



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Progress Monitoring Inspection Report**

**Beechwood School**

**March 2023**

## School's details

<b>School College</b>	Beechwood School		
<b>DfE number</b>	886/6011		
<b>Address</b>	Beechwood School 12 Pembury Road Royal Tunbridge Wells Kent TN2 3QD		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 532747		
<b>Email address</b>	info@beechwood.org.uk		
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Justin Foster-Gandey		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Alpha Schools Holdings Ltd		
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18		
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	365		
	<b>Day pupils</b>	338	<b>Boarders</b> 27
	<b>EYFS</b>	20	<b>Prep</b> 104
	<b>Seniors</b>	164	<b>Sixth Form</b> 77
<b>Date of inspection</b>	7 March 2023		

# 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 Foundation Stage (EYFS); 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 those who do are full boarders. The school has identified 52 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including dyslexia, dyspraxia and autistic spectrum disorder; all receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 35 pupils whose needs are supported. The school's previous inspection was an educational quality and focused compliance inspection in June 2021 followed by a progress monitoring inspection in June 2022.

## 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 20 June 2022. 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, paragraph 7 (safeguarding) and paragraph 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9	<b>Remain unmet</b>
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); NMS 10	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	<b>Met</b>
Part 4, paragraph 18 (suitability of staff); NMS 19; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9	<b>Remain unmet</b>
Part 4, paragraph 21 (single central register); NMS 19; EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.12	<b>Not met</b>
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	<b>Met</b>
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	<b>Remain unmet</b>

## 2. Inspection findings

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 8; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9]**

#### **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 Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively in most areas in order to safeguard children. Pupils confirm that they are confident to express any concerns they have, that staff and school leaders listen to them, and that action would be taken promptly, if needed. Records of safeguarding concerns confirm this. Since the previous inspection, school leaders have instigated an effective system of keeping records of any pupils of concern. Methods of recording and retaining safeguarding information are now effective and follow statutory guidance. Pupils say that they feel safe, and that they are well educated about online safety.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), who is the head, and a deputy DSL undertake appropriate advanced level training and they carry out training for all staff, both face to face and using online resources. Staff receive regular updates and demonstrate suitable understanding of child-on-child abuse including the vulnerability of any pupils with protected characteristics. They confirmed that they know how to report any allegations about colleagues and that they would use the whistleblowing process without hesitation. Their understanding of the staff code of conduct is secure. They know how to report concerns which do not meet the threshold of significant harm and have done so effectively. They are not securely conversant with the concept of 'low-level concerns'. Current practice meets statutory guidance although detailed recording of low-level concerns in a centralised log is still at an early stage.

- 2.5 Suitable recruitment procedures are outlined in the safeguarding policy and detailed in a separate recruitment policy. However, training for those responsible for recruitment checks has not been sufficiently effective. Not all the necessary recruitment checks for staff have been carried out. There have been instances where checks on the barred list have only been undertaken after appointment. Statutory guidance is still not always followed in respect to the obtaining of references. Some staff have begun work before suitable references have been received. The school was unable to show through effective record keeping that contractors working in the school have their identity checked on arrival.
- 2.6 The policy describes the arrangements for proprietorial oversight of the implementation of safeguarding arrangements. However, the continued anomalies in staff files and in recruitment checks in several key areas show that monitoring and oversight is not sufficiently effective.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; NMS 10]**

- 2.7 The school meets the standards and the requirements.

- 2.8 An appropriate fire safety policy is in place. At the time of the previous inspection, a fire risk assessment had been carried out but the identified actions required to ensure the safety of pupils, including boarders, had not taken place.
- 2.9 The extension to one of the buildings was still undergoing refurbishment at the time of the visit and one action from the fire risk assessment is still to take place. This has been booked to be completed in the school holidays when there are no pupils on site. All other actions have been completed satisfactorily. Fire safety equipment is effectively maintained and extinguishers have been checked. The fire alarm system has been overhauled and there is now a suitable log which records weekly checks.
- 2.10 Fire evacuation procedures are carried out at least termly, including in boarding time, and suitable records are kept of these. Pupils show good understanding of the procedures. Staff have been trained in fire safety and clear signage is in place including in the newly refurbished building.

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

- 2.11 The school meets the standards and the requirements.
- 2.12 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy and the actions required following the fire risk assessment, carried out by an external provider in May 2022, have now been effectively completed or are scheduled suitably for completion outside of term time.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19; EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.12]**

- 2.13 The school does not meet the standards and the requirements.
- 2.14 The school carries out necessary recruitment checks on most staff. However, the school was not able to provide evidence of checks for prohibition from teaching, and of medical fitness and qualifications being undertaken in several recent appointments. The school does not use supply staff and checks on proprietors have been effectively completed.
- 2.15 The single central register of appointments does not currently record the date on which each member of staff's DBS certificate was seen by the school. In some cases, dates for prohibition from teaching checks and those on persons who have worked overseas are also missing, making it impossible to be sure they were completed before a person's appointment.

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

- 2.16 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]**

- 2.17 The school does not meet the standards and the requirements.
- 2.18 The school's leadership and management have made some progress in implementing the actions required by the previous progress monitoring inspection. However, there are still instances in which recruitment procedures do not follow statutory guidance, signifying a lack of informed oversight. This means that the school does not yet effectively promote the wellbeing of pupils. Leadership and management do not fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

### 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; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9**

- The school must ensure that checks against the barred list are undertaken before staff start work; that at least two suitable references are obtained for each member of staff before appointment, and that records of recruitment checks in staff files are kept consistently and comprehensively, including with regard to identity checks on contractor staff [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].
- The school must ensure that those responsible for undertaking recruitment checks receive sufficient training to enable all aspects of the procedures outlined in the school's safeguarding policy and associated documentation to be implemented effectively [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].
- 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 3.7 and 3.9].

#### **ISSR Part 4, Suitability of staff, paragraphs 18 and 21; NMS 19; EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.12**

- The school must ensure that checks are undertaken to ascertain that all newly appointed staff have a medical fitness declaration, suitable qualifications where relevant, and that these checks are carried out before the member of staff begins work in the school. They must also ensure that all prohibition from teaching checks are carried out on staff where relevant [paragraphs 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)(ii) and (iv), 18(2)(f) and 18(3); NMS 19.1; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].
- The school must ensure that the single central register of appointments records the dates on which any DBS certificate was checked by the school and the date on which prohibition from teaching and any appropriate overseas checks were made [paragraphs 21(1), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b); NMS 19.1; EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.12].

#### **ISSR Part 8, Quality of leadership and management, paragraph 34; NMS 2**

- The proprietor must ensure that effective arrangements are implemented for the oversight of the recording of recruitment checks and that the content of staff recruitment files is comprehensive; similarly that they and the school's leadership demonstrate sufficient knowledge and apply it effectively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils, including boarders [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.

### Inspectors

Mrs Kate McCarey

Reporting inspector

Mr Patrick Wenham

Assistant reporting inspector