

Brookthorpe Hall School

Stroud Road, Gloucester GL4 0UN

Inspection dates

7 November 2024

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7–7(b), 32(1) and 32(1)(c)

- At the emergency inspection in January 2024, the school did not meet this standard because the published safeguarding policy did not provide accurate details of the staff who held safeguarding responsibilities. Therefore, it was not clear who the responsible persons were in relation to any safeguarding concerns that staff needed to report.
- This progress monitoring inspection found that in September 2024, the proprietor recruited a new designated safeguarding leader. The school has published a suitable safeguarding policy on its website. It details staff and governors who are responsible for safeguarding. The policy reflects the latest government guidance.
- The school closely monitors pupils' safety and welfare. A newly introduced 'daily debrief' meeting allows teaching and clinical staff to discuss any welfare or safety concerns. This is bringing about an open culture of safeguarding. Pupils feel safe in school. They can name trusted adults they can talk to about any worries.
- Currently, the school uses a combination of paper-based and electronic record-keeping systems to log any concerns about pupils. The safeguarding team act promptly on this information. They work closely with external agencies, such as social workers, to ensure that pupils who are at risk of harm receive the right support. Safeguarding leaders are working at pace to transfer all records to the electronic system.
- The proprietor has put in place a package of induction training to ensure that new staff understand the safeguarding expectations. All staff receive regular and relevant training, including understanding local risks to pupils. The school continues to provide staff with ongoing training to increase their knowledge and expertise further.
- The single central record (SCR) is compliant. The regional director checks the SCR regularly, including when new staff join the school. Designated safeguarding leaders have completed the statutory safeguarding training.
- The school now meets the previously unmet independent school standards (the standards) in this paragraph.

Paragraph 14

- At the time of the previous emergency inspection, staff shortages and a high staff turnover meant that the school did not supervise pupils well enough.
- Since that inspection, the proprietor has ensured that the school is fully staffed. Supervision ratios are high in class and at social times. Staff receive relevant information and training so that they know how best to support and supervise pupils.
- The relevant standards from this paragraph are now met.

Paragraph 9, 9(b)

- This standard was not met at the emergency inspection. The school's behaviour policy was not implemented consistently. Many staff and pupils felt that poor behaviour persisted due to a lack of consequences. Furthermore, many staff did not feel supported by leaders in managing challenging behaviour.
- Since then, the school created a new behaviour system in September 2024. Leaders recognise that some staff need more guidance to ensure greater consistency in its implementation. Currently, some staff and pupils do not understand how the new points system works or how sanctions are applied if a pupil breaches the school's rules. Although records show that serious behaviour incidents have reduced significantly this academic year, a few staff continue to feel unsupported in managing the most challenging behaviour.
- Recent changes to the organisation of lessons and lunchtime are contributing to a calmer environment around the school. Therapeutic staff run lunchtime activities, such as crafts, to cater for the range of individual needs. An investment in play equipment, an outdoor gym and a dedicated sports coach captures the interests of most pupils. Nonetheless, a minority of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour that disrupts the experience of others, notably at social times. The school has identified improving this as a priority.
- The standards in this paragraph remain not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–(34)(1)(b)

- At the emergency inspection, the proprietor had appointed an interim headteacher and other temporary leadership roles. The high turnover of staff was impacting the quality of therapeutic and education provision. The proprietor had not taken sufficient action to ensure that all of the standards were consistently met.
- This inspection found that the proprietor successfully appointed permanent senior leaders, including middle leaders and therapeutic and teaching staff. More recently, staff turnover has begun to stabilise. The therapeutic team works more effectively with teaching staff to ensure a consistent approach with pupils.
- The school's senior leadership team has strong knowledge and experience in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Alongside new clinical leaders, they are strengthening the provision for pupils. Nonetheless, some of the positive changes are too recent to ensure that the school consistently meets all of the standards.

- The proprietor continues to support and challenge leaders. The school improvement adviser and the regional director visit the school regularly to check on its progress towards meeting the standards.
- The proprietor and school have made some positive changes in addressing many of the previously unmet standards. This is reflected in the improved safeguarding culture and supervision of pupils. However, other aspects, such as the behaviour strategy, are in the early stages of implementation.
- The current strategic plan is not precise enough to address specific issues. While leaders understand what needs to improve, many actions do not contain clear or measurable milestones. Therefore, it is not yet possible to evaluate the difference these actions will make to pupils' experience at the school.
- The standards found to be unmet in part 8 at the emergency inspection remain unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	149064
DfE registration number	916/6029
Inspection number	10349324

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

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	P Bloom Ltd
Chair	Chris Groom
Headteacher	Jonathan Bell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,901 to £88,955
Telephone number	01452717004
Website	www.brookthorpehallschool.co.uk
Email address	jacqui.ingram@brookthorpehallschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	11 to 13 July 2023

Information about this school

- Since the emergency inspection in January 2024, changes to leadership and staffing have occurred. A new headteacher took up post in February 2024. A deputy headteacher joined the school in March 2024 and two assistant headteachers started in September 2024. Several teaching and therapeutic staff are also new to the school.
- The school is part of Options Autism, a national provider of independent specialist education.

- Brookthorpe Hall School provides education for pupils with autism and/or social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The Department for Education (DfE) requested that the inspector consider whether particular independent school standards contained within parts 3 and 8 are met.
- The inspection was carried out without notice. It was the first progress monitoring inspection since the emergency inspection in January 2024.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan because of non-compliance with the independent school standards identified at the time of the emergency inspection. Ofsted evaluated this action plan in April 2024. The DfE rejected this action plan.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and the regional director, who is also chair of the governing body. He also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority commissioning team for pupils with SEND.
- The inspector visited lessons and spoke to some pupils about their experiences at the school. He observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the end of the school day.
- The inspection also considered the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central register of pre-employment checks and whether the school's safeguarding policy is available to parents and carers. These requirements of the independent school standards are met.
- The inspector reviewed a range of other school documents, including school policies, safeguarding records, the school development plan, quality assurance visit notes, governors' minutes and records of pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector spoke to some parents at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Dale Burr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.

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