

Best Futures School

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

Inspection dates

21–23 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor does not accurately evaluate the school’s strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, actions taken have not led to school improvement.
- The school does not have a suitable system in place to allow teachers to improve the quality of their teaching. This has had a negative effect on the quality of teaching that pupils receive.
- Governors are not knowledgeable about the school’s strengths and weaknesses. This limits their ability to challenge the proprietor and support school improvement.
- The proprietor has not ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust. Consequently, pupils’ safety and welfare are at risk.
- Leaders and managers have not planned the curriculum adequately so that it maximises pupils’ opportunities to make good progress.
- Too many teachers do not have good subject knowledge or use assessments well to plan learning, particularly in English.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met.

The school has the following strengths

- Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Staff meet pupils’ emotional needs effectively. These strengths promote the good behaviour seen throughout the school.
- Pupils generally make good progress in mathematics.
- Leaders have planned a curriculum that means that pupils spend a lot of time in physical activities. This has helped promote pupils’ good social and emotional skills.
- The prospective principal is already implementing new procedures to enable school improvement.

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 full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers must ensure that pupils' welfare is promoted at all times, by ensuring that:
 - communication with safeguarding authorities is completed as required and in a timely manner
 - recruitment procedures are rigorous, and documentation is well organised
 - all staff are fully aware of the potential safeguarding risks of the pupils within their setting
 - safeguarding procedures for reporting concerns are more rigorously implemented
 - procedures for administering pupils' medication are stringently adhered to
 - risk assessments are updated to reflect pupils' changing needs and are consistently adhered to.
- Improve leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on available evidence and this is used to develop actions to bring about school improvement
 - governors are better and more accurately informed about standards and processes in the school
 - governors are more effective in challenging and supporting the school leaders
 - a review of the curriculum takes place to identify how it can better meet the academic needs of pupils
 - a more effective system is developed to review the quality of teaching and learning so that these can better support school improvement
 - all staff who deliver teaching and learning are supported more effectively so that their individual continuing professional development needs are met.
- Improve the quality of teaching to enable pupils to make better progress, particularly in English, by ensuring that:
 - time transitioning between activities is more profitably spent
 - planning for learning takes into account individual needs more accurately
 - during activities, learning is focused on academic outcomes as well as emotional outcomes.

The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietor is not proficient at evaluating how well the school is meeting the needs of pupils or identifying actions needed to bring about improvement. This has limited school improvement since the last inspection.
- One local authority has been supporting the school regularly during the past year. School leaders have not made good use of this support to enable school improvement.
- Teachers receive little support to help them improve the quality of their teaching. Similarly, teaching assistants who lead learning have not received guidance on how to improve their work. This has meant that the quality of teaching is not good.
- Teaching staff access regular online training. However, this training is not personalised to meet individual teachers' needs. This hinders them from improving their skills and supporting pupils' learning more effectively.
- A curriculum has been planned around topics and includes lots of physical activities to help interest pupils and get them to take part. However, it is not clear within the topics what is planned for pupils' academic learning and this is hindering pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders have planned a curriculum that meets the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils well. For example, caring for the rabbits that run freely around the play area is helping pupils to develop empathy, and understand the responsibilities of caring for a pet.
- The proprietor is passionate about meeting the emotional needs of the pupils. She knows the pupils well, as do her staff; as a result, pupils' emotional and social needs are skilfully met.
- Several staff responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and all responses were extremely positive. All staff enjoy working at the school. Comments such as, 'Best Futures is a wonderful place to work,' and, 'I find it a motivating and rewarding place to work,' were made.
- Parents and carers and representatives of placing local authorities commented on how suitably the school meets pupils' social and emotional needs, with comments such as, 'I feel my son has come a long way since starting the school,' and 'Best Futures has been a lifeline for my son'. However, they raised some concerns about the leadership of the school, safeguarding procedures and how well teachers are meeting pupils' academic needs.
- The prospective principal is currently working in the school and has an accurate idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The areas for development that he has already identified closely match the findings of the inspection team.
- Although not yet in post, the prospective principal has already developed a more rigorous system to evaluate the quality of all teaching and learning. He has begun to implement this system very recently; however, it is too soon to see the impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Governance

- The proprietor and governors do not have effective quality assurance systems in place that ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met, and that pupils' welfare is promoted adequately.
- Governors are not well informed about pupils' academic progress and the quality of teaching and learning. This lack of knowledge prevents them from challenging the proprietor well or being able to support the school effectively to bring about improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective as processes and procedures are not implemented effectively to ensure pupils' welfare.
- The proprietor and governors have not ensured that when required, the appropriate agencies have been involved in safeguarding concerns.
- Leaders have many policies and procedures in place, for example for recruitment, risk assessment and administering medicines. However, these policies and procedures are not always stringently adhered to and the potential for pupils to come to harm is therefore present.
- The safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website, follows recent government guidelines and staff receive regular training in safeguarding. However, their knowledge and that of senior leaders on how to effectively implement the policy are unsatisfactory. Staff are not aware of the risks that are particularly relevant to pupils at the school.
- The proprietor and governors keep staff files and a record of some recruitment checks made. As raised at the previous inspection, recruitment checks are still not always made or are not being recorded.
- The proprietor and the prospective principal immediately took steps during the inspection to address safeguarding issues that were identified by the inspection team.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Most of the timetable is spent in enrichment and physical activities which promote good social and emotional outcomes. Too often, teachers miss chances to promote pupils' academic learning in other subjects during these times. For example, opportunities to engage in mathematics while in physical education lessons, or while completing simple tasks such as climbing the stairs, are lost.
- Teachers do not maximise pupils' learning. For example, pupils spend too much time waiting for the next activity to start.
- Too often, teachers set work for pupils to complete that does not match their needs. For example, some pupils had complex comprehension tasks to complete that were well beyond their levels of ability.

- Teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in English, does not promote good outcomes for pupils. Teachers do not always model the correct vocabulary and incorrect spellings repeatedly appear in books, for example, 'feild'.
- Teachers build strong and positive relationships with pupils, and this helps them meet their emotional needs well.
- Teachers plan topics and activities that interest pupils and stimulate their enthusiasm for learning. For example, pupils were observed making sea creatures while covering the 'Blue Abyss' topic and were eager to show inspectors what they had created.
- Teachers quickly adapt activities to meet the emotional needs of pupils.
- Teachers assess pupils' learning in English, mathematics and emotional progress regularly. Generally, assessments are accurate and show the progress or lack of progress that pupils are making. However, these assessments are not used well to plan next steps in learning and are not carefully moderated.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate as pupils' welfare is not consistently promoted.
- Pupils indicated to inspectors through their relaxed and happy demeanour that they feel safe and that they are happy to be in school.
- Pupils' confidence in their ability to complete new tasks improves as the staff ensure they feel safe and comfortable enough to try new things.
- Teachers ensure that British values are promoted throughout the day and instances where these values are not apparent are swiftly dealt with. Teachers take time to explain clearly to pupils why any racism or bullying cannot be tolerated.
- Teachers ensure that pupils spend time off the school site and take part in activities that involve the wider world. They take part in fund-raising activities to make them more aware of different people and the world outside the school gates.
- The prospective principal has organised an information session for parents on online safeguarding to further promote the work that he is doing with the pupils in school. He recognises the need to work alongside parents to support pupils' personal developmental needs.
- Parents commend the school for the progress their children make in their personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good, largely due to the effective way that teachers manage pupils' emotional needs. Their knowledge of pupils' needs, and of the things that make them anxious, help teachers keep pupils calm and happy.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and rates of attendance are good.

- Parents comment on how their child's behaviour has improved since attending the school and how their child is less anxious. Incidents of poor behaviour reduce as pupils settle into the school. Pupil exclusions and the use of physical restraint are rare.
- Low-level disruption is rare. On the odd occasion it occurs, it is generally when teachers are not using lesson time and transition times effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress pupils make in English is erratic and requires improvement. This is because learning is not being well planned for, and does not meet pupils' differing needs. Sometimes work that is set is too complex and pupils complete tasks without real understanding. At other times, expectations are too low and pupils are limited to working at an easier level. Both scenarios limit pupils' progress in English.
- In mathematics, teachers have adopted a more structured approach to building on prior knowledge and using this to enable pupils to gain a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. There are, however, missed opportunities for using these skills in other subjects.
- Pupils spend limited time on discrete English and mathematics lessons and teachers do not make good use of opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding in English and mathematics when they are learning other subjects. This limits pupils' progress. While there is some good practice in developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, successful strategies are not shared throughout the school.
- An assessment system is in place to follow pupils' progress. Senior leaders use this system to follow progress from the beginning of each year and not from the pupils' starting points. Consequently, teachers are not always pitching work at a level that represents a pupil's capabilities and this limits the achievements of too many pupils.
- Pupils spend a lot of time in learning the broader curriculum. Their topic work shows that they are building a broad knowledge in a range of subjects such as humanities and science. Teachers are imaginative in assessing and consolidating pupils' knowledge. For example, pupils created a slide presentation to show what they had learned about the digestive system and also wrote questions to ask their peers.
- The progress pupils make in physical education is good in term of both social and physical skills.

School details

Unique reference number	142828
DfE registration number	812/6004
Inspection number	10093655

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Dawn Best
Chair	Janet Goodwin
Headteacher	Dawn Best
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,500 to £38,500
Telephone number	01472 278978
Website	www.bestfutures.co
Email address	office@bestfutures-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2017

Information about this school

- The school is located in a rural setting in North East Lincolnshire.
- The school is registered to accept up to 10 pupils between the ages of five and 11 years. Pupils are referred to the school by a local authority and have social, emotional or mental health difficulties or have an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. The majority of pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The pupils take part in physical education at a local sports facility.

- The proprietor is also the principal. The prospective principal, who is currently working in the school, is due to take up the post of principal in September 2019.
- The school was previously inspected in October 2017, when it was judged to require improvement. The school also received an emergency inspection in February 2019 when it was judged not to be meeting all the independent school standards.
- The school's mission is to 'successfully eliminate children's barriers to learning, ensuring they have the opportunity for their very own best future'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two and a half days by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector.
- The inspectors met with the proprietor and the prospective principal throughout the inspection. They also met with teaching and administrative staff.
- The inspectors observed lessons and looked at pupils' work in their books in all subjects with the proprietor and prospective principal. They also observed activities and lessons while pupils were at other locations.
- The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and spoke to representatives of referring local authorities and to parents.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the school day and observed behaviour throughout the school day.
- Five responses to Parent View were received, which was insufficient to record the views received. Four online parent free-text service responses were received. There were 10 responses to the staff questionnaire and five responses to the pupil questionnaire. All these views were considered.
- The lead inspector toured the school building both inside and out, to check whether the relevant independent school standards are met and pupils' welfare is taken into account.
- A range of documentation was examined by the inspector, including policies, the record of safeguarding checks and other safeguarding documentation. All documents relating to the independent school standards were studied and their implementation and effectiveness considered.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tricia Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) 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;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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