

# School inspection report

5 to 7 November 2024

## **Beech Lodge School**

Stubbings Lane

Maidenhead

Berkshire

SL6 6QL

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. Leaders and governors have a clear and ambitious vision for the school that is widely known and understood. They are guided by their highly developed understanding of risk management as they continue to develop and expand the school's provision. Leaders throughout the school have the training, knowledge and skills they need and fulfil their roles effectively. Pupils' wellbeing is central to all aspects of school life. The Standards are met consistently.
2. Systematic procedures for monitoring the updating and implementation of school policies are in place, including for safeguarding. An updated policy for admission and attendance had not been made available to parents on the school's website prior to the inspection. The proprietor and leaders took prompt action so that this oversight was immediately rectified. The school's complaints policy meets requirements and is implemented consistently. There is close liaison with parents and carers regarding their children's academic and personal progress and attainment, including in relation to annual reviews of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.
3. The school's comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach very successfully combines education and care and is based upon a deep understanding of attachment theory and pupils' emotional needs. This is a significant strength. The school's approach enables pupils to develop their confidence, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-control, motivation and socialisation particularly well. This focus on supporting pupils' personal development provides a stepping stone to strong academic achievement. Pupils develop high aspirations and achieve a range of qualifications that prepare them for further education and beyond.
4. The curriculum provides all the required areas of learning with a focus on developing communication, literacy and mathematical skills. It is adapted effectively to meet pupils' individual needs. Detailed assessments inform teaching throughout the school. The support that pupils receive from the special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), therapists, teaching assistants and academic and pastoral staff enables them to access learning in the classroom and to make good progress from their starting points.
5. Staff support pupils with understanding and care throughout the day. This makes school life consistent for pupils, enabling them to regulate their own behaviour and enjoy their learning. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.
6. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) are well planned and adapted to take pupils' needs into account. Pupils develop an understanding of, and respect for, themselves and others. The school's positive approach to behaviour management supports pupils in taking responsibility for their own behaviour. They learn to make amends and move on when incidents occur.
7. The premises are designed and maintained to a high standard. The required maintenance checks are completed thoroughly and consistently and are monitored by the proprietor.
8. Pupils attend school regularly, achieve suitable qualifications and pursue their interests. They are keen to help others, particularly through supporting local and national charities. They are well-prepared for their next steps and life in British society.

## 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 step

The proprietor should:

- consistently monitor the reviewing and publication of policies to ensure that up-to-date versions are published on the school's website as required.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The proprietor and leaders have a clear vision and aims for the school that successfully combine education and care. They are based upon a deep understanding of emotional development and principles of inclusion. Leaders' vision and aims are shared effectively and have a direct positive impact on the school's work. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) well, such as through its regularly reviewed accessibility plan.
10. The proprietor and leaders work in partnership and share effective practice with local authorities, other schools and relevant organisations. Leaders consider deeply all aspects of the school including its design, ethos, staffing, operational systems, curriculum, resources and methods for supporting pupils with a range of additional needs. The multi-disciplinary team is highly effective in ensuring that pupils' individual plans have relevant, aspirational and achievable academic and personal targets that are implemented consistently for pupils throughout the school.
11. Leaders focus on enabling pupils to communicate and 'have a voice' within the school. Leaders enable members of the school council to put forward their ideas and to contribute to decision-making, including the appointment of staff.
12. The proprietor manages risks effectively. Suitable risk assessments are in place in relation to health and safety and safeguarding. These identify potential hazards and the actions to be taken in order to minimise and manage them. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly. Changes are made and 'lessons learnt' following any incidents.
13. Suitable monitoring of policies, procedures, records and practice is in place, including for all aspects of safeguarding. Policies are shared appropriately and implemented consistently. However, an updated policy for admission and attendance had not been made available to parents on the school's website prior to the inspection. Leaders took swift and appropriate action to rectify this oversight.
14. Communication between the proprietor and school leaders is comprehensive and effective. This helps the proprietor to assure themselves that leaders have the skills and knowledge they need and that the Standards are met consistently. The proprietor enables staff to develop the knowledge and skills required for their roles through training, performance reviews and professional development opportunities.
15. The proprietor and leaders are reflective and continually seek to improve the school. They provide and accept challenge as part of their ongoing evaluation of the school. This enables them to develop a comprehensive picture of its effectiveness and to identify where further action is required. They use this knowledge to inform well-considered school improvement plans, which are followed diligently.
16. Information is provided for parents and others, as required, particularly through the school's website. Parents are provided with full reports detailing pupils' academic and personal progress and the activities that they have taken part in. There are also termly open evenings for parents where they can discuss their child's needs, attainment and progress. Any concerns or changes are shared with parents on an ongoing basis. This close liaison ensures that there is a bridge between home and school as part of nurturing every aspect of each pupil and ensuring their wellbeing. Parents' and

pupils' views are sought for annual reviews of EHC plans. Required information, and any changes needed to EHC plans, is provided to the relevant local authority.

17. The school has a suitable complaints policy which is implemented consistently. Leaders and staff are easily accessible to parents if they have any queries or concerns. Where formal complaints are received, they are managed effectively, within clear timescales, through the school's three-stage process. The number of complaints received is published annually in the school's complaints policy, which is published on its website. Appropriate records are kept of complaints, including their outcomes and any actions taken in response to them.
18. Suitable policies and procedures are in place to ensure that health and safety and maintenance requirements are met. The proprietor liaises effectively with the leaders responsible for the safety, maintenance and upkeep of the school. Timely action is taken to address any shortcomings that arise.

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

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

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The curriculum is carefully designed to give pupils throughout the school experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, physical and aesthetic and creative education. Schemes of work are continually adapted to meet the age, stage and needs of pupils. Pupils have access to an extensive range of qualifications including unit award schemes. They can study BTEC qualifications from entry level to level two in a range of subjects, including media and cookery. GCSEs are available in English, mathematics, combined science and art. The school also offers its own accredited courses, such as in farming and miniature war games.
21. Almost all pupils that are entered for a qualification achieve a pass grade. Grades achieved at GCSE range from entry level to grade seven. The school's individual and integrated approach enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Most pupils progress to college where they study subjects that interest them and support their career choices.
22. The school focuses well on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, targeted support and the use of repetitive overlearning techniques by specialist staff help pupils to master and apply core knowledge and understanding. This supports pupils in accessing learning across the curriculum.
23. Pupils' needs are comprehensively assessed on entry, including for pupils who speak English as an additional language, if required. Standardised tests and other assessments are carried out by specialist staff, including occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. Rigorous and detailed tracking of assessment is in place at each stage across the curriculum. Progress in all subjects is meticulously recorded against the targets in pupils' learning journals. These are used extensively to feedback to pupils and to set further targets.
24. Detailed reviews of pupils' progress take place regularly. Throughout the school, staff use assessment information to plan individually for pupils, including the use of scribes, where appropriate. This enables staff to support pupils in filling any gaps in learning and in moving on confidently to the next steps in their learning. The emphasis is upon pupils accessing learning in the classroom. Where pupils are taken out of class for individual or group work, it is targeted and part of a cohesive individual education plan.
25. Teachers use a wide range of specialist resources to support learning including sensory fidget toys, wobble chairs and tactile equipment. These resources are selected on advice from therapists. Teachers, therapists and support staff work closely as a team to ensure that teaching is adapted to support pupils' needs effectively.
26. Pupils appreciate the care and understanding they receive from adults. Many say that this has enabled them to enjoy learning for the first time. Pupils speak with enthusiasm and pride about their work and appreciate the way it is displayed and celebrated throughout the school. They like the way teachers enable them to set out their work, with comments and resources that help them to build their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically. This also helps pupils to revise for examinations effectively.
27. The vast majority of pupils have an EHC plan. These are monitored closely by specialist staff who ensure that statutory and accessibility requirements are met. Parents and pupils regularly contribute

to EHC plans. This supports staff in ensuring that academic and personal targets are relevant and meaningful for pupils.

28. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Planning is closely matched to pupils' needs and interests. Leaders have high expectations of pupils and ensure that teaching enables them to acquire the qualifications they need for further education and beyond.
29. The school provides a range of clubs and activities during lunchtime and after school. These include multi-sports, art, dance, drumming, construction and film club. In addition, staff support pupils in having access to facilities within the school during their breaktimes. These include an American-style diner where pupils can make snacks and drinks, outdoor play equipment, the library and musical and art equipment. This integration of relaxation time, activities and lessons enables pupils to regulate their behaviour within an environment that continually supports their learning. Every interaction is used as a learning opportunity.

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

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



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

31. Leaders have recently updated schemes of work for PSHE and RSE. They cover all the required areas, with detailed assessments recorded in pupils' learning journals. This reflects the assessment system throughout the curriculum and enables teachers to plan PSHE and RSE taking into account pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
32. Class teachers and specific staff in the senior school are trained to deliver PSHE and RSE lessons. They know the pupils well and make continual adaptations to support pupils' knowledge and understanding of key aspects, including puberty, consent, contraception and attitudes to pornography. Pupils learn about the differences between people, such as their race and religion, and the importance of being respectful to everyone in society. Sufficient time is given for discussion regarding topics that are important to pupils, including managing friendships and relationships. Consequently, pupils value PSHE and RSE and the opportunities that they have to talk about what matters to them.
33. In conjunction with a university psychology department, leaders have developed a programme that supports the emotional and social development of pupils who have attachment and trauma-related difficulties. Through this programme, staff develop deep understanding of how children develop from birth to 19 years. Developmental guides detail how to support pupils in a range of areas including play, socialisation, motivation, self-esteem, moral development and self-control. These are used to set developmentally appropriate targets for pupils, which are continually tracked. The programme enables pupils to flourish through discovering themselves, developing relationships with others and experiencing personal and academic success.
34. The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies articulate clearly the school's expectations, and are implemented well. There is a positive approach to behaviour management which enables pupils to understand and control their responses to situations. Behaviour is recorded extensively using the school's electronic system. This enables leaders, the proprietor and the safeguarding team to monitor behaviour, including any patterns, and to respond quickly and appropriately to any needs that arise. Where sanctions are necessary, pupils are supported in reflecting on their behaviour and are given opportunities to make amends and move on.
35. Spiritual development is woven into the nurturing ethos of the school. Through a growing understanding of themselves, pupils discover their place in the world and how they can contribute to it. Pupils value attending school, being able to communicate with others and having the time, space and support they need to develop themselves.
36. Pupils' physical development is assessed thoroughly, including their nutrition and dental care needs. The occupational therapists support the assessment of pupils' physical development and work with them in the classroom and in specialist facilities. Pupils develop their physical control and tactical skills effectively through weekly physical education (PE) lessons in the gym and in outdoor adventurous activities. Older pupils are given the opportunity to study BTEC sports science at levels one and two.
37. The school meets statutory requirements for admission and attendance. The local authority is informed of leavers and joiners to the school at non-standard transition points. Pupils are well-

supported in attending school regularly. Absence is carefully monitored and specific support is put in place where necessary.

38. Supervision of pupils is well organised, including before and after school and during breaktimes. Staff are highly visible at all times. Pupils are well supported in managing this time as part of their physical, mental, social and emotional development.
39. The school's premises are maintained to a high standard and all required checks are carried out appropriately. Careful thought is given to the use of space, light, colour and acoustics, as these impact pupils' sensory processing and their feelings of anxiety.
40. Staff undertake regular health and safety training. Appropriate risk assessments are in place in relation to health and safety, with access to higher risk areas, such as the pond, being restricted by secure fencing and locks.
41. An appropriate number of staff are qualified in first aid, including the lead first aider who is responsible for first aid and medicine control. The medical room is well managed. Detailed records are maintained in relation to accidents and the administration of medicines, which are stored in a locked cabinet.
42. Any maintenance issues are reported promptly by staff and acted upon without delay. Suitable use is made of external specialists to carry out safety checks including for specialist play equipment, electrical and fire equipment. Fire procedures are clearly displayed throughout the school. Fire drills are carried out regularly.

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

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

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

44. The school implements a curriculum that supports an ethos of equality, inclusion and respect. PSHE encompasses learning about democracy, understanding right from wrong, the value of rules and laws, public services, understanding society and the range of cultures and differences within it. Pupils' understanding is enhanced through themes identified in the wider curriculum, the life skills programme, educational visits and school community gatherings. Pupils are presented with differing views and supported in evaluating evidence in order to achieve a balanced perspective. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society.
45. Pupils are encouraged to accept additional responsibilities, particularly through the school council. Joining the school council enables pupils to be part of a team that can get things done in the school and beyond. School counsellors learn to negotiate and persuade, such as when asking leaders for additional facilities. They develop their ability to make their feelings known, for example, when writing to the press to raise objections to issues such as the images used in media articles. School counsellors develop their leadership skills through activities such as interviewing candidates as part of the staff recruitment process.
46. Pupils learn to be respectful of the opinions of others and to appreciate how they can work together to achieve common goals. Pupils are given opportunities to do things for other people, such as raising funds for charities. The school community supports a variety of charities, including a local organisation that provides employment for people with disabilities and a charity that supports homeless and vulnerable families and first aid supplies to refugees.
47. Careers and the development of economic knowledge and understanding are primarily developed through PSHE. There is a focus on meeting the needs of each pupil and ensuring that they develop life skills and the qualifications necessary to enter college and pursue their chosen careers. Topics include making decisions about money, financial risks, budgeting, saving, borrowing, debt and the impact of advertising on financial choices. Life skills experiences include completing applications for college, learning how to communicate during interviews and undertaking independent travel using the bus and train.
48. The school's pop-up charity shop, located in a nearby town, is a key part of its careers programme. The shop provides a supported working and learning space which is managed two days per week by pupils. Recycled homewares are sold at the shop with the proceeds going to local charities. It provides pupils with meaningful work experience that enhances their communication and life skills, whilst at the same time contributing to the local community.
49. Staff throughout the school have high expectations for pupils. Through continual positive support, pupils become aware of their strengths and set themselves aspirational, achievable goals. Pupils learn to look beyond the school and to envisage a future where they can continue to grow and contribute to society.

### 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. There is a deep culture of safeguarding that permeates all aspects of the school's provision. A detailed annual review is carried out to support the proprietor's monitoring of the effectiveness of safeguarding.
52. Staff throughout the school know the pupils and their families well. They are alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour, including verbal and non-verbal signals, enabling them to respond appropriately to any concerns. Staff understand how trauma may impact pupils' physical and mental wellbeing in the short and long term. Consistent and effective strategies to build secure attachments mean that pupils can identify a range of adults to whom they can turn if they are worried or concerned.
53. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputy DSLs are trained to the required level, including inter-agency and partnership working with a wide variety of local authorities and other agencies. They have senior leadership roles within the school and have been allocated sufficient time for their safeguarding responsibilities. They work effectively as a team, continually evaluating how to respond to concerns raised, taking pupils' needs into account.
54. Risk assessments for each pupil are updated continually and shared with multi-disciplinary teams through daily updates. Prompt action is taken when required, including securing early help, and making referrals to the multi-agency safeguarding hub, the local safeguarding designated officer (LADO) or the police, as necessary.
55. Comprehensive safeguarding training, induction and updates are in place for staff and the proprietor. Staff know the actions to take if they are worried or concerned about a pupil or the behaviour of a member of staff. They are confident in using the school's electronic system for recording any concerns. Records are detailed and comprehensive, including actions taken, assessments of risk, support put in place and any referrals made.
56. The school has installed effective systems for filtering and monitoring internet use. Staff have been suitably trained in these systems. The safeguarding team receive notification of any potentially inappropriate internet use, which enables them to respond without delay.
57. PSHE and RSE support pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe, including speaking to a trusted adult straight away if they are not comfortable with something that happens to them. Pupils are not allowed to use mobile phones in school, which reduces the possibility of online bullying and abuse. Pupils learn about, and understand, a range of actions to take in order to be safe online. These include not sharing personal information and not responding to people they do not know.
58. Safer recruitment procedures are secure and meet statutory requirements. The school carries out all required pre-employment checks in a timely fashion. The single central record of these checks is kept appropriately and checked regularly by the proprietor.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	Beech Lodge School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	868/6021
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1151323
<b>Address</b>	Beech Lodge School Stubbings Lane Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 6QL
<b>Phone number</b>	01628 879384
<b>Email address</b>	head@beechlodeschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.beechlodeschool.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Beech Lodge School Limited
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Daniel Gillespie
<b>Age range</b>	7 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	75
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	February 2020

## Information about the school

60. Beech Lodge School is an independent co-educational special school located near Maidenhead in Berkshire. It caters for day pupils aged between 7 and 18 years. Pupils have a range of additional needs including social and emotional difficulties linked to trauma. The school consists of two sections. Claremont caters for pupils broadly up to Year 8 and Deancroft caters for pupils broadly from Year 9. The proprietors provide the governance of the school, supported by an advisory board.
61. The school has identified all pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Seventy-four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for no pupils.
63. The school states that it aims to provide quality care and education within a nurturing environment based upon the 'Fagus' approach developed by the school. It strives to develop pupils' self-esteem, self-control, motivation, socialisation, self-awareness and moral development. It seeks to enable every pupil, over time, to maximise their potential and prepare them for the future and the workplace.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

5 to 7 November 2024

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

65. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and gatherings
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the headteacher, 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.

66. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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