

Inspection of Belmont School

Haslingden Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 6RX

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 September 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Belmont School. They said that they are greeted by kind and caring staff as they arrive at school each morning. The warm and friendly relationships that exist with staff help pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Adults are skilled at helping pupils to manage their behaviour. Pupils are keen to try their best. In time, they learn to sustain their concentration for longer periods. They join in classroom discussions with enthusiasm.

Pupils learn about the different forms that bullying may take. Pupils told inspectors that leaders deal with any incidents of bullying quickly and effectively.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know that their teachers are ready to listen to any concerns that they may have. Pupils benefit from a range of support and therapy for their mental health and well-being. They enjoy spending time with Bella, the school's therapy dog.

Pupils benefit from weekly enrichment time. For example, pupils choose to spend time in the school gardens. Pupils grow fruit and vegetables and care for the school's chickens. Pupils are proud to represent the school in sports.

Leaders and staff share a determination for every pupil to be fully prepared for their next steps. They expect pupils to learn well. Due to the effective range of learning opportunities and the support that leaders and staff provide, pupils do achieve well.

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

The newly established leadership team has taken decisive steps to meet pupils' varied needs. Leaders have made improvements to the curriculum and to the pastoral support that enhance pupils' experiences. These changes are successfully addressing pupils' individual learning and development needs.

Overall, leaders have put in place a well-designed curriculum. Pupils benefit from learning a wide range of subjects. In most subjects, leaders have successfully ensured that the curriculum contains the important knowledge that pupils must learn. Pupils revisit this important curriculum knowledge often. This helps to ensure that pupils remember and can use this knowledge with increasing confidence and independence. However, in one or two subjects, leaders have not set out with clarity how pupils should build on their learning as they move from key stage 2 into key stage 3.

Across the school, leaders provide pupils with a range of interesting books and magazines to read and enjoy. Reading areas are well stocked and attractive. Most younger pupils learn phonics in well-ordered steps. Reading books are matched to pupils' reading ability. Leaders have provided training in teaching phonics to staff.

However, a minority of pupils struggle with their early reading. Some do not have sufficient time to learn and practise new sounds.

Leaders provide staff with very regular training. This ensures that staff are skilled in delivering the curriculum. However, a few subject leaders are new to their roles. They have not had the opportunity to develop their expertise in leading their subject areas. That said, leaders are taking effective steps to support these new staff.

Teachers think carefully about what activities will support pupils well in their learning. Leaders make detailed checks to make sure that pupils are achieving well. They use this information well to shape future learning.

Pupils have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When pupils start at the school, a team of clinicians works closely with staff, parents and carers to identify pupils' individual social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. Leaders use this information well to ensure that pupils benefit from individually tailored support. For example, leaders provide a range of strategies to meet pupils' sensory needs. This support enables pupils to access the school's curriculum well. Staff keep in regular contact with parents to share important information about their children's learning.

Staff and clinicians work closely to support pupils to improve their behaviour over time. Pupils are given safe spaces and time to regulate their emotions. Caring and supportive staff are always on hand. In lessons, most pupils behave well. Any interruptions due to misbehaviour are dealt with calmly and quickly by staff. This ensures that everyone can get on with their learning.

Leaders provide pupils with well-designed opportunities to enhance their personal development. For example, older pupils learn important life skills, such as planning and cooking healthy meals. Planning for pupils' future careers starts at an early stage. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that pupils have a range of experiences in the community, and in school, to prepare them successfully for college and work.

Leaders make effective use of the school buildings and grounds to support pupils' learning and well-being. Classrooms and learning areas are well resourced. Leaders give careful thought to the vocational provision for older pupils. Pupils are given the opportunity to gain qualifications in areas including construction, mechanics and horticulture. Pupils move on successfully to a range of college and training settings of their choice.

Staff appreciate how senior leaders consider their work-life balance when making decisions. They value the professional development opportunities that leaders provide. Through daily briefings, staff share any concerns with leaders and other colleagues. As one teacher said, 'we are like a family'.

The proprietor body and governors keep a careful check on leaders' work. They undertake regular and detailed checks to ensure that the independent school

standards (the standards) are met consistently. They provide leaders with an appropriate level of challenge and support to ensure that pupils achieve well.

The school meets the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Leaders have established suitable risk assessments for a range of activities. All necessary policies are published on the school's website and are available to parents. Leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

As part of this inspection, inspectors considered leaders' request to change the school from single sex (boys) to mixed. The proprietor body intends to use the school's current safeguarding, health and safety policies and procedures to ensure that the proposed new pupils will be safe, should the proposed change be granted. Suitable provision for pupils has been made, for example through the provision of an appropriate number of toilet facilities which are separate for boys and girls.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide staff with regular and detailed safeguarding training. This ensures that staff recognise the possible signs of abuse. They report any concerns to leaders in a timely manner. Leaders take effective action when dealing with any safeguarding concerns.

Leaders carry out suitable checks to ensure that those pupils attending alternative provision are well cared for and safe.

Leaders have ensured that the safeguarding policy is available on the school's website. It reflects the latest government guidance.

Pupils learn about situations which may lead to potential harm. They find out about possible dangers in the community, such as knives, drugs and alcohol. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when online. They know that they should share any concerns with a trusted adult.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- A small number of pupils at an early stage of developing their reading skills do not have sufficient time to learn and practise phonics. This means that some of these pupils do not develop fluency in reading and blending sounds as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that these pupils receive sufficient time to develop their early reading knowledge.
- In one or two subjects, pupils do not make a smooth transition in learning as they move from key stage 2 into key stage 3. This hinders how well some pupils acquire new knowledge in these subjects as they move into the secondary age-

phase. Leaders should ensure that they refine the steps in learning that pupils must take in these remaining subjects. This is to ensure that pupils continue to build on prior learning.

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

Unique reference number	131025
DfE registration number	888/6029
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10210330
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Steve Pegrum
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,000 to £77,000
Telephone number	01706 221043
Website	www.belmont-school.co.uk
Email address	admin@belmont-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January to 1 February 2018

Information about this school

- The date of the previous standard inspection was 30 January to 1 February 2018.
- The school provides for pupils with moderate to complex learning and behavioural difficulties. Some pupils have additional needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- A new executive headteacher and new heads of school have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- There have been significant changes in staffing since the previous inspection.
- Leaders make use of 13 alternative providers, of which six are unregistered.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the 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: reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, 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 pupils' work, visited lessons and spoke with leaders about some other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils about school life. They spoke with the executive headteacher, heads of school, senior leaders, members of staff and the chair of the governing body. An inspector spoke with the chair of the proprietor body by telephone. Inspectors also met with the school's special educational needs coordinator and members of the school's pastoral team.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They spoke with some parents by telephone. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of some local authorities.
- Inspectors spoke with alternative providers used by the school and checked safeguarding arrangements in relation to these.

- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that in relation to safeguarding and information relating to the standards. They looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school premises.

The school's proposed change to becoming a co-educational school

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, inspectors checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**

Information about the material change inspection

- Inspectors discussed the proposed change with leaders.
- Inspectors checked the school premises.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ian Young

Ofsted Inspector

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