

Inspection of Newbury Independent School

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

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April and 3 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

New leaders have a lot to do to improve the school. Pupils' learning is often disjointed in individual subjects and across the curriculum. The curriculum is not sufficiently well planned and coherently constructed to meet pupils' individual needs.

Some pupils enjoy school, attend well and work hard in their lessons. High levels of staffing ensure that pupils get lots of attention throughout the day. Staff work patiently with them. They encourage pupils to do their best. However, too many pupils do not attend school often enough. This means that they cannot get the support they need to develop the knowledge and skills required for future training and employment.

Many pupils behave well in lessons. Sometimes, pupils with special educational needs find school hard. Some staff have limited knowledge of how to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. They do not manage inappropriate behaviour as effectively as they should.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know that staff care about them. Pupils cannot recall incidents of bullying but trust staff to listen and help if they are worried about anything.

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

Since the last inspection, the quality of education has declined. The proprietor, and those responsible for governance, have not kept a close enough eye on what is happening in the school. There has been a lack of challenge and support. They have not made sure that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Almost the whole staff team, including the headteacher and senior leaders, are new to the school. They are well meaning and care about pupils. They are trying to put things right. However, it is early days. Although leaders have halted the decline, they have not had enough time or support to do all that needs doing.

The curriculum in most subjects is not coherently planned or sequenced. It does not take into account pupils' starting points and the gaps pupils have in their knowledge and skills. It does not make clear what pupils are expected to learn and when they should learn it. Staff do not always know the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn in lessons. Staff do not check carefully enough what pupils know and can do already. This means that pupils do not make the progress that they should.

Teachers' subject knowledge is variable. Where it is stronger, for example in mathematics, staff skilfully explain new concepts to pupils. They deal with misconceptions as they arise and adapt lessons to meet pupils' needs. However, this is not the case in all subjects. Where staff do not have the required depth of subject knowledge, pupils are not challenged and do not achieve as well as they could.

Training is provided to help staff develop their skills and knowledge. Leaders help staff understand how to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' individual needs, but this is in its infancy.

Staff want pupils to develop a love of reading. The 'Newbury 12' lists books such as 'Animal Farm' that they want pupils to know. Adults read with pupils, but leaders do not have clear plans in place to teach reading. Staff are not trained to teach reading effectively. There are no appropriate resources available to support pupils that are at the early stages of learning to read.

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Teachers do not use information in these plans effectively to support learning. In addition, they do not adapt resources and lessons to meet pupils' individual needs effectively.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is not well planned. The newly introduced curriculum consists of individual lessons loosely connected to broad themes. Leaders have not yet considered how pupils will develop their PSHE knowledge and understanding over time.

Pupils in the sixth form have effective personalised plans. These link to pupils' needs, interests and strengths. Pupils study for appropriate qualifications to help them access further education, training or employment. Leaders secure suitable work experience placements to engage pupils and deepen their knowledge and skills. For example, pupils studying horticulture work with a local gardening firm.

Leaders have ensured that pupils receive independent careers advice. They support pupils well with preparation for college interviews or when writing a curriculum vitae.

Most pupils have a history of poor school attendance. Attendance improves slightly when pupils join Newbury. However, too many pupils do not attend school often enough. Staff work hard to tackle low attendance, but many pupils continue to miss significant chunks of their education.

Leaders have put in place opportunities for pupils to learn to be respectful and active citizens. For example, pupils pack and hand out food parcels each week. Leaders also support pupils with their speaking and listening skills so that their views and opinions are heard.

Leaders ensure that the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education is implemented. Pupils learn about healthy relationships. This is adapted to meet the needs of different ages of pupils in the school.

The premises are well maintained. The school provides a range of facilities such as a hair and beauty salon and bike repair classroom to support learning. Leaders make sure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff are appropriately trained and know how to keep pupils safe. They brief staff regularly about current safeguarding issues. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Record-keeping is suitably detailed and includes a chronology of actions taken by leaders. Designated safeguarding leads work well with external agencies to find the right help for their vulnerable pupils.

The safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent guidance from the Secretary of State. It is published on the school's website. Leaders undertake all the appropriate pre-employment checks before staff start work.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- There has been insufficient oversight of the school by the proprietor and those responsible for governance. There is a lack of appropriate support and challenge for leaders. The quality of education has declined and is not good enough. The proprietor should ensure that more regular checks are made on the school's effectiveness. They should ensure that new leaders are well supported and held to account to take the right action at the right time to improve the school.
- The planning and sequencing of the curriculum in most areas are weak. Consequently, pupils are not taught well and do not make strong progress in their learning. Leaders should ensure that there is an ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum in place in all subject areas, including PSHE education.
- Staff do not always know the key points that pupils need to learn. This means that pupils do not build on their previous knowledge to achieve success in learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the key knowledge they want pupils to know and when to teach it.
- Not all teachers possess the essential subject knowledge to teach effectively. Senior leaders are beginning to develop the teaching skills of staff in the school. Leaders should continue to provide support and training so that all staff have the skills, knowledge and confidence to teach all the subjects of the curriculum well.
- Staff are not always aware of the specific needs of individual pupils. They do not use the recommended strategies laid out in EHC plans when teaching pupils. Pupils with SEND do not achieve well. Leaders should help and support staff to know how they can adapt learning appropriately to support all pupils effectively.
- Despite leaders' actions, the improvements to pupils' attendance are not sustained over time. There are still too many pupils absent from school. This includes pupils who are on a flexible timetable. Leaders need to develop systems and strategies to ensure pupils attend school each day. They should ensure pupils attend school more regularly to reduce the gaps in pupils' knowledge over time.

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	143174
DfE registration number	330/6031
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10220434
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of pupils in the sixth form	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Robin Smith and Anthony Walters
Headteacher	Antonique Watson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,502 to £48,902
Telephone number	0121 794039
Website	www.newburyschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@newburyschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

Information about this school

- Newbury is an independent day school providing education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 years old. It opened in October 2016 and is registered by the Department for Education to accommodate up to 60 pupils.
- The current headteacher was appointed in November 2021. The behaviour and pastoral support leader was appointed at the same time. The deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2022.
- Pupils attending the school have a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Most pupils have an EHC plan. Most have been excluded or were at high risk of being excluded from their previous school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's last full standard inspection was from 25 to 27 June 2019. An emergency inspection took place on 20 October 2020 after concerns were raised about the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school. The school met all of the independent school standards that were checked during the emergency inspection.

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.

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the pastoral leader. They spoke to other staff during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the governing body and both proprietors.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics and PSHE education. For each deep dive, this included discussions about the curriculum with subject leaders, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects and talked about the books they were reading.
- Inspectors talked to pupils more generally about their experiences in school. They observed pupils at breaktimes and saw them at work in a range of lessons.

- Inspectors talked with staff to discuss how they are supported to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including school policies, curriculum documents and the school website.
- In checking safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised documentation and looked at the school's processes for reporting concerns and the employment checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment.
- Checks were made relating to the independent school standards, including checks on the school's premises.
- The lead inspector considered responses, including free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire. The lead inspector considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephanie Moran	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Edgerton	Ofsted 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)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 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 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

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.

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