

School inspection report

Date 13 to 15 February 2024

Beech House School

184 Manchester Road

Rochdale

Lancashire

OL11 4JQ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor and the leadership team have appropriate knowledge and skills and discharge their responsibilities effectively, thus promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Suitable policies cover all areas of school operations, and these are implemented effectively. Potential risks both on and off site are understood and well managed.
2. The school meets its aims of developing pupils' intellectual curiosity and moral values because this vision is shared and promoted by staff across the school. Leaders have created a positive learning culture based on self-evaluation and review.
3. Leaders have created a suitable curriculum which enables pupils to develop their skills and understanding across the required range of areas. Effective, well-planned teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress, as evidenced by pupils' examination results. On occasions, teacher's planned tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities and do not offer sufficient challenge and pupils' progress is not as consistent.
4. A comprehensive assessment programme provides extensive data so that teachers can monitor pupils' progress and intervene to support them where necessary. The marking of pupils' work is usually regular and thorough and contains helpful advice. The feedback they receive from teachers helps pupils to improve.
5. Leaders in the early years fully consider individual children's needs and interests. Staff plan carefully, so that activities build on children's prior learning. This ensures that they make good progress and develop their social, creative, emotional, intellectual, and physical skills.
6. The range of extra-curricular activities is limited and does not always align with pupils' interests. As a result, they are not always able to develop skills which could support their personal development.
7. Pupils feel that leaders do not listen to or value their views, which impacts on their self-esteem.
8. Leaders carefully consider the mental health needs of pupils and provide effective support for pupils when necessary. Pupils feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have any concerns.
9. Leaders have developed a curriculum and ethos which encourage mutual respect, including acceptance of those which relate to characteristics such as race, faith or gender identity. Behaviour is good. Bullying is rare and when it occurs it is tackled promptly and decisively. Health and safety procedures are effective.
10. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum promotes diversity and cultural understanding. Pupils understand right and wrong and show respect for the law and other cultures. The relationship and sex education (RSE) programme is appropriate and effective in helping pupils understand the importance of respect and what constitutes a healthy relationship.
11. Leaders have developed a curriculum, which includes appropriate careers advice, which prepares pupils effectively for most aspects of life in modern British society. However, for some pupils there is limited economic education about aspects such as managing their personal finances.

12. Leaders have a secure understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, and they implement suitable policies and procedures to promote pupils' wellbeing and safety. The proprietor carries out an effective annual review of safeguarding.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that teaching always provides suitable levels of challenge so that pupils make consistently good progress
- provide a more varied range of extra-curricular activities in line with pupils' interests so that pupils can develop further skills beyond the academic curriculum
- increase opportunities for pupils to express their opinions so that they feel their views are heard and valued
- strengthen pupils' economic education so that they are prepared for the experiences of later life.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Leaders have the required skills and knowledge to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively and so ensure that the school consistently meets the Standards. They promote aims which aspire to develop both pupils' intellectual curiosity and moral values, enabling them to become responsible members of society. These aims guide their planning and are understood by both pupils and staff.
14. The proprietor is also the principal and performs the role of governance. There is effective oversight of all aspects of the school. Through regular meetings with all staff and annual appraisals of teaching, they are aware of the strengths of the school and areas for development and can plan effectively.
15. Leaders are suitably trained in safeguarding and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Pupils are aware of the ways they can raise any concerns they may have. These include talking to trusted staff and using the 'worry' box. However, their views are not routinely sought. All staff are trained in safeguarding and that there is an open and transparent culture in which staff are vigilant to potential risks.
16. Leaders in the early years effectively promote the wellbeing of the children. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed in the setting and that all staff are appropriately trained. Children are suitably supervised, and appropriate staffing ratios are followed. Teachers use a wide variety of techniques and resources to promote effective learning, and children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
17. Leaders systematically identify risks and put mitigation measures in place. They ensure that appropriate risk assessments are in place to cover both the school site and activities which take place both on and off the school premises. Health and safety procedures are thorough, and the school uses specialist outside agencies effectively for support where required. Policies and procedures are understood by staff and implemented well so that they support pupils' safety and wellbeing. The school is suitably maintained, lit and heated and provides a suitable learning environment. The school site and buildings are secure, and access is strictly controlled.
18. There is a suitable accessibility plan in place which identifies how the school can improve access to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities [SEND]. This includes considering how physical access to building on site can be improved.
19. All the required information is either on the website or else available from the school. Parents receive regular and detailed reports on their child's progress and prospects. Leaders, including those in the early years, are visible and available to parents to discuss aspects of their children's learning and progress.
20. The complaints policy is appropriate and is followed closely. If a complaint is made, the complainant receives a clear and timely response, and detailed records are maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders have devised a balanced curriculum which focuses on the acquisition of numeracy, linguistic and literacy skills. Teachers develop pupils' knowledge and understanding across all of the required areas of learning and so effectively prepare them for the next stage in their education. Pupils are successful in gaining places on a wide range of further education courses. Leaders' particular focus on numeracy and literacy means that these skills are well developed.
23. Teachers in the early years use their knowledge of children's individual interests to devise engaging activities which stimulate their intellectual curiosity and promote their learning. By the time they leave the reception class most children have achieved all the early learning goals and achieved a good level of development. For example, Nursery children showed age-appropriate numeracy skills as they confidently count to 10, could add up and take away and recognise that addition resulted in more and subtraction in less. Reception children showed effective communication skills when talking knowledgably and clearly about the life cycle of a butterfly.
24. Numeracy skills are well developed throughout the school. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson pupils showed a deep understanding of symmetry and could accurately reflect shapes about a line of symmetry. Year 9 pupils swiftly assimilated the concept of probabilities and could accurately calculate the chances of something happening. Mathematical skills are used effectively in a range of other subjects. In science, pupils are able to draw and interpret graphs accurately.
25. Leaders are also alert to the need for pupils to develop skills in other areas. The curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to develop their creativity, and this is particularly evident in high quality of their artwork, notably photography. Pupils computing skills are well developed, as seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils created sophisticated presentations on internet safety showing a secure understanding of misinformation and disinformation.
26. Leaders's monitoring of teaching means that teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and lessons are typically well planned. Teachers make effective use of resources and take into account pupils' prior learning. Consequently, pupils make good progress. In 2023 over 80% of pupils gained subject grades 9-4 at GCSE, which is above the national average for all schools. In some teaching, tasks are not matched to pupils' abilities and do not offer sufficient challenge for pupils. In consequence, their progress was not as consistent.
27. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities [SEND] are identified and supported so that they make good progress in line with their abilities. Leaders provide effective support both within lessons and through specialist teaching on an individual basis. Detailed individual education plans outline strategies to help teachers plan their lessons so that they meet these pupils' learning needs.
28. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are also well supported. Their teachers are alert to their need and provide targeted support in areas such as vocabulary. As a result, they become more fluent in their use of English, and make progress in line with their peers.
29. Leaders have developed an effective framework for assessment. They use a detailed tracking system to monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Targeted support is offered to pupils as required. Pupils work is marked regularly, and teachers provide feedback both orally and in writing. Pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Many subjects offer lunchtime clinics which give pupils the opportunity to deepen their understanding of a topic.

30. The enrichment and co-curricular programme is limited in both the number and range of activities available. It does not always reflect the interests of pupils. This restricts opportunities for them to develop skills and interests which support their wellbeing beyond the academic curriculum provided.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

32. Leaders successfully promote mutual respect and tolerance amongst pupils and celebrate the cultural and religious diversity of the pupil body. Issues of equality and respect are discussed frequently. In a Year 10 PSHE lesson pupils discussed the concept of gender, the structure of family and the need for tolerance and respect for all within modern society. Pupils display an understanding of these concepts and discussed them maturely and sensitively.
33. As they move through the school, pupils develop their self-confidence and self-esteem through performing various roles within their classes. This begins in the early years where children take turns to be classroom monitors and continues into the senior school where pupils can be members of the school council or anti-bullying ambassadors. Older pupils with positions of responsibility help to meet the needs of their peers whilst also increasing their own decision-making skills and building self-confidence. However, pupils feel that leaders do not always take their views and opinions into account, which can affect their sense of self-worth.
34. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their moral understanding through the effective PSHE programme, which discusses a range of issues such as respect for the law and rights and responsibilities. These lessons and the religious education programme provide opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual understanding whether it be learning about the importance of *Risalah* to Muslims or a philosophical discussion about life after death. Early years children learn about a range of world religions and enjoy celebrating different feast days.
35. Leaders develop pupils' understanding of physical and mental health. There are staff trained in mental health. Prefects and the anti-bullying ambassadors effectively support pupils' wellbeing and happiness. The school is part of the 'BeeWell' programme which aims to support children's mental health. Through the PSHE curriculum pupils develop an informed understanding of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. Physical education (PE) and games lessons provide regular opportunities for exercise. Pupils are successful in a range of inter-school fixtures and individual sports competitions.
36. Children in the early years are encouraged to take part in physical activities through the dedicated PE lessons. Healthy eating is explained and promoted, with fresh fruit provided at snack time. Staff help them become independent, for example putting on their own coats and hats when going outside. They model good behaviour, and children seek to emulate this in their interactions with each other.
37. Leaders have developed a relationship and sex education (RSE) programme which supports pupils in developing an understanding of what constitutes a healthy relationship and the importance of respect within relationships. Pupils are well informed and understand their responsibilities to themselves and others. Parents are informed via the website of what is in the RSE curriculum and are encouraged to come into school to discuss any aspect of it about which they are unsure.
38. School leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and the school rules are prominently displayed in every classroom. Leaders make it clear that bullying is unacceptable, and teachers and pupils know what to do if they experience or witness any such behaviour. In consequence, behaviour is good and bullying rare. There are very few serious breaches of school rules and the school deals

with any instances appropriately. Pupils are appropriately supervised throughout the school, including in the early years.

39. Leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation, are well maintained. Health and safety procedures are implemented effectively. Appropriate measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire, and staff receive regular training so that they understand their roles and responsibilities.
40. First aid is administered in a timely manner and staff are suitably and regularly trained. Staff within the early years have suitable paediatric first aid training and appropriate records are kept of illness or injury and parents are informed.
41. Admissions and attendance registers are correctly maintained, and any absences are followed up. The local authority is informed when pupils leave the school. There are suitable arrangements for pupils who become unwell.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 42. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

43. Respect and tolerance are central to the school's ethos and are reinforced through the school rules. Pupils show respect for all regardless of background and understand the importance of respect for characteristics such as gender, faith or race.
44. Leaders ensure that pupils gain an informed knowledge and understanding of British values and to learn about other cultures through the PSHE curriculum. Pupils understand the concept of democracy and see it in practice when applying for places on the school council. However, the school council meets irregularly, and pupils say that few of their suggestions are implemented, and they receive little feedback about the suggestions they put forward. This makes their views seem less valued.
45. In the early years, children learn to take turns and to share equipment. They understand that rules exist to help keep them safe and staff help them to develop positive relationships based upon kindness. This helps pupils develop a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong.
46. Leaders ensure that pupils are effectively prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British Society. The PSHE programme actively promotes British values and covers topics such as rights and responsibilities and the rule of law. For older pupils, there is a series of lessons on politics, which includes the role of parliament and the monarchy, the changing relationship between the UK and the EU and the differences between the major political parties.
47. However, for those pupils who do not study GCSE economics, there is limited coverage of economic issues, such as managing their personal finance. Consequently, their understanding of topics such as budgeting, banking and student finance is restricted.
48. The school's values, which include responsibility, are embedded in school life. Pupils value the opportunities provided to take up leadership roles and to contribute positively to the school community. For example, they can be prefects, house and form captains or anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils have opportunities to contribute to life beyond the school through activities such as singing in a retirement home. Pupils support a range of local and national charities and raise money for them through activities such as the Harvest Festival service.
49. Leaders have devised and implement a careers guidance programme which meets the needs of the pupils, including providing work experience for pupils in Year 10. Younger pupils receive detailed advice about subject choices at GCSE. Senior pupils have individual meetings with the head of careers to discuss options for study at local sixth forms, with consideration for possible university choices and future careers. The school holds a regular careers fair at which local-sixth forms come into school and talk to pupils and parents. Visits to these establishments are also arranged. As a result, they are able to make informed choices about a range of further education options and careers.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. Leaders have established a culture of transparency and awareness so that staff are alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk. When concerns arise, external agencies are consulted appropriately, and the school liaises effectively with them. A suitable system is used to record and share any concerns raised by staff, and comprehensive records are kept, including of any low-level concerns.
52. The school's child protection policy is written in line with the most recent statutory guidance and sets out suitable procedures for protecting pupils from harm. Leaders ensure that all staff and volunteers receive suitable safeguarding training when they join the school and this is updated regularly so that they are kept informed of the latest guidance. They understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern, including child-on-child abuse. They have been trained to recognise the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism.
53. The warm relationships which exist between staff and pupils contribute to the culture where safeguarding is of paramount importance. Pupils feel safe at school and could identify several people they would approach if they are worried about anything. Leaders have ensured that pupils understand how to stay safe online. There are suitable filtering and monitoring systems in place.
54. Safer recruitment checks are carried out for all staff and volunteers, and a suitable central record of appointments is kept. The proprietor carries out an effective annual review of safeguarding.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 55. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Beech House School
Department for Education number	354/6001
Address	Beech House School 184 Manchester Road Rochdale Lancashire OL11 4JQ
Phone number	01706 646309
Email address	info@beechhouseschool.co.uk
Website	www.beechhouseschool.net
Proprietor	Beech House School Ltd
Chair	Mr Kevin Sartain
Principal	Mr Kevin Sartain
Age range	2 to 16
Number of pupils	180
Date of previous inspection	22–23 May 2019

Information about the school

56. Beech House School is an independent co-educational day school. Founded prior to 1850, the school occupies four large Victorian houses close to Rochdale town centre. The principal is also the proprietor and has responsibility for governance.
57. The school is divided into three sections: the senior school, for pupils between the ages of eleven to sixteen; the upper preparatory department, for pupils aged from eight to eleven; and the lower preparatory department for pupils up to the age of seven including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The lower preparatory department is located half a mile from the main site.
58. The EYFS setting consists of one nursery class and one reception class.
59. The school has identified 27 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
60. English is an additional language (EAL) for 75 pupils.
61. The school states its aims are to blend the best traditional education values with up-to-date skills and resources to ensure that pupils are provided with a challenging environment which stimulates and develops intellectual curiosity. The school seeks to provide a supportive environment where pupils may develop a sense of moral values, develop self-worth and learn how to become responsible members of society.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

13 to 15 February 2024

62. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

63. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

64. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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