

Inspection of Newbury Independent School

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

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 May 2025

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

At Newbury, a fresh start is more than mere words, it is a heartfelt pledge. Underpinned by a shared commitment to care and aspiration, inspirational leaders and staff drive improvements. However, while improvements are being made, further steps are needed to ensure every pupil fully benefits from their education.

Pupils develop knowledge in subjects such as English, mathematics and computing. However, many pupils have gaps in their learning, and sometimes, the school does not help them catch up when they miss lessons or struggle to focus.

Many pupils start at Newbury following difficulties in their previous schools, including exclusions or unmet learning needs. These experiences have often impacted their confidence and self-belief. However, in the school's supportive and aspirational environment, they receive encouragement and guidance, helping them to rebuild their resilience and engage more positively in learning.

Despite their challenges, pupils benefit from a positive school culture where they show respectful behaviour, engage well, and respond positively to staff. Staff use thoughtful and caring approaches to help pupils feel safe, understood and supported.

Outdoor pursuits like rock climbing and go-karting build pupils' confidence and teamwork. Careers guidance and work-related learning also broaden their aspirations, preparing them for future opportunities.

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

Since the last standard inspection, the school's leadership has changed considerably. Newly appointed leaders have brought a drive and enthusiasm for learning and meeting the additional needs of pupils. An experienced and knowledgeable governing body has been established, providing high-quality support and challenge for the school's work. All are focused on continual improvement and making the necessary changes to improve the experiences and outcomes for pupils.

The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The proprietor and school leaders have robust systems to ensure these standards are regularly checked and do not drop.

When they arrive at the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) often have unmet or undiagnosed needs. From the moment pupils start school, the caring and attentive staff, including their families, get to know them well. 'Newbury Team Around the Child' meetings review carefully how well pupils are doing and identify changes needed in the school's provision. One parent, whose view represents the views of others, said that the school has provided the 'best support for their child' and that this is 'the first time they felt settled at a school'.

Across all subjects, the school has set strong expectations for what pupils should learn and when. Its curriculum is designed to build pupils' knowledge over time, providing access and links to carefully considered resources and advice for teachers. For example, in English, pupils develop a strong understanding of poetic language before exploring the works of Emily Dickinson. Ongoing training and support for all staff and enhanced curriculum leadership have started to increase the school's capacity for further improvement.

Lessons in core subjects like English, mathematics and science follow a clear and structured approach, helping pupils to build their knowledge step by step. Pupils told inspectors about their understanding of their recent work, such as in science, about purity and ecosystems. Pupils' work in books in these subjects shows their steady progress in learning the school's curriculum. Pupils remember what they have learned. However, teaching in some other subjects, such as humanities and art, do not help pupils to develop their knowledge well over time. This makes it harder for pupils to build on past learning and move forward confidently in their knowledge.

Staff are quick to act when pupils need additional support. For example, teaching staff use well-timed questions to understand whether pupils understand the intended learning for each lesson. Staff adapt teaching to provide additional pupils with support and guidance when needed. However, too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. The school does not routinely help pupils to catch up in their learning when they are absent or struggle to engage.

The quality of the teaching of reading is improving. The school has taken steps to give extra attention to reading by providing pupils with additional help to read, such as opportunities to read in different subjects. Regular whole-class reading sessions provide opportunities for pupils to read with staff. Staff deepen pupils' understanding by discussing different books with them. However, the school has not yet ensured that there is a well-structured approach to teaching phonics and reading. As a result, some pupils struggle to develop strong literacy skills and progress confidently in their reading abilities.

At Newbury, pupils get a fresh start in their education from caring and supportive staff. Staff are calm and eager to develop strong, secure relationships. The proprietor's vision to support the whole family has strengthened behaviour management by building trust between staff, pupils and families. Attendance and engagement are improving rapidly, with pupils attending more than ever. Staff work closely with pupils and families to address barriers, fostering a culture of high expectations. These efforts have led to notable progress in ensuring pupils' consistent attendance and engagement in learning.

Lessons and carefully considered pastoral support fosters respect, inclusion and personal growth through a supportive environment. Pupils learn to make responsible choices, build confidence, and develop positive relationships. The school's work on gender issues and relationships is particularly strong. Pupils participate in activities that encourage teamwork and resilience. Visits to local places of religious

observance and museums develop pupils' understanding of different cultures and societies, preparing them for life beyond school.

Personal, social, health and economic education equips pupils with essential life skills, structured career guidance and vocational training. Trips to local job fairs and workplaces provide opportunities to develop pupils' aspirations for the world of work. Safety education, including health and workplace awareness, helps students to navigate real-world challenges. Work-related learning, guest speakers, and practical experiences foster ambition, preparing pupils for future employment and independent living.

Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. There is a suitable accessibility plan in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school has not yet established a structured approach for teaching phonics and reading. As a result, some pupils struggle with literacy, which affects their confidence and ability to build strong reading skills. The school should ensure pupils access a structured phonics programme, wider reading opportunities, and consistent application of literacy initiatives when needed.
- In some subjects, particularly humanities and foundation subjects, the curriculum is poorly implemented. As a result, pupils find it challenging to build knowledge progressively and engage with more complex concepts. The school should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects, including the non-core subjects, is implemented well so pupils can build knowledge and develop understanding in all subjects.
- Variability in curriculum sequencing, assessment, and subject implementation leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge and fragmented learning. This is particularly the case for those pupils who have time away from school or find it challenging to engage in lessons. This affects their ability to build on their prior knowledge. The school should ensure that all pupils catch up on missed learning when they return to school or re-engage with lessons.

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	10374911
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	9
Proprietor	Anthony Walters
Chair	Samantha Wilkins
Headteacher	Enamul Hoque
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,502 to £67,942
Telephone number	01218 030831
Website	www.newburyschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@newburyschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 to 5 October 2023

Information about this school

- Newbury Independent School is an independent day school that provides education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19. It opened in October 2016 and is registered by the Department for Education to accommodate up to 60 pupils.
- Since 2020, the school has also operated from a second site at Unit 4, Cuckoo Wharf, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, West Midlands B6 7SS. This site has been in use since 2020.
- Pupils attending the school have a range of social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. Most have an education, health and care plan. Most have been excluded from or were at high risk of being excluded from their previous school.
- Since the last standard inspection, the headteacher at the school has changed twice. The current postholder took up the post in May 2024. A new head of teaching and learning was appointed in July 2024, and a new special educational needs coordinator was appointed in September 2024.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school's last full standard inspection was from 3 to 5 October 2023.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- As part of this inspection, the Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to complete a progress monitoring inspection to consider the progress made to meet the unmet standards identified at the last progress monitoring inspection on 8 January 2025.
- To evaluate the school's work in meeting the independent school standards, an inspector completed a site walk-around with the headteacher, a review of complaints for the last year, and a detailed review of the information on the school website.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record, considered 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.

- During the inspection, inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, science and computing. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, and talked with pupils and staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects to check how they were planned and taught.
- The team talked to pupils to gather their views. In some of these meetings pupils were unaccompanied and in others staff were present to provide extra support. Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, the chair of the governing body and pupils. They also talked informally with parents and carers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- An inspector also spoke with the proprietor.
- An inspector spoke with a member of staff from the alternative provision that the school uses.
- An inspector held telephone calls with parents to gather their views about the quality of provision for their child and communication between the school and home.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracey O'Keeffe-Pullan

Ofsted Inspector

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