

Inspection of Newbury Independent School

Unit 6, Cuckoo Wharf, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, West Midlands B6 7SS

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend Newbury Independent School are not being educated well enough. The school does not pay enough attention to pupils' well-being and it fails to take full account of the things that put pupils at risk of harm. Leaders do not identify and act on concerns quickly enough. This means that pupils do not always receive the help they may need.

Newbury pupils have experienced disruption to their schooling. All of them have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school is not resourced properly to provide for their diverse needs. Pupils do not benefit from a curriculum that is suited to their needs or aspirations. Older pupils do not have the opportunity to study for qualifications that will allow them to follow their aims and ambitions.

School staff work hard to build positive relationships with pupils. Despite this, some of the pupils spoken to said they do not think that staff always have their best interests at heart. Pupils' behaviour is not well managed and this means that the smooth running of the school is frequently affected and pupils' safety is put at risk.

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

The proprietor and those responsible for governance have not made sure that the quality of education is suitable for pupils. They have not made sure that the independent school standards (the standards) are consistently met. They have not ensured that aspects of the school's work that keep pupils safe, including health and safety requirements, are met. The proprietor has not made sure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

The school has recently admitted pupils with increasingly complex needs. The school is not resourced to provide for this diverse range of needs well enough. This means that some pupils do not receive the help and care they need.

The curriculum in nearly all subjects is not well planned or organised in a way that enables pupils to build on their prior learning. The school has not identified precisely what they want pupils to know. The curriculum does not take into account pupils' starting points or any gaps in their knowledge. As a result, lessons do not meet the needs of pupils. Often, teaching activities are not matched well to the learning that is intended. High levels of pupil absence further hamper pupils' learning, and teachers do not make sure that pupils catch up with missed work. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge widen rather than reduce.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, do not have a curriculum that meets their needs. The school has not made sure that all teachers understand the learning strategies that will best help pupils succeed in their lessons. The curriculum for sixth-form students with complex needs is ill planned and does not enable students to achieve well. Students are not taught how to keep safe or how to manage their

changing bodies. The curriculum does not prepare these students well for adulthood.

Staff do not support pupils who are at the early stages of reading, or who find reading difficult, to read well. The school does not assess pupils' reading abilities on entry and there is no phonics or reading curriculum in place. This means that some pupils do not become proficient readers.

The school does not manage pupils' behaviour well enough. The school has provided training for staff on behaviour management. However, leaders have not ensured that staff have identified effective strategies to improve pupils' behaviour over time. Instead, therefore, staff focus on managing incidents as they occur. This means that learning is often disrupted and pupils' behaviour does not improve. The school does not keep records of sanctions given to pupils, as required by the standards.

Pupils' attendance is poor and is not improving. The school does not monitor pupils' absence rigorously enough. Students in the sixth form have particularly low attendance and the school has not taken effective actions to improve this. The school does not complete the attendance register correctly. The admissions register does not meet the requirements of the standards.

The school's commissioning and referral processes are not robust. The school does not make sure that it records the most important information about the pupils it is admitting. The school has begun to admit pupils with complex needs. However, they have not made sure that the accommodation and curriculum meet their needs. Staff are not trained sufficiently well to meet the needs of these pupils. As a result, many of these pupils do not benefit from a high-quality education.

The school has taken some actions to ensure that pupils have a wider set of experiences beyond the academic. Pupils go on some trips and visits, for example to a local prison museum and a few pupils engage in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. However, these opportunities are not coherently planned to make sure they meet the talents and interests of all pupils. Pupils who do not attend well miss out on these opportunities. This wider curriculum offer is not in place for sixth-form students and those with more complex needs.

The school has a careers programme in place. However, this programme does not allow all pupils to find out the career routes that most interest them. Pupils do not receive individual careers advice. This does not prepare them well enough for their next steps.

The curriculum for personal social, health and economic (PSHE) education is not matched well enough to provide pupils with the skills and knowledge they need. Sixth-form students do not study PSHE and so they do not learn about the important topics they need to be well prepared for adulthood. The school has not made sure that the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education is implemented.

Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the school's work. The proprietor has not made sure that he understands the weaknesses of the school and so he has not been able to put in place the right actions to stem the school's decline. The school

does not monitor its work well enough. This means that staff do not spot things that need improving. There is limited leadership capacity to improve the school.

The school has not carried out a suitable fire risk assessment. It has not ensured that the medical room is appropriate or that it is suitable for the needs of pupils with complex needs. The school has not made sure that it complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school is not tenacious in identifying risks and securing help for pupils. It does not identify the additional measures that are needed for pupils with the most complex needs and those with communication difficulties. The school does not make sure that these pupils can let people know that they may not be safe. This means that some pupils are at greater risk of additional harm. Where risks are identified, the school does not always secure help for pupils promptly or appropriately. Some pupils rarely attend school and leaders do not make the necessary checks to assure themselves that these pupils are not at risk of harm.

The proprietor, members of the school leadership team and the safeguarding governor are related. This may make it difficult for staff and pupils to raise concerns. Leaders have not recognised this potential risk. The chair of the governing body does not acknowledge that this may pose a risk. Staff are not clear about how they would report safeguarding concerns about other adults. There is a lack of clarity about safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

Staff receive training to help them understand their responsibilities. However, some incidents seen by inspectors were not followed up well enough. The school was unable to assure inspectors that all safeguarding leaders had received the appropriate training to discharge their duties.

The safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent guidance from the Secretary of State. It is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some pupils at the school have safeguarding risks that are not identified well enough by the school. As a result, these pupils are not protected from potential harm well enough. Leaders should make sure that they are clear about the safeguarding risks that pupils may face and put in appropriate steps to manage these.
- The proprietor and leaders have not given due consideration to the impact of personal staff/proprietor relationships on the school's approach to reporting safeguarding concerns. This may prevent safeguarding concerns being reported

or followed up, placing pupils at risk of harm. The proprietor should review the safeguarding reporting and accountability leadership in the school to ensure that concerns can be reported openly and followed up robustly.

- Pupils with complex additional needs do not have their needs met well enough. There are not appropriate resources in place to ensure that their learning and personal care needs are met. This means that these pupils do not receive the education to which they are entitled. Leaders should make sure that pupils receive an education that is tailored to their needs; that classroom environments are suitable; and that there are appropriate facilities for personal care so that all pupils' needs are met.
- The proprietor has not ensured that there is a coherent, well-planned curriculum in place. This prevents pupils from achieving as well as they could. Leaders should make sure that they identify the precise knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember, sequence this well for all subjects and ensure that it is delivered effectively.
- Pupils do not attend the school frequently enough and leaders do not follow this up adequately. This has a negative impact on pupils' learning. Leaders do not check that pupils are safe and they do not make sure that pupils make up the learning that they have missed. The school should make sure that they do all that they can to ensure that pupils attend school, robustly and promptly follow up on any non-attendance, and support pupils who have missed learning to catch up on what they have missed.
- Leaders and the proprietor do not have a good enough oversight of the school's work. For example, they have not met the independent school standards, they are not tackling pupils' absence effectively, and they do not make sure that the curriculum in place is well planned and well delivered. This has resulted in the school's continued decline. Leaders and the proprietor should make sure that they monitor and oversee their work effectively so that pupils are able to benefit from a high-quality education. They should ensure that all the independent school standards are met consistently and securely.

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	143174
DfE registration number	330/6031
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10284434
Type of school	Other independent 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	17
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	11
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Anthony Walters
Headteacher	Antonique Watson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,752 to £97,500
Telephone number	0121 8030831
Website	www.newburyschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@newburyschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 April to 3 May 2022

Information about this school

- Newbury Independent School is a day school providing education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 years old. It opened in 2016 and is registered by the Department for Education to accommodate up to 60 pupils.
- The school's last full standard inspection took place on 26 and 27 April and 3 May 2022. A progress monitoring inspection was held on 29 March 2023.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- Pupils attending the school have SEND. At the time of the previous inspection, the school catered for pupils with a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school now also admits pupils with complex needs.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has altered its admission procedures; there are now three different admission routes.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continuing impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They spoke to other staff during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the governing body and to the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, history and PSHE education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at some samples of pupils' work. Inspectors visited lessons in English, science and PSHE education. They were unable to visit history lessons.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors talked to pupils more generally about their experiences in school. They observed pupils at social times.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including school policies, curriculum planning and the school's website.
- Checks were made relating to the independent school standards, including checks on the school's premises.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil or staff surveys.

Inspection team

Claire Price, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Henrick

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 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) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.
- 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;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

- 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- 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; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including-
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility; and
 - 24(1)(c) where a school caters for pupils with complex needs, additional medical accommodation which caters for those needs.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 28(1)(a) suitable drinking water facilities are provided;
 - 28(1)(c) cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such; and
- 28(2) The facilities provided under sub-paragraph (1)(a) will be suitable only if-
 - 28(2)(a) they are readily accessible at all times when the premises are in use; and

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector[14], the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate[15];
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;

- 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school’s internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request;
- 32(1)(g) any information reasonably requested in connection with an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act which is required for the purposes of the inspection is provided to the body conducting the inspection and that body is given access to the school’s admission and attendance registers;
- 32(1)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State;
- 32(1)(i) where a pupil with an EHC plan wholly or partly funded by a local authority or other body through public funds is registered at the school, such information as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the EHC plan is provided to the responsible local authority; and
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 32(3)(a) particulars of the school’s policy on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions;
 - 32(3)(b) particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language;
 - 32(3)(e) particulars of the school’s academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations;

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

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school does not publish an accessibility plan. They did not provide inspectors with an accessibility plan on request.

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