

# Belong School Gloucestershire

Church Lane, Whaddon, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL4 0UF

**Inspection date**

12 October 2022

**Overall outcome**

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

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 3(a), 3(e)*

- At the previous inspection, in September 2021, curriculum plans were not sufficiently detailed to show how pupils' knowledge would develop year on year through to age 16. There were no appropriate plans in place to support the systematic teaching of reading for pupils who were at the early stages of learning to read. In addition, staff did not have the skills and knowledge to teach phonics.
- Considerable work has been completed to ensure that the school's curriculum is sequenced effectively in every subject so that pupils' knowledge can build successfully. Staff implement the school's curriculum for current pupils aged 13 to 16. Pupils educated on site and off site are taught the same curriculum.
- The proprietor has introduced curriculum pathways to ensure that pupils can progress on to GCSE and vocational pathways. All pupils now study for qualifications. In addition, a new staff appointment has been made to assist in the planning for pupils' post-16 progression to further study or employment.
- The proprietor has ensured that staff have appropriate skills and knowledge. Specialist teachers now teach each curriculum subject. Mathematics teaching is based on strong subject knowledge.
- There is now a phonics programme in place. The proprietor has successfully appointed teachers with appropriate knowledge and skills to teach pupils to read, including phonics. These staff have strong subject knowledge to develop pupils' early reading and writing knowledge.
- The standards in Part 1 are now met.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

*Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- The school's safeguarding policy complies with the latest requirements set out by the Secretary of State. It is available on the school's website. It provides detailed guidance to secure effective safeguarding practice throughout the school.

- Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) ensure that all staff receive up-to-date training. Staff know how to report concerns and they use the school's recording system diligently. DSLs are tenacious in their work with external agencies to ensure that pupils who are at significant risk of harm get the right support.
- However, the proprietor has not ensured that all aspects of the school's safeguarding policy are fully understood by school leaders. For example, senior leaders are unclear why specific recruitment checks are carried out. In addition, they do not have enough oversight of other important systems and processes such as the storage of medicines.
- There are currently 23 pupils on roll. A significant proportion of pupils are educated off site in pupils' homes or in the community. Typically, approximately between 10 and 12 pupils are educated on site at any one time. The systems that leaders have in place to assure themselves of the whereabouts of pupils and staff when teaching happens off site are not sufficiently rigorous. This potentially puts pupils at risk. The proprietor does not have sufficient oversight of this.
- The standard in this part is now not met.

#### *Paragraph 12*

- At the previous inspection, in September 2021, the school was using a second site in Hartpury. At the Hartpury site, fire extinguisher checks were not up to date and no action had been taken to remedy this. The school no longer uses the Hartpury site. The school's current fire risk assessment is up to date. It stipulates a maximum number of 35 pupils on site. Regular fire safety checks are in place. Fire extinguisher checks are up to date and reviewed regularly. Fire marshals have been trained and appointed. Where shortfalls are found, leaders ensure that these are acted on quickly.
- The standard in this part is met.
- However, overall, the standards in this part are not met.

### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

#### *Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a)*

- At the previous inspection, in September 2021, the school was using two sites. The main school site in Whaddon and a second site at Hartpury. At the Hartpury site, there was one toilet, which was shared by staff and pupils. As a result, the relevant standard was not met. Directly after the inspection, the proprietor ceased to use the Hartpury school site. The main school building has suitable toilet facilities. There is a separate toilet for staff to use. There are suitable toilets for boys and girls. The proprietor intends to create a toilet facility that is provided in a room that can be secured from the inside and that is intended for use by one pupil at a time. However, this is at the planning stage.
- This requirement in this paragraph is now met.

#### *Paragraph 23(1)(c)*

- Since the previous inspection, in September 2021, pupils' arrangements for physical education have changed. Pupils benefit from using a sports hall on the old Wynstones school site adjacent to the school. Wynstones school is now closed and as a result

unmanned. Consequently, leaders are taking over the health and safety checks for this building. However, pupils do not have access to showers at either the main school site or in the sports hall. It is a requirement for pupils from the age of 11 who undertake physical activities to have access to showers.

- The standard in this paragraph is now not met.

#### *Paragraph 25*

- The proprietor has successfully appointed and trained a new member of staff to oversee the health and safety checks. All the relevant health and safety checks are being completed by existing staff. The site is well maintained. Where shortfalls are found, leaders ensure that these are acted on quickly. Nonetheless, executive and newly appointed senior leaders do not have clear oversight.
- The standard in this paragraph is met.
- Overall, the standards in this part are not met.

### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

#### *Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)*

- The proprietor has ensured that changes made since September 2021 have improved the ambition and implementation of the school's curriculum for current pupils.
- However, the proprietor has not ensured that all leaders fully understand the requirements of the independent school standards. The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Arrangements to safeguard and promote welfare of pupils at the school have shortcomings. This is because school leaders do not have enough oversight of the operational systems at school level, including when staff educate pupils in their homes or off site. This means the requirement of 34(1)(c) are now not met.
- The standard is not met.

## **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	146671
DfE registration number	916/6025
Inspection number	10245614

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 school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Belong Learning CIC
Chair	James Evans
Headteacher	Janie James-Ashburner
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000 to £90,000
Telephone number	0300 303 5755
Website	<a href="http://www.belonglearning.co.uk/gloucestershire">www.belonglearning.co.uk/gloucestershire</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:Reception.gloucestershire@belonglearning.co.uk">Reception.gloucestershire@belonglearning.co.uk</a>
Dates of previous standard inspection	9 to 10 July 2019

## Information about this school

- Belong School Gloucestershire is an independent special school. It operates from one site in Whaddon, Gloucestershire. Adjacent to the school is the large sports hall of a previous school (Wynstones). Belong School Gloucestershire uses this sports hall for physical education. The school no longer uses the site in Hartpur.
- The school was previously called Community Mentoring and Support School. It received a standard inspection in July 2019. This was the school's first inspection after its initial

registration in December 2018. At this time, the school was operating from a different site in Lydney.

- In September 2021, the school received a material change inspection. The outcome of this inspection was: the school is unlikely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.
- The school is registered to provide education for boys and girls with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. They join the school throughout the year, often having been excluded of having attended a number of mainstream and specialist schools. Many have been out of full-time education for more than one year.

## **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 inspector talked to the chair of the proprietor board, a member of the local advisory board, school leaders and staff.
- The inspector also talked to a representative of Gloucestershire County Council.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documents, including school policies, safeguarding records, the single central record and the school's curriculum. She also visited lessons, talked to pupils and reviewed pupils' work.
- The inspector completed a tour of the site and reviewed health and safety records and those relating to fire safety.

## **The school's proposed change to the age range of pupils and the maximum number of pupils.**

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: the school is unlikely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.
- The school has requested a change to its age range to accept pupils from age 12. Schemes of work are now in place that demonstrate how teaching will develop pupils' skills and knowledge from age 12 to 16. The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change is implemented.
- The school's proposed change to increase the number of pupils from 32 to 50 is contrary to the school's current fire risk assessment. In addition, currently, approximately only half of the pupils on the school's roll are educated on site at any one time. Based on the current one-to-one teaching arrangements and building size this standard is not likely to be met if the material change is implemented.

## **The school is unlikely to meet the following standards:**

### **Part 3 Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

## Information about the material change inspection

- The material change inspection was commissioned by the DfE to look at the school's proposed changes to its age range and numbers on roll. This was the school's second material change inspection. In assessing whether the school is likely to meet the standards, the inspector met with leaders, toured the premises and scrutinised documentation provided by the school.

## Inspection team

Julie Carrington, 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 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; and
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

*Standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection*

#### **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; and
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

#### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 23(1) Subject to sub paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 23(1)(c) suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

### **The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of Education**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
    - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught; and
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being Taught.

### ■ **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

### ■ **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 23(1)(a) suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils.
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

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