

Inspection of Bladon House School

Newton Solney, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE15 0TA

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 July 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love attending this caring and supportive school. Parents and carers say that their children are safe and happy at the school. Many say that the care their children receive is exceptional. One parent reflected the views of the others when they said, 'My daughter's life has been transformed since starting at Bladon House.'

Staff know the pupils well. Relationships are very positive. Pupils know staff will support them to learn and keep them safe. All the staff at the school are highly trained. They are very skilled in meeting the complex needs of the children.

Staff support pupils to understand and manage their emotions. They help pupils to adapt to change and interact positively with each other. They also help pupils to understand their own needs and those of others. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves dramatically as they settle into the school. Pupils are polite and considerate and welcoming to visitors. Pupils engage well with their learning.

The personal development of pupils is excellent. School leaders have high ambitions for all pupils and provide them with experiences that prepare them well for their next steps. Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral care and therapeutic support.

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

Leaders have developed suitable 'pathways' to meet pupils' complex needs. They assess pupils' starting points when they first join the school. Leaders' ambitious end goals for pupils guide their decisions about which pathway is best suited for each individual. Careful consideration of each pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan) allows staff to place pupils in groups that best support their learning.

The more structured 'Open Skies' learning pathway provides opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. Logically organised English and mathematics lessons help pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Older pupils and students complete units of work in these subjects that build towards accredited outcomes. They also have access to specialist learning such as food technology, hair and beauty and land-based studies. Several students are completing qualifications in these subjects.

On this pathway, teachers plan lessons that take into account pupils' additional needs. Pupils enjoy well-structured lessons. They engage with the subject they are studying. Staff use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. When staff identify misconceptions, they provide further support so that pupils' understanding is secure. However, leaders have not precisely identified what key knowledge pupils should be learning from these lessons. This has led to teachers being uncertain about exactly what knowledge and skills should be taught and assessed. As a result, pupils are unsure about precisely what they are expected to know and remember. This affects their ability to remember and apply this knowledge over time.

Leaders have a clear system in place to assess what pupils know and can do on the informal 'Bright Horizons' curriculum pathway. Teachers use these assessments to plan the next steps to help pupils to learn and develop further. However, teachers have not consistently used this system to assess accurately whether pupils have successfully met the learning intentions. As a result, the next step targets that teachers set are not always the most appropriate to help pupils develop as well as they might.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They have sought to promote a love of books and engagement with reading in many different ways. Pupils who are capable of reading receive support to become more fluent readers. Leaders have recently reviewed their approach to reading. They have recognised some inconsistencies in the support for these pupils. They are introducing a new phonics-based reading programme. This is starting to bring an increased level of structure and support for pupils.

Staff foster in pupils a readiness to learn and the resilience they need to achieve. Leaders have ensured that pupils' behaviour support plans are comprehensive and bespoke to their needs. The regularly updated plans provide detailed guidance so that all adults provide consistent support to help pupils manage their behaviour. The 'team around the child' approach ensures that pupils' needs are at the forefront of the strategies staff use to support pupils. There are significant improvements in pupils' behaviour over time, the longer they attend the school.

Leaders ensure that pupils' learning is not limited to the classroom. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the many different trips they have been on. They also talk about how they enjoy the opportunities they have to explore and learn in the school's extensive grounds. The school's farm provides pupils with valuable learning experiences, as they learn to take care of the various animals.

The 'Bladon Way' underpins the school's approach to personal development. Pupils are encouraged to 'look after everything, try their best, look after everyone and be kind to everyone'. Pupils learn about difference. They know this is a positive thing and celebrate it. They know, for example, that people have different faiths and beliefs. Pupils know how to keep physically and mentally healthy. They learn what makes relationships safe and positive. There are opportunities for pupils to get involved in the local community. For example, some pupils volunteer to tidy up the local churchyard. Leaders provide access to high-quality careers education, information and guidance. The particularly skilled work to enhance the life experiences of pupils with Prader-Willi syndrome is exemplary. Pupils who are above the compulsory age for education are well prepared for adulthood and their next steps in education or supported or independent living.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the training they receive and leaders' commitment to ensuring staff's well-being.

Leaders and the proprietor are uncompromising in their commitment to improving the school. They have ensured that the independent school standards are met. Regular health and safety checks help keep the premises well maintained. The

school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The safeguarding and relationships and sex education policies are available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Staff receive high-quality safeguarding training. Staff understand their responsibility to report any concern and use their training to identify quickly any potential issues. Leaders keep accurate records. They use what they know about pupils and their families to provide comprehensive support. Leaders are quick to act, involving other agencies when needed. The proprietor has clear oversight of safeguarding arrangements. They have appropriate procedures in place to manage any allegations.

Staff work with pupils and parents to ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not ensured that the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn on the 'Open Skies' pathway are clearly identified. As a result, staff do not always plan lessons that deliver the most important knowledge and skills that pupils need to know and remember. Leaders should ensure that all teachers understand what knowledge and skills they need to teach and assess on this pathway.
- Leaders have not assured themselves that teachers are using assessment processes accurately to assess pupils' 'learning intentions' in the 'New Horizons' pathway. As a result, teachers do not always provide pupils with exactly the right next steps. Leaders should ensure that all assessment leads to accurate next steps being identified for pupils. Furthermore, leaders should assure themselves that all staff know how to assess accurately pupils' success in achieving their 'learning intentions'.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	113019
DfE registration number	830/6009
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10286128
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The SENAD Group Limited
Chair	Richard Atkinson
Headteacher	Shally Saleri-Palmer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000 to £99,000
Telephone number	01283 563787
Website	senadgroup.com/bladon
Email address	bladon.info@senadgroup.com
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 March 2019

Information about this school

- Bladon House School is an independent special school. It is part of the SENAD group of schools.
- The school provides education for pupils aged between five and 19 years. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils on roll under the age of seven years.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils have a range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including pupils with autism and Asperger's syndrome; speech, language and communication needs; moderate or severe learning difficulties; and social, emotional and mental health needs. The school also provides for pupils with Prader-Willi syndrome. The majority of pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour, resulting from their complex needs.
- Additional off-site educational provision is accessed by some pupils at two unregistered provisions.
- Pupils who are above the compulsory age for education pursue a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs, including preparing them for adulthood.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place on 5 to 7 March 2019.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to carry out the standard inspection earlier in the inspection cycle than previously planned. This was due to concerns that the DfE had received regarding the school's provision for pupils with SEND. The inspection was carried out unannounced.
- Inspectors held various meetings with a representative of the proprietor, the headteacher and the deputy and assistant headteachers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the 'Open Skies' pathway (which included English, mathematics and reading), the 'Bright Horizons' pathway and specialist subjects. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and instructors, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at individual pupils' EHC plans and associated learning and behaviour support plans.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan. To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safer recruitment of staff and met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with pupils to gather their views.
- Inspectors considered relevant documentation and reviewed the school facilities to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Stonier

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Tordoff

His Majesty's Inspector

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