skills. Students of all abilities make good progress in English and mathematics because reading, writing and numeracy are promoted well across a range of subjects such as horticulture science and through research topics. Occasionally, staff miss opportunities to promote students' more rapid progress by deepening their thinking through closer questioning.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour is good. Most students make at least good progress in their behaviour and all make outstanding progress in their attendance. The school helps students to make good progress in managing their own behaviour through the effective implementation of the rewards and sanctions system. This provides students with a predictable and dependable learning environment, enabling them to settle into their routines quickly. Students respond well to the consistent management of their behaviour in lessons and around the school. Students are respectful to others and well behaved in lessons, in garden activities, at the horse riding centre and at lunch time. There are few recorded incidents of more challenging behaviour. In discussion, students said that behaviour is good and there is no bullying.

The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Their self-esteem is raised through the judicious use of praise and encouragement and by providing them with good feedback on how well they are doing. As they re-engage in learning and experience success, students grow in confidence. Students develop good awareness of other cultures and traditions through the religious education programme. For example, in their study of Islam, students have developed an interest in Halal meat and have asked if they can prepare Punjabi food. Through citizenship topics, such as democracy, students develop respect for the modern British way of life. They also develop knowledge of public institutions through visits to the police, the library and the local tourist information office. The school ensures that, when discussing topical issues, students are presented with balanced viewpoints.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good. One-to-one teaching is provided to all students who benefit from an individual timetable which takes full account of their abilities and interests. The headteacher carries out detailed assessments of every student's learning needs on entry to the school. This

information is shared with teaching assistants who, together with the headteacher, plan sequences of lessons in each topic. Learning activities, teaching approaches and resources are therefore closely matched to an individual student's needs and this helps them to make good progress. Teaching assistants have a good understanding of the teaching of communication, literacy and numeracy skills, which are well taught. This ensures that students make good progress towards their IEP targets in these areas. They make good use of well-chosen resources such as flash cards for literacy, real shapes in mathematics and lap tops to research planets in science. Staff plan to develop their teaching skills further in the forthcoming training day on the use of signing to support a student with limited communication. Questioning usually encourages students to think more deeply about their topic but this is not always the case. Teaching assistants have a good understanding of examination requirements. Students are given good feedback in lessons on how well they are doing. The marking of students' work clearly informs them how well they are doing and what levels or grades they are reaching, but does not guide them as to how to improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good. A good balance between academic and vocational learning opportunities is tailored to each student's individual needs, based on carefully assessment on entry to the school. There is a strong emphasis on developing the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy in each student's personalised timetable. As a result, students are able to acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills well. The well-thought-out programme of work-related learning includes good careers guidance and structured work experience programmes, such as gardening, tailored to student's needs. The curriculum is meeting the needs of all students with statements well. For example, the student with severe learning difficulties and limited communication needs has additional speech therapy support. Students also have good opportunities to acquire independence skills through a variety of activities, such as preparing budgets in cookery, and using the correct tools and equipment in gardening and construction. This is also promoted through life skills unit awards, such as taking medications safely. Good links with the careers service and local college is enabling the school to prepare its first student for transfer to further education employment or training at the end of this academic year. However, it is too early to tell what impact this will have over time on retention as the school has only been admitting students quite recently.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

The procedures for ensuring students' welfare, health and safety are good. All the regulations are met. All staff were trained in child protection, behaviour management and the use of physical intervention as soon as they were appointed. In September 2013, they had further and updated training. The headteacher, who is the designated person for safeguarding, has had additional training in safer recruitment and liaises closely with the local safeguarding board to ensure that all requirements are met. The school maintains a single central register which includes all the required checks on the staff and proprietor. These are updated regularly by the headteacher and proprietor when new staff are appointed. All procedures for ensuring fire safety, including the regular checking of all appliances such as gas appliances, are implemented effectively. The recently revised first aid policy is also implemented effectively, with the few accidents and administration of medicines recorded appropriately. The consistent implementation of the behaviour policy and application of rewards and sanctions is ensuring that students' behaviour improves and they know the consequences of their behaviour. The school successfully implements its policies for addressing and preventing bullying. Good links with outside professionals, such as therapist and health service, enable the staff to meet the needs of students effectively and has a good impact on their personal development. Students stay healthy and fit as a result of good opportunities to make healthy choices and through regular exercise. The standard of maintenance in the premises and accommodation is good with full assessments of potential risks against each student's needs carefully assessed. Detailed risk assessments are also made on each school or outside learning

activity, such as horticulture in the garden and horse care at the local riding school. Control measures to reduce any potential hazard are in place to ensure students' safety.

Leadership and management

Good

Good leadership and management has enabled students to quickly re-engage with learning and to make good progress during their relatively short time since admission as a result of good teaching. The induction of new staff is well managed and includes safeguarding training, the use of physical restraint, behaviour management and detailed information about each student. Needs. Plans are in place to provide further training in November 2013 in the use of signing. Staff meetings are held every day to discuss each student's progress and response in lessons. The headteacher carefully checks the impact of teaching on the learning and the progress of each student, offering clear advice and support to staff. As a result, staff morale is high and is reflected in the overwhelming positive returns of their completed questionnaires. Teaching assistants receive good training and support from the headteacher, particularly in the management of behaviour and in planning sequences of lessons matched to the schemes of work.

The headteacher liaises closely with the students' homes to exchange information about their learning and well-being. The proprietor has formed an accurate view of the quality of teaching, through regular visits to the school and discussion with headteacher. The headteacher, with the support of the proprietor, has ensured that all independent school standards are met and that the premises and accommodation are secure and adequate to meet students' needs. The proprietor has created two new classroom areas and overseen the development of the outside garden area of the children's home to enable horticulture to take place. The proprietor has also ensured that up-to-date information is provided to parents either on line through the school's website or in the school's brochure. All parents receive an informative annual report on their child's attainment and progress and aspects of their personal development, such as attendance and behaviour. The school provides local authorities with the required information about the students they fund at the school. The school's complaints procedures meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	139018
Inspection number	422845
DfE registration number	874/6004

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Day Special School
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	10–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Beeches UK Limited
Chair	Quintin Lovis
Headteacher	Deborah Hayward
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected

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