

Best Futures

The Stables, Church Lane, Aylesbury, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN37 7AW

Inspection dates

10–11 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The leadership team has a clear vision for the school; however, it does not yet have a clear understanding of the independent school standards. As a result, several standards have not been met.
- Governors do not yet have a clear understanding of what is needed to make the transition from a successful alternative provider to an independent school.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is not yet consistently good. This is because leaders have yet to implement planned checks on staff performance.
- Pupils make less progress in English than in mathematics or personal, social, health and economic education. This is because pupils are not encouraged to read often enough.
- Staff often work closely with individual pupils in order to support learning and behaviour. Sometimes this does not give pupils sufficient opportunity to develop independence, particularly when writing. This slows pupils' progress over time
- Pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the right choices about their behaviour. When this happens, standards of behaviour dip.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and staff are passionate about ensuring that pupils receive the best experience that school can offer.
- The school has recently employed a new teacher who is bringing about improvement across the school.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong because staff understand pupils' needs well.
- Pupils' behaviour improves as they settle into the routines of school.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Their enjoyment at coming to school is reflected in their increased attendance and positive attitudes.
- The school provides a wide range of curriculum enrichment activities which help to engage pupils.
- Parents spoken to feel school staff understand their children's needs and provide positive experiences and support for their children.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the main report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that all staff teaching pupils have sufficient knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn to ensure that work set matches their needs accurately
 - giving pupils opportunities to develop independence more often, particularly when writing
 - providing a wider range of different activities to encourage pupils to practise their reading skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders and governors develop a better understanding of how to implement the independent school standards
 - putting in place the planned system for checking on the quality of teaching and learning in order to bring about improvement
 - carrying out the required changes to the medical room so that it meets the needs of pupils who may be sick or injured.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching in 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. The curriculum must be delivered by staff through well-planned lessons using effective teaching methods and management of class time (paragraphs 3, 3(a) and 3(c)).
- The proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility. The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs 1(a) and 1(b) (paragraphs (1)(a), 1(b), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b) and 24(2)).
- The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school leadership team and the proprietor do not yet have a strong enough understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school. School leaders also lack a working understanding of how to interpret some areas of the independent school standards, for example the provision of a functioning medical room. This lack of understanding and knowledge within the leadership team has made the school's journey from being a successful alternative provider to an independent school more difficult than it should be.
- Planned systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning have not yet been fully implemented. Weak practice is not yet effectively challenged. As a result, staff sometimes have too low expectations of what pupils can achieve and this slows the progress that pupils make over time, particularly in English.
- Leaders have introduced a very new system to check on the progress made by pupils. However, the information generated does not yet provide leaders with sufficient information about the progress of different groups, particularly the most able pupils and those who have additional needs. As a result, the targets set for pupils do not always match their needs.
- Performance management strategies are beginning to be put place, but at the time of the inspection, it was not possible to analyse the effectiveness of the system in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The curriculum engages pupils well. However, leaders recognise that more structured time is needed for some pupils, particularly the most able, to enable them to practise their reading and writing skills.
- The principal, who is also the proprietor, has a very strong vision for the future of the school, which is shared by staff and governors. Her strong knowledge, understanding and empathy with the personal circumstances of the pupils in her care have enabled the school to develop a caring and nurturing ethos.
- Parents speak very highly of the provision and they were keen to explain how the school has made a difference to the lives of their children and their families. Comments made by one parent summed up the needs of others well: 'Our children, when they come to the school, often feel it is their own fault that they haven't been allowed to stay in other schools. This school makes them feel welcomed, cared for and valued.'
- The curriculum offers many enrichment activities to pupils, including horse riding and swimming. School leaders also promote close bonds between pupils and animals. All classrooms have pets and the principal's dog nearly always accompanies pupils on their daily country walk. Staff and pupils report that the presence of animals often calms pupils' behaviour and the daily routine of caring for each animal teaches responsibility and an understanding of the needs of others.
- School leaders do not currently receive pupil premium funding for individual pupils, although they recognise that some pupils are eligible. However, the bespoke approach taken to the needs of all pupils ensures that they are effectively supported.

- Pupils receive a diverse and relevant personal, social, health and economic education. They are offered opportunities to develop an understanding of other cultures through work on world festivals. Health education and an understanding of how to keep safe are delivered to pupils through the 'safe and proud' curriculum. This also enables pupils to gain an understanding of British values, such as making the right decisions and becoming good citizens.

Governance

- Governors, like the proprietor, lack a clear understanding of how to interpret some aspects of the independent school standards (ISS). They often take a mainstream school approach without taking into account the requirements of the ISS. This could clearly be seen in the writing of a complaints policy which needed minor alterations to ensure that all aspects of the standard relevant to the policy were met. This was completed by the end of the inspection.
- The governing body includes the deputy headteacher and the school's improvement partner as well as others from education and the local community. As with the school, it is relatively new and is evolving.
- The minutes of governing body meetings clearly show that governors are beginning to take a lead in some areas, including safeguarding. Governing body meeting minutes also show that governors are beginning to offer the proprietor a firm challenge as well as support, particularly around the recruitment of new staff.
- Governors are beginning to develop a clear understanding of the needs of the school. Their passion to do their best for pupils within the school and to make the school a success matches that of the proprietor and this is beginning to bring about improvement overall.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have made sure that the school's safeguarding practice is informed by the government's most recent guidance, and an up-to-date policy is available on the school's website.
- The school safeguarding policy is readily available to parents from the school website or a paper copy can be obtained from the school office.
- Staff are very clear about what to do if they have concerns about a child. The clear knowledge and understanding of staff make a significant contribution to the understanding within school that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.
- Regular briefings keep staff updated and leaders ensure that staff undertake required training.
- Close working relationships with other professionals are evident in the confidential and well-organised records kept by school. These further contribute to the strong culture of safeguarding within the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning requires improvement because not all staff have a strong enough subject knowledge in the subjects that they teach. The current system of the teacher setting work and teaching assistants delivering learning to individuals and small groups slows pupils' progress. This is often because staff lack a clear understanding of how pupils learn.
- Work set often matches pupils' needs. However, sometimes staff do not have a high enough expectation of what pupils, particularly the most able, can learn in the time available. This is clearly reflected in the quality of work completed in pupils' books and files and in the data kept by the school.
- Staff do not always use questions effectively to help pupils learn. When this happens, pupils rely too much on staff support and do not develop an ability to think and learn independently.
- Pupils' progress in writing is not yet consistently good because the quality of teaching and learning in this subject area is not consistently effective. For example, work in books shows that the most able pupils do not always get sufficient opportunity to practise their writing skills.
- Pupils have access to a small library, but pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunity to read a variety of different texts. This slows their progress in reading overall.
- Pupils enjoy learning about mathematics. Several spoken to said that it was their favourite subject. Some delight in carrying out complicated calculations in a bid to arrive at an answer before the staff member. Progress in mathematics is stronger than in English overall.
- Staff understand the needs of their pupils well and form strong and caring relationships both inside and outside the classroom. Comments such as, 'I like this school' and, 'teachers help me to learn' described the feelings of the majority of pupils well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff understand the needs of pupils well and are successful at developing pupils' self-esteem and self-worth. Pupils' social and emotional needs are clearly recognised and effective support is put in place. As a result, pupils are often able to re-engage with school and learning and make small steps towards improvement.
- Staff are skilled at recognising pupils' needs and they recognise and reduce the barriers to learning caused by pupils' previous experiences. The nurturing environment of the school enables pupils to feel cared for and respected.
- Pupils spoken to say that they feel very safe in school and most enjoy attending. They commented on how staff help them. For example, they learn how to stay safe when crossing the road through road safety training on their daily walks.

- Parents feel that their children are safe and well cared for in school. Those spoken to were very keen to explain how much school leaders have done to improve their children's attitudes to school.
- Through lessons in swimming and football, pupils learn the important role that exercise plays in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Planned weekly physical education (PE) lessons reinforce this key message.
- Visits to other organisations in the community, such as care homes for the elderly, have increased pupils' awareness of the needs of others. Pupils are involved with the local community and church and have worked with the elderly community in particular in preparation for nativities, events and fund-raising. Pupils described with pride how they enjoy undertaking this work, which has helped pupils to gain an insight into the needs of others, reinforcing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour nearly always improves as they settle into the routines of school and recognise the expectations of staff.
- However, behaviour logs and observations made during the inspection show that the standard of pupils' behaviour sometimes slips and, despite the support given to them, pupils do not always make the right choices.
- School staff help pupils to recognise and deal with the triggers that cause their behaviour to dip. The positive start to each morning as pupils complete their 'scrap books of good work' and receive encouraging feedback from staff helps them to build resilience and take responsibility for their own behaviour. However, some are further along this pathway than others.
- The attendance levels of many pupils improve when they join the school. As a result, overall attendance is improving and is close to the national expectations for primary schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils arrive in school with a diverse range of aptitudes and abilities. Their progress from this variety of different starting points requires improvement because the quality of teaching and learning is not yet consistently good.
- Pupils' progress is stronger in mathematics than in reading or writing. This is because pupils often enjoy learning about and practising practical mathematical concepts and find this preferable to reading and writing.
- Pupils also often make better progress in personal, social, health and economic education. This is once again because pupils enjoy the topic more and engage with more enthusiasm and interest.
- Staff and leaders understand the needs of pupils and support their individual social and emotional needs well. However, their academic needs are less well supported and this slows progress overall.

- The school currently has only one teacher, who has been in post for approximately six months. The teacher has already developed an understanding of what is needed to bring about improvement to pupils' outcomes but as yet has not been able to put in place the required strategies.

School details

Unique reference number	142828
DfE registration number	812/6004
Inspection number	10040148

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Best Futures Community Interest Company
Chair	Janet Goodwin
Headteacher	Dawn Best
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,500 to £28,500
Telephone number	01472 278978
Website	www.bestfutures.co
Email address	office@bestfutures-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered with the Department for Education on the 12 October 2016. Previously, the proprietor ran an alternative provision which supported pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school meets the needs of pupils who have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have additional needs, including autistic spectrum disorder and other learning difficulties.

- The school is registered for up to 10 pupils who are between the ages of four and 11 years old. Currently there are six pupils on roll, none of whom are in early years. This is due to increase next term as up to four others join the school.
- The school does not have a particular religious character.
- All pupils are educated on the school site except for some aspects of physical education, when pupils attend a range of different sports facilities with staff from school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in classes across the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils and the leadership team and three parents.
- The inspector analysed a wide range of documents in relation to the independent school standards. These included the school's curriculum plan and supporting schemes of work, safeguarding documentation and a wide range of policy documents.
- There were too few responses received on Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, for parents' views to be interpreted. However, the views of parents were gathered through telephone conversations during the inspection.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Suzette Garland-Grimes

Ofsted Inspector

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