



Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Beechwood School

June 2024

School's details

School	Beechwood School			
DfE number	886/6011			
Address	Beechwood School 12 Pembury Road Royal Tunbridge Wells Kent TN2 3QD			
Telephone number	01892 532747			
Email address	info@beechwood.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Justin Foster-Gandey			
Chair of proprietors	Mr Ali Khan			
Proprietor	Alpha Schools (Holdings) Ltd			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	378			
	Day pupils	338	Boarders	40
	EYFS	27	Prep	100
	Seniors	188	Sixth Form	63
Date of inspection	3 to 4 June 2024			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Beechwood School is a co-educational boarding and day school situated in Royal Tunbridge Wells. The school has been owned and governed by Alpha Schools Holdings Ltd since January 2021. The school comprises: pre-prep, for pupils aged 3 to 7 years, which includes the early years setting; prep for those aged 7 to 11 years; the senior section for pupils aged 11 to 16 years; and a sixth form. Pupils can board from the age of 11 and all who do so are full boarders. The school has identified 80 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are four pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 32 pupils. The school's previous inspection was an educational quality inspection in November 2021 followed by non-routine inspections in June 2022, March 2023 and October 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the progress monitoring inspection on 5 October 2023. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8; EYFS 3.4, 3.5 and 3.7	Remain unmet
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour); NMS 15	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying); NMS 16	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision); NMS 20	Met
Part 3, paragraph 15 (admissions and attendance)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9; EYFS 3.75	Not met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance); NMS 9	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 14	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Remain unmet
NMS 17 (promoting positive relationships)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 8; EYFS 3.4, 3.5 and 3.7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school does not meet the standards and the requirements.
- 2.4 Although much work has been undertaken to strengthen the school's safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection, not all safeguarding arrangements have been implemented effectively. Safeguarding leads have not always followed statutory guidance fully. The local authority designated officer (LADO) has not been consulted early enough when concerns are raised about staff members. Senior leaders have not always followed up appropriately on advice given by the LADO. Whilst suitable risk assessments are in place for relevant pupils with particular needs, leaders have not considered risk carefully enough in other areas of safeguarding in making decisions. This includes decision making as to whether the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) should be informed when there are concerns about staff members.
- 2.5 Staff have now received appropriate training on logging any safeguarding concerns on the school's electronic management system. However, safeguarding records are not yet kept consistently and comprehensively. Supporting documentation relating to some safeguarding concerns is not effectively linked within the system to provide a full picture of each case. Additionally, those with leadership roles are not using the data drawn from records effectively to identify any trends and patterns.
- 2.6 Proprietorial oversight of safeguarding still lacks rigour. In particular, it is insufficient in the areas described above, including those where statutory guidance has not been followed. An annual review of safeguarding is undertaken, centred around reports provided by leads in the school, but this is not wholly effective because some deficiencies remain.
- 2.7 The safeguarding team has been developed effectively since the previous inspection to ensure all sections of the school are fully represented. Processes for the safer recruitment of staff now ensure that all the required checks are carried out before a person commences employment as outlined in statutory guidance. Entries made on the single central record of appointments are now supported by the required evidence in staff files, including copies of identity documents, qualification certificates, references and medical checks.
- 2.8 Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding including those who have specific safeguarding responsibilities. Recent update training has ensured that staff fully understand all aspects of safeguarding including how to report concerns about staff that do not meet the harms threshold. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and link effectively with safeguarding leaders. They understand different types of abuse and what signs to look out for in the pupils, including those who may be particularly vulnerable such as those who have SEND. Staff understand that there is a code of conduct in place to protect both themselves and pupils.
- 2.9 Pupils feel safe at the school and feel that there is always a trusted adult to whom they can talk should they have any worries or concerns. When they express concerns, they receive a response and action is taken. Records of safeguarding confirm this. Pupils are well supported with their emotional and

mental health both through support networks, such as counsellors and the independent listener for boarders, and the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE). Pupils are suitably knowledgeable about staying safe online and in the potential misuse of technology. Monitoring of the use of technology is effective.

- 2.10 Suitable arrangements are implemented relating to the Prevent duty, the potential radicalisation of pupils, and the dangers of extremist behaviours.

Promoting good relationships [NMS 17]

- 2.11 The school meets the standard.
- 2.12 Boarders build positive relationships with one another. They respect one another and enjoy the time spent in the boarding house with their friends. They socialise well across the age ranges and are well supervised. The school's PSHE and RSE schemes of work suitably support the personal development of all pupils, including the boarders.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9; NMS 15]

- 2.13 The school meets the standards.
- 2.14 The school has a suitable behaviour policy that is implemented effectively. Suitable logs are kept of all behavioural incidents, including those relating to boarders. Entries on the logs and are appropriately categorised, such as those pertaining to child-on-child abuse, racist or homophobic behaviours. Pastoral leads have an effective oversight of all behavioural patterns and trends. There are suitable rewards and sanctions implemented to which the pupils respond positively. The school keeps a suitable record of any serious sanctions, including those relating to boarders. There is a strong focus on restorative justice which enables pupils to reflect on their behaviour when it falls below expected levels.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10; NMS 16]

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 The school's policy and anti-bullying strategy is effective. Incidents are not common and any which occur are investigated appropriately and suitably recorded on school logs. The categorisation of such logs enables any patterns and trends to be identified and acted upon. The PSHE and RSE schemes of work ensure that bullying has a suitably high focus and that pupils can learn about the best ways of dealing with any incidents should they encounter them.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 20]

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 Pupils, including boarders, are appropriately supervised. This includes around the school site during the day and in the boarding house at non-teaching times. Boarding house staff always know the whereabouts of boarders. Boarding house staff are suitably trained and deployed to ensure appropriate supervision of boarders at all times, including at night.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission and attendance registers [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]

- 2.19 The school meets the standard.
- 2.20 Registers of admission and attendance are suitably held. Registers of attendance are completed each morning and afternoon, and any unexplained absences are followed up promptly. Any long-term absence is recorded and dealt with effectively. Pastoral leads effectively analyse attendance data to identify any significant patterns or trends.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 9; EYFS 3.76]

- 2.21 The school does not meet the standards and the requirements.
- 2.22 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy in place. There are appropriate risk assessments for many areas of school life including for all matters relating to health and safety and for premises and accommodation. Suitable risk assessments are also in place for all trips and visits, including in the EYFS. Suitable risk assessments exist for individual pupils who may be vulnerable. However, there is not a systematic and comprehensive approach to risk in other areas. This includes evaluating risk appropriately on some safeguarding matters. For example, there is insufficient evidence to show how risk assessments are used during decision-making processes, such as those relating to concerns about adults working with children.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19]

- 2.23 The school meets the standards.
- 2.24 The school's safer recruitment procedures have been suitably strengthened since the previous inspection. All required checks for persons working at the school are now completed before the person commences their employment, including checks to ascertain that all newly appointed staff are medically fit and, where relevant, have appropriate qualifications to fulfil their roles. Staff files, supporting the recruitment process, contain all the required information.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25; NMS 9]

- 2.25 The school meets the standards.
- 2.26 School premises are suitably maintained. This includes boarding accommodation, which has been recently refurbished. As part of the refurbishment required checks were undertaken on cladding and the use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.27 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 14]

- 2.28 The school meets the standards.

- 2.29 The school has a suitable complaints policy which is implemented effectively. The process allows for a complaint to be heard at an informal level in the first instance. If the complainant remains unhappy then they may choose to make a formal complaint in writing. Should the complainant remain dissatisfied then there are suitable arrangements in place for a panel hearing to be convened. All the requirements of the standard relating to complaints are included in the policy and implemented effectively. Suitable records are kept, including those relating to boarding. Where review of the handling of any complaint shows a need to revise procedures this is done effectively and changes are implemented appropriately.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 2]

- 2.30 The school does not meet the standards.
- 2.31 The proprietor has not ensured that leaders have fully and effectively implemented the action plan required following the previous inspection. Leaders do not demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.

3. Regulatory action points

3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7 and 8; NMS 8

- The school must liaise effectively with safeguarding partners, especially the LADO, and take advice in a timely manner as required by statutory guidance [paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].
- The school must ensure that all risk associated with leaders' decision-making about safeguarding matters, including any relating to concerns about adults working with children and in considering referral to external statutory agencies, including TRA and DBS, is considered with due care [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.5].
- The school must ensure that safeguarding records are kept consistently and comprehensively, to enable the transfer of all relevant information and leaders must monitor such information to identify patterns and trends [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7].
- The school must ensure that monitoring and review of safeguarding arrangements by the proprietor has sufficient rigour to identify areas where statutory guidance has not been followed [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.5 and 3.7].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 16; NMS 9

- The school must ensure that there is a comprehensive and systematic approach to assessing and mitigating risks especially those pertaining to safeguarding matters [paragraph 16(a) and (b); NMS 9.3; EYFS 3.75].

ISSR Part 8, Leadership and management, paragraph 34; NMS 2

- The proprietor must ensure that the school's leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including through the full implementation of the existing action plan, so that the independent school standards are met consistently and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.8].

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the proprietor. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.