

Inspection of Belle Vue School

Jockey Lane, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 3JN

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy place where pupils flourish. Lots has been achieved in the relatively short period of time since the school opened. Leaders are passionate, nurturing and highly effective. They lead by example and empower their staff, who have energy and are enthusiastic about their work. Consequently, pupils demonstrate a strong sense of belonging and respond positively to the high demands made on them.

Classrooms are purposeful places where humour is not uncommon. This includes in the sixth form, where students show growing confidence in themselves. They also contribute well to developing younger pupils' self-esteem and well-being. This collaborative work is often facilitated by staff. However, it is clear to see that the pupils themselves have already bought into making the school a great place to be.

Pupils mostly behave exceptionally well because they know where the boundaries are. This includes when they are out of school. A local parish leader described the school as a bright light in the local community to the inspector. Evidence collected throughout the inspection confirmed this positivity from other sources. These included parents, staff and professionals from outside the school, but most importantly, the evidence of this positivity comes from the pupils themselves.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum lies at the heart of why this school has quickly become popular with its pupils. Partner this with the safe, nurturing environment that leaders and staff provide, and the result is a recipe for success that many pupils have not experienced in their education before.

The curriculum has been successfully designed to meet the needs of each individual pupil. All pupils must study mathematics and English at an appropriate level, including at GCSE if appropriate. However, the wider curriculum offer is very much tailored to pupils' own strengths and interests while maintaining adequate breadth. Pupils also access the Assessment and Qualification Alliance unit awards scheme. This helps them build portfolios of accredited awards during their time at the school.

Classroom visits showed pupils engaging well in their studies. Staff are experienced in planning learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They constantly check pupils' understanding. Targeted questioning is used effectively. It provides pupils with an opportunity to say they are unclear or do not understand. Staff are also adept at changing the emphasis or completely reframing their questions when needed. This provides pupils with 'thinking time' and 'another way in' when they are struggling with a problem or losing focus.

The curriculum is equally bespoke in the sixth form. Programmes of study are designed to help students go on to further education if possible. Students also benefit from an additional focus on preparing for employability and the world of work. Parents are particularly pleased about the sixth form. One wrote about how

the transition into the sixth form from the proprietor's other school has been 'excellent'. They also praised the school's focus on getting their son to 'aim high' academically.

Many pupils have wide gaps in their learning due to their experiences prior to joining the school. Often, this has meant extended periods of time out of education. Staff work hard to recognise and celebrate the strengths pupils have. They also use assessment well to identify the key gaps in pupils' prior learning. Assessments include exploring pupils' confidence in reading. This includes reading fluency and comprehension skills. Intensive ongoing support from internal and external specialist staff is available when required.

Pupils' timetables vary from day-to-day but are consistent in how they deliver the mathematics and English curriculum over time. This ensures that pupils understand clearly what their core studies will be and what additional learning experiences they will enjoy. These include visits into the local community to help develop independence and social skills. Pupils also value and enjoy their work on the school's allotment as part of their land studies programme.

The school provides very well for pupils' wider personal development. This includes teaching about equalities, different cultures and beliefs, and how pupils can contribute successfully to wider society. Leaders and staff understand the importance of building pupils' confidence and sense of self-worth. Much of this is achieved through clear and open communication from the moment pupils arrive at school in the morning. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them, and what is not.

The school's curriculum also helps with pupils' social and emotional development. A good-quality personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is in place. This is designed for the unique context of the school and the pupils it serves. It includes relationships and sex education, as well as an employability programme which helps pupils with planning for a future career.

Leadership and management of the school is well-established and effective at all levels. Leaders have exceedingly high expectations of themselves. This starts at the top but is very evident at all levels, including in leadership of the curriculum. One distinct feature of the school is the high quality of written records, systems and procedures to ensure that the school runs smoothly. Additionally, all the independent school standards are met because leaders make them a priority. High-quality governance is also a feature here. The model is unique but effective, ensuring that the school provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils in a safe and happy environment. Furthermore, extremely positive responses from parents', staff's and pupils' surveys confirmed how well current stakeholders view the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding pupils at the school is strong. Leaders and staff are knowledgeable about the wide range of real or potential risks pupils face in and out of school. Staff have confidence in leaders to act when they need to. Leaders know that staff understand what to do if they have concerns. Record-keeping is meticulous. Processes for staff recruitment and making the right checks on adults at the school are sound. Policies to protect the welfare, health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors to the school are in place and fit for purpose.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	148062
DfE registration number	886/6161
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10214666
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Keefields Limited
Chair	Mary McKeeman
Headteacher	Mary McKeeman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,500
Telephone number	01580 854 641
Website	www.bellevue.kent.sch.uk
Email address	info@bellevue.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This was the first standard inspection the school has been subject to since it was first registered by the Department for Education in January 2021.
- The school caters for pupils with the following areas of SEND:
 - cognitive learning needs
 - specific learning difficulties
 - moderate learning difficulties
 - behavioural, emotional and social development needs and difficulties
 - communication and interaction needs
 - speech, language and communication needs
 - autism spectrum disorder
 - sensory and/or physical needs.
- The school does not presently make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teaching and support staff. He had a meeting with the chair of the local governing board accompanied by one other governor. He talked on the telephone to four external professionals who work with the school, including two officers from local authorities who place pupils at the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time.
- The inspector toured the premises and accommodation of the school. He checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. He also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff linked to the independent school standards.

- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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