



Progress Monitoring & Material Change Inspection Report

The New Beacon School

November 2023

School's details

School	The New Beacon School		
DfE number	886/6017		
Registered charity number	1097977		
Address	The New Beacon School Brittains Lane Sevenoaks Kent TN13 2PB		
Telephone number	01732 452131		
Email address	admin@newbeacon.org.uk		
Head	Mrs Sarah Brownsdon		
Chair of proprietors	Mr Gavin Rochussen		
Proprietor	Tonbridge School		
Age range	4 to 14		
Number of pupils on roll	312		
	Day pupils	298	Boarders 14
	Pre-prep	81	Junior 64
	Middle	87	Senior 80
Date of inspection	9 November 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The New Beacon was founded in 1900 as an independent school for male pupils. It is set on the outskirts of Sevenoaks, Kent. The school offers flexible boarding for older pupils on four nights a week. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors overseen by the governance of Tonbridge School. The school is organised into: the pre-prep, including early years and a junior school for pupils aged four to nine; the middle school for those aged nine to eleven; and the seniors for those aged eleven to fourteen. The school has thirteen pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities. One has an education, health and care plan. English as an additional language for five pupils. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in May 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 regulatory compliance inspection on 11 to 12 May 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.
- 1.3 Additionally, this inspection serves as a material change inspection to assess the school's proposal to increase the age range of pupils from 4 to 14 to 2 to 14, and to include co-educational provision in Nursery classes.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraphs 2 to 4 (curriculum, relationships and sex education, teaching and assessment) ; NMS 18	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils); NMS 17	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 (toilet, washing and changing facilities) and 30 (accommodation of boarders); NMS 4	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – curriculum, including relationships and sex education (RSE), teaching and assessment [ISSR Part 1, paragraphs 2 to 4; NMS 18]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The curriculum is suitably documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. These include an appropriate curriculum for early years which is implemented systematically and effectively for current pupils. Suitable plans, activities and accessible resources for Nursery male and female children are implemented effectively. Appropriate RSE provision is made for all ages of pupils currently in the school. This is in line with statutory requirements. The statement of the school's provision is published appropriately. Suitable elements related to personal, social and emotional development and understanding of the world are included in the early years curriculum.
- 2.3 Teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place, including in Nursery and Reception classes.
- 2.4 The school is likely to continue to meet the requirements when the age range for pupils is increased to include 2 to 14-year-olds and coeducation is introduced for Nursery age children.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5; NMS 17]

- 2.5 The school meets the standards.
- 2.6 The school's principles and values are actively promoted through curiosity, creativity and collaboration, which are intrinsic to the school's ethos. These facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Lessons provide for a strong focus on British values throughout the school. They encourage respect, tolerance and empathy towards the needs of others, including those with protected characteristics. This encouragement is included within provision for coeducation in Nursery. This was evident in positive interactions observed between pupils and between staff and pupils. During discussion, pupils articulated the view that rules are necessary to ensure equality and fairness within society. A range of themed opportunities to explore sustainability and current affairs across the diverse school community engenders pupils' effective understanding of different cultures and the needs of a diverse world. Pupils develop age-appropriate democratic knowledge through classroom debates, the school council membership and a parallel 2019 national election activity in school.
- 2.7 The school is likely to continue to meet the requirements when the age range for pupils is increased to include 2 to 14- year-olds and coeducation is introduced for Nursery age children.

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

Safeguarding policy

- 2.8 The school meets the requirements.

- 2.9 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. In particular, the policy references current statutory guidance.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.10 The school meets the standards.
- 2.11 Scrutiny of records, observation and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that appropriate safeguards are implemented effectively, including in early years and boarding. Those responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions within the school. They are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained, including for multi-agency working. Staff in Nursery respond effectively to the safeguarding needs of both female and male pupils. Safeguarding, pastoral, healthcare and boarding staff share key information regularly and effectively. They take into account each individual pupil's physical and psychological needs and wishes, including those pupils with SEND. This information is used to agree appropriate action including the drawing-up and implementation of individual support plans. There is effective liaison with external agencies including referral to child and adolescent health services (CAMHS) and the local authority designated officer (LADO) for safeguarding. Training for other staff and for governors is conducted regularly as required. It is effective and includes informal updates.
- 2.12 Staff are knowledgeable about changes in recent legislation, including the management of children's mental wellbeing, contextual safeguarding, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence. They understand the principles underpinning the staff code of conduct and the procedures for making a referral, including the importance of low-level reporting. They are confident about using whistleblowing procedures. Interviews with staff confirmed that training is thorough and safeguarding is managed effectively. Senior leaders take appropriate action if any perceived breach of the staff code of conduct occurs, or an allegation is received with regard to an adult who works with children. They understand their responsibility to make referral to relevant statutory bodies once investigations by external agencies are completed. They fulfil this effectively.
- 2.13 The governor responsible for safeguarding meets regularly with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies. This maintains effective oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation in the main school and the boarding houses. Reports are given regularly to the governing board by the safeguarding governor and the DSL. These highlight appropriate details of any safeguarding incidents which occur, including during trips and outside of school. This ensures that governors have an appropriate level of understanding, scrutiny and oversight. In addition to continuous monitoring, a suitable annual review of safeguarding is undertaken in line with guidance from the local authority (LA).
- 2.14 Governors have ensured that recruitment procedures are now appropriate. In particular, barred list and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are now carried out before a person commences work at the school. Procedures are in place so that if any staff are engaged in regulated activity before a DBS certificate is available, the school ensures that an appropriate risk assessment is produced.
- 2.15 Pupils know how to contact the school's independent listeners. Any concerns raised are monitored and acted upon by the DSL. Records confirm that when pupils raise a concern, they receive a timely response and action is taken where needed. Safeguarding leaders understand the need to ensure immediate referral to children's social services in the event of a child disclosure in order to mitigate any risk of harm. Pupils who board stated confidently that they receive a detailed induction when they start school including how to stay safe and who to talk to; how to contact helplines including Childline and the Children's Commissioner; online safety; and behavioural expectations. They can name a number of staff to whom they can turn if they are worried or concerned.
- 2.16 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of pupils for the proposed change in age range from 4 to 14 to 2 to-14-year olds and coeducation is introduced for nursery age children.

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

- 2.17 The school meets the standards.
- 2.18 The school has now implemented in full a clear recruitment policy which identifies all the required recruitment checks for staff and governors to ensure their suitability to work with children. It ensures that all required checks for staff working in regulated activity are completed before a member of staff starts work, as are required checks for governors. All such checks are recorded effectively on the single central register of appointments, together with a record of when such checks were made. The required documentary evidence supporting these checks is kept appropriately.

Premises and accommodation – toilet, washing and changing facilities and accommodation of boarders [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23 and 30; NMS 4]

- 2.19 The school meets the standards.
- 2.20 Suitable policies and procedures are in place which ensure that the school premises and accommodation and facilities are maintained to a standard where the health, safety and welfare of pupils is ensured as far as possible. Accommodation for boarders is appropriate and is similarly maintained effectively. There are sufficient designated toilet and changing facilities throughout the school currently, including in early years. These, together with facilities installed in the proposed new buildings are sufficient to accommodate the proposed increase in age range for pupils to include 2 to 14-year-olds and the introduction of coeducation for Nursery age children.

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

- 2.21 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.

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

- 2.22 The school meets the standards.
- 2.23 The school has implemented the action plan required following the previous inspection in full. Senior leaders and the proprietor, including those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding, boarding and the early years, demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that all the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that the proposal for the age range of pupils to be increased to include 2 to 14-year-olds, and for coeducation to be introduced for Nursery age children, is granted.

5. Summary of evidence

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