



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Beech Lodge School

February 2020



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School's Details

School	Beech Lodge School		
DfE number	868/6021		
Registered charity number	1151323		
Address	Beech Lodge School Stubblings Lane Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 6QL		
Telephone number	01628 879384		
Email address	head@beechlodeschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Daniel Gillespie		
Proprietor	Mrs Daniela Shanly		
Age range	7 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	55		
	Juniors	15	
	Seniors	34	Sixth Form 6
Inspection dates	11 to 13 February 2020		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Beech Lodge School is a co-educational independent day school for pupils aged between 7 and 18, located near Maidenhead in Berkshire. It opened in 2013 and provides education for pupils whose needs are difficult to meet in a conventional school setting and who require a supportive and nurturing learning environment. The school is owned by Beech Lodge School Ltd, whose trustees supply the governance of the school, supported by an advisory board. The school's previous regulatory compliance inspection took place in March 2017, followed by a material change visit in November 2017. Since the previous inspection, the school has moved to its current site and built new classroom facilities. A further material change visit was conducted in August 2019 to approve an increase in pupil numbers.
- 1.2 The school offers three provisions: Nelson, for pupils with social and emotional difficulties, primarily trauma-related and anxiety; Lionheart, which opened in September 2019 for pupils with a diagnosis of specific learning difficulties (dyslexia and dyscalculia); and Meadow, for pupils who require more intensive support and outreach provision.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to provide a nurturing and supportive educational environment that promotes and facilitates the social and emotional development and academic progress for its pupils. Through a focused curriculum, the school aims for every pupil to develop the skills, experiences and qualifications to reach their academic potential and develop social responsibility, a sense of self-worth and life-long independence.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds and live within travelling distance of the school. The school works directly with families and 13 local education authorities who place and fund pupils at the school. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is below average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified all pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), most with dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia, autism or social and emotional needs. All receive additional specialist help. Forty-eight pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are no pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 Pupils take GCSE examinations in their final years at the school. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The 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.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils show high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning and they talk positively about their experiences in school.
- Pupils' progress across all areas of learning is good and for some pupils it is excellent when judged against their individual starting points.
- Pupils do not have a depth of knowledge in a wide range of subjects due to their concentration on a small core curriculum.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning encouraged by the vision, dedication and commitment of the leadership and staff.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupil's self-esteem and confidence grow through their time in school.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their emotional and social development.
- Pupil's personal development is strongly promoted by the positive relationships they enjoy with the leadership team and staff.
- Pupils exhibit an excellent level of tolerance and understanding towards their peers.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Ensure pupils develop a broad educational experience, especially in science and humanities, as they grow through the school.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Pupils' progress across all areas of learning is good and for some pupils it is excellent when judged against their individual starting points on admission to the school and their levels of ability. All pupils have diagnosed special educational needs and mental health issues related to their backgrounds and early learning experiences, and most have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Standardised data and teachers' assessments show that, although pupils are working below, or significantly below, age-related national expectations, they make good progress in their core curriculum over time and, when ready, access the public examinations system to gain qualifications.

3.6 Pupils show high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning, and they talk positively about how their experiences at Beech Lodge have allowed them to make progress compared to their previous experiences of school. They trust the school's leadership and staff to support their varying needs and to be caring and kind to them when they struggle with the challenges of everyday life. Pupils respond well to the excellent levels of professional support from specialist therapists and counsellors, but the most important contributory factor to their progress is the strong relationships they have developed with the school's leadership, teachers and pastoral staff who are committed to ensuring that pupils have a positive and stimulating educational experience. Helped by the small class sizes and teachers using detailed individual tracking systems, pupils respond well to the personal attention they receive. Pupils say that the school has given them a fresh start, often following long periods of being school refusers involving lengthy periods out of the education system. Their re-engagement with their education has not been easy for them and for some progress is slow, but they continue to talk positively about their enjoyment of school.

- 3.7 Many of the older pupils confidently express their knowledge and opinions across a small range of subjects and enthusiastically share their aspirations for their futures. A few have clear targets for achieving success in GCSEs. Pupils have been able to access the public examination system in 2018 and 2019 as they have progressed through the school and show themselves ready regardless of age. The school is careful not to set pupils up for failure when they already struggle with low self-esteem. The very small number means that GCSE results are not statistically significant when compared to national averages. In 2019, a small number of pupils entered GCSEs in English, mathematics, food science and biology or human biology. Almost all achieved grades ranging from 4 to 6. Since 2018, pupils have achieved certificates in vocational qualifications including land and animal-based management and construction. When considering their base-level assessments on entry to the school, these achievements are excellent.
- 3.8 Pupils do not have a depth of knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects. They make good progress in a small core of subjects tailored to their needs, such as literacy and numeracy, and in the targets set in their EHC plans. Scientific knowledge, especially in physics and chemistry, and their understanding of humanities subjects is weaker. Their creative and physical skills are less well developed due to the lack of a full creative and physical education programme. Their access to these areas of learning and a wider range of examination subjects has been restricted due to their learning needs and the small number of pupils in the school. The leadership recognises the need to gradually introduce more subjects for pupils to achieve in and to develop subject leadership in some areas of learning.
- 3.9 Pupil's knowledge, skills and understanding are strong across the subjects to which they have access and within the context of the stage they are working in. Lesson observations showed pupils' understanding, particularly when expressed verbally, is good. Written work was understandably of different levels, but the more able pupils exhibited nuanced understanding of literary texts or historical events. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows careful, well-presented written work with good levels of vocabulary. Pupils understand the importance of writing clearly to communicate ideas and to express their feelings, as demonstrated by a particularly expressive piece of poetry and a lengthy piece of work about their love of their school. Pupils demonstrate higher standards in reading than in writing, and listening skills were observed to be under-developed. Data show that reading levels, which are well below their age on starting the school, rise quickly over a short time, often by four years over a two-year period. By the time they leave the school, many pupils have reading ages commensurate with their chronological age or one year below. This is achieved by teaching that engages the pupils' enthusiasm for the task, by making learning fun and the use of constant reinforcement and praise to raise levels of confidence.
- 3.10 The majority of pupils suffer from mathematics anxiety and/or dyscalculia, but numeracy understanding is good for their level of ability, and their progress in understanding was seen to be excellent in the lessons observed, especially in the one-to-one sessions with teachers trained in helping pupils with dyscalculia. A wide range of skill is achieved, and problem solving is developed especially when their knowledge is applied in other subjects. Numeracy was observed to be not restricted to the mathematics classroom. A primary aim of their teachers is to build pupils' confidence in the use of numbers and to develop independence in applying their knowledge outside the classroom. A real strength of the teaching is the excellent use of cross-curricular links between mathematics, science, construction and outdoor education which enables pupils to achieve a good level of understanding of how to apply their knowledge and skills.
- 3.11 The focus on key learning and social skills is important for pupils to allow them access to classroom education and a broader curriculum. These skills have allowed many pupils to work with other children for the first time. Pupils' key skill development is most noticeable when they are engaged in the outdoor education programme. The pupils engage naturally with the environment and appreciate their impact upon it, whether building dens or cleaning up river banks, and helping with the

preservation of National Trust land. Scientific knowledge is well established through play, exploration in the woodland setting and practical activities such as planting seeds or looking after animals.

- 3.12 Study skills develop over time. Independent learning is an aim of the school and, although this is a challenge for many pupils, they are beginning to build confidence, and evidence can be seen in their written work and in the classroom where they are allowed time to develop their ideas and reflect on their answers. Few pupils complete homework successfully, but as their social skills develop they learn to collaborate in the classroom and learn from each other. Pupils were not observed to be using information and communication technology (ICT) to aid their learning in many subjects. Pupils are, however, focused on developing communication skills to a good level and, when ICT is used, pupils use it competently and comfortably. They enjoy their computer lessons, and the introduction of media studies has allowed some pupils to develop their skills in using programmes beyond word processing.
- 3.13 Pupils enjoy the increased space and learning opportunities of the new buildings and facilities provided by the proprietor who has a clear vision for their future needs. Pupils are seeking more opportunities to be involved in sports and hobbies and so extra-curricular activities are beginning to expand. Team games are a challenge for some pupils but, as they develop socially and learn to collaborate successfully with each other, they seek out opportunities to play games such as football and netball. Individual success in some sporting competitions with other schools is being developed, for example, in skiing and cross-country running. A number of pupils have shown excellent levels of achievement in the Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) scheme, with five pupils achieving bronze awards and five silver awards in 2019. Two pupils have become ambassadors for the gold award. Pupils engage enthusiastically in singing in the choir attending a national singing competition.
- 3.14 Pupils make excellent progress in developing positive attitudes to learning. The majority of pupils on admission to the school arrive with extremely negative feelings towards education and learning. Many are disengaged and refuse on arrival to co-operate. With time, they begin to trust and build positive relationships with the staff. They show a high level of resilience and perseverance to overcome the many hurdles that they have previously encountered and, for some, coming into school every day is a major achievement. Pupils were observed to be enthusiastic and willing learners and displayed an ambition for themselves and the drive to achieve their targets.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.16 Pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence grow through their time in the school. They demonstrate a clear awareness of the progress they are making regarding their learning and can talk about their strengths and aspirations for the future. Pupils readily engage in activities which develop their confidence, resilience, curiosity and self-organisation, and they respond well to the excellent role models presented to them by the staff. The younger pupils are self-aware, but this is not always transferred into self-understanding, and evidence suggests that many still suffer from low self-esteem. As they mature, they begin to build their own self-identity and they talked of being proud of themselves and accepting of their difficulties. They all remember their poor learning experiences in other schools, and they express their happiness to be in a school that is accepting of their differences and allows them the space and time to learn and achieve. Parents reported very favourably on the changes in their children after being in the school for a short time, commenting that the school has been transformational on their children's mental health and confidence, causing anxiety levels to drop and resilience to grow.
- 3.17 The pupils' excellent emotional and social progress is promoted through the school's specially devised programme called *Fagus* (Latin for Beech) which runs alongside the conventional curriculum and is especially beneficial for pupils with attachment and trauma-related difficulties. Staff have a good understanding of the impact of early trauma on educational achievement and social and emotional development. Pupils respond well to the tasks set to help them with such areas as self-control,

organisation, moral development, socialisation and motivation. The programme gives the staff the tools to monitor pupils' development in these core areas which in turn allow pupils to progress academically. Pupils were observed to be engaged and smiling, with many willing to share their positive feelings. Pupils respond to the non-competitive nature of the school, concentrating on their own development as a priority. They spoke enthusiastically of their involvement in Circus School, a two-week activity organised by the school to develop physical skills, creativity, self-discipline, teamwork and fun, all areas of learning pupils struggle with. Staff commented on how this activity had a major impact on levels of confidence as pupils developed the skills of balance, trapeze work, juggling and other tricks which they happily performed for each other and their parents.

- 3.18 The majority of pupils on entering the school are functioning below age-related expectations in the areas of making personal decisions and, in time, they begin to trust their supporting adults to make decisions for them. As pupils progress through the learning stages, they are able to make decisions about their own learning, how to organise themselves, the appropriate behaviour and words to use in challenging situations and when to provide support for others to help them in their learning or social relationships. Activities, such as involvement in the school council and the choice of curriculum study, further enhance their decision-making ability. By the time they leave school, they are able to make decisions about their next stage of education or work and understand what the impact of these decisions may be, supported by staff with whom they have strong relationships and who offer them high standards of guidance and care.
- 3.19 Pupils have an excellent understanding of what is important in life. Their experiences have taught them that happiness is not a result of material things but rather in being part of a happy and caring community. They understand the value of caring for others and of kindness and demonstrate this in school through their concern for the well-being of their peers. Their participation in a wide variety of visits, for example to religious venues, and other activities provides uplifting experiences for them to enjoy and reflect upon, commenting that just being outdoors around nature makes them happy.
- 3.20 Generally, pupils' behaviour is excellent, and a calm atmosphere pervades the school. Pupils develop good instincts about what is the proper thing to do and are perceptive about when it feels right to support each other. They recognise that pupils sometimes act strangely but value their differences and show a high level of understanding as to why they behave that way. Pupils do know the boundaries for good behaviour and what is expected of them. Self-regulation is strong when they have to deal with their personal behavioural concerns, learning self-control as part of their emotional and social education. This is as a result of the school's therapeutic approach to behaviour management which focuses on the pupils' development of self-control. The consequences of their behaviour are always discussed, and staff know how to de-escalate moods, and allow time out and space for reflection. Modelling of how to do things by staff is excellent. Pupils could talk about the importance of the school values to respect themselves, others and the environment.
- 3.21 Many pupils arrive in school without the ability to form good relationships with others and are socially unaware. In time, they develop the social skills which allow them to access formalised and structured classroom learning. For some pupils, this has been a challenge, but significant progress is evident. Their history shows that, as they progress through the school, their ability to collaborate with others in lessons has developed, and they gradually learn to enjoy the experience of working in pairs and groups. Teamwork is slower to develop, but older pupils begin to seek it out as expressed in their desire to form a football team. Pupils in Year 5 enjoy holding a tea party each week when they invite a member of the staff to join them so that they can practise their conversational skills and improve their ability to co-operate with each other. Pupils of all ages develop socially through involvement in a new house system which has been formed allowing pupils of all ages to mix and take on responsibilities in organising competitions, social events and charity work. Pupils report having friends for the first time. High staff ratios enable staff to have good-quality discussions with pupils, allowing them time throughout the day to develop their social skills. The excellent quality of pastoral care, the

Fagus programme and thoughtful personal, social and health education (PSHE) are instrumental in embedding pupils' ability to make positive relationships and adapt to different social conditions.

- 3.22 The range of pupils' backgrounds and family circumstances makes the school a diverse community. Pupils exhibit excellent levels of tolerance, and they are accepting of each other, often proud of their differences but also recognising their similarities. They develop an empathy and understanding of how others live outside of their school community and recognise people have different beliefs and faiths from their work across the curriculum and from their charity work. Pupils understand the dangers of discrimination as many may have been discriminated against in their previous schools. They understand what it feels like to be marginalised and why it is wrong.
- 3.23 Pupils have a growing understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different environments. Pupils learn from a variety of experiences which support their health, emotional and physical well-being. They speak knowledgeably about the importance of good nutrition and have a growing understanding of how to eat healthily from their work in food technology. They understand the importance of physical exercise and take advantage of the many opportunities for them to learn and play outside. They speak knowledgeably about how to stay safe online, but the school is aware of how vulnerable they are to the dangers outside of school. As pupils develop more feelings of happiness and trust, they also develop more resilience and coping strategies to face the dangers that life can present supported by staff who have an excellent understanding of their needs. The school has a good working relationship with parents and works with them to keep their children safe.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor and attended an assembly. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Maureen Bradley	Reporting inspector
Mr Peter Sharp	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Marcus Cliff Hodges	Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Paula Hobbs	Team inspector (Headteacher, IAPS school)