

New Direction School

Ringer Villa Farm, Ringer Lane, Clowne, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S43 4BX

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The proprietor and senior leaders have not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- The school does not have an adequate framework in place to consistently assess pupils' starting points, particularly for pupils who enter the school before key stage 4.
- The school's arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work do not provide consistent information about pupils' progress from their starting points, across all subjects.
- The provision for science is not sufficiently systematic or comprehensive.
- Occasionally, classroom activities and tasks do not challenge pupils to analyse and research in sufficient depth. They do not make sufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT) to deepen their knowledge and to present their ideas effectively.
- The proprietor and senior leaders do not take sufficient account of the quality of teaching and learning, and the extent of pupils' progress, in their monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision.

The school has the following strengths

- Overall, pupils make good progress with their learning, achieving success in GCSE English and mathematics and securing suitable placements in further education or employment.
- Pupils enjoy school. They cooperate well with staff and sustain their concentration well during lessons.
- The school provides a varied curriculum that motivates and engages pupils. The equine and land-based experiences, in particular, contribute strongly to pupils' emotional well-being, self-esteem and personal skills.
- Staff understand pupils' individual characteristics and their barriers to learning. They adapt the curriculum effectively to ensure that all pupils can succeed.
- The proprietor and staff have a good understanding of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and motivation.
- Arrangements for all aspects of safeguarding, health and safety, and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve arrangements for the assessment of pupils' learning to ensure that:
 - all staff have a good understanding of pupils' starting points on entry to the school, particularly in reading, writing, comprehension and numeracy
 - regular assessments of pupils' work demonstrate the extent of their progress from their starting points.
- Ensure that pupils make effective use of information and communication technology to provide sufficient depth and high-quality presentations of their findings in learning activities.
- Extend the school's provision for scientific education, including the availability of suitable accreditation at the end of key stage 4.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- Ensure 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 (paragraphs 3 and 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and (b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, and senior leaders have not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Senior leaders have not established sufficiently robust baseline assessment arrangements to ensure that they have an accurate understanding of pupils' starting points on entry to the school. Consequently, members of staff do not have immediate information about pupils' prior attainment to enable them to set precise learning targets.
- The curriculum includes various aspects of scientific experience across classroom and practical subjects. However, this is not coordinated and planned with sufficient rigour to ensure that all pupils have a coherent and consistent experience of science.
- Senior leaders' arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the work of the school do not include a comprehensive and continuous evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress from their starting points.
- The school has improved its provision since the previous inspection and has addressed the previously unmet requirement to make a range of information available to parents. The curriculum is now broader, for example, through additional provision for art and history at key stage 3.
- Additional accreditation routes are now available. Pupils achieve unit awards across a range of subjects and have access to functional skills certification up to level 2 in English and mathematics. The school also provides appropriate and successful BTEC accredited courses, for example in land-based studies, catering and hospitality, together with British Horse Society qualifications.
- Pupils continue to have access to GCSE courses in English and mathematics. Additional GCSE courses can be included in individual timetables, depending on pupils' previous courses of study on entry to key stage 4.
- Senior leaders have established a culture of mutual respect and cooperation between pupils and staff. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, cooperation and application to their work. They are largely successful in turning around pupils' negative attitudes to school and enabling them to settle to productive work and achievement.
- All staff are strongly committed to the welfare and personal development of pupils. They provide an effective therapeutic dimension to pupils' learning and well-being, particularly through pupils' work with horses. The range of equine-related experiences provides a strong and effective context for pupils' practical and vocational skills, cross-curricular learning and motivation.
- The school gives good attention to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The personal and social development course, together with elements of teaching across a range of subjects, ensure that pupils understand essential British values. Pupils understand the democratic process, how equal rights for all groups in society are protected in law, and how the nation funds local and national services.
- Senior leaders and staff ensure that each pupil has equal access to the full curriculum,

tailored effectively into imaginative individual timetables that enable all pupils to develop their strengths and interests within a balanced curriculum. The school's programme for personal and social development enables pupils to understand the diverse lifestyles and cultures that contribute to life in modern Britain.

Governance

- The proprietor has a mostly secure understanding of the quality of the school's provision because of her involvement in all aspects of the day-to-day running of the school.
- In her role as headteacher, the proprietor contributes to a systematic programme of lesson observation. This, in turn, contributes to appropriate arrangements for the appraisal of the performance of each member of staff. All staff have access to regular training related to essential aspects of the school's priorities, including pupils' safety and well-being.
- The proprietor evaluates the school's provision and outcomes through consultation with senior leaders and staff. She has a comprehensive understanding of pupils' attainment, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- The school's current assessment arrangements do not provide sufficient information about pupils' starting points, particularly if they enter the school before key stage 4. The proprietor does not have access to a systematic analysis of the extent of pupils' progress from their starting points.
- The proprietor's evaluation of the school's provision and outcomes is suitably enhanced by systematic monitoring visits and validation reports provided by representatives of one of the school's placing authorities. This makes an effective contribution to the proprietor's identification of, and planning for, areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders have written a safeguarding policy that has regard to the latest statutory guidance. This policy document is available for parents to download from the school's website, together with other required school policies.
- All staff are trained to the required levels in safeguarding and the proprietor ensures that they receive regular updates as new requirements are introduced. Senior leaders implement all safeguarding arrangements robustly, including safe staff recruitment, effective work with parents and external agencies, and thorough record-keeping.
- Leaders disseminate relevant information about the individual needs of vulnerable pupils to staff who work closely with these pupils. All staff work effectively to ensure that pupils are safe, that they are comfortable to share their anxieties and that staff take prompt action to resolve concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Individual teaching staff manage the assessment of pupils' academic starting points and learning needs. There is no consistent whole-school system to determine accurate starting points and to record progress towards agreed targets at regular intervals. Information about prior attainment from placing schools varies in scope and detail,

although pupils who enter the school during key stage 4 have clear goals related to the completion of external examinations.

- Staff mostly plan effectively for individual pupils' learning despite shortcomings in baseline information. Teachers of English and mathematics analyse pupils' work during their early weeks of placement at the school and quickly adjust learning tasks to meet their emerging capabilities. However, the work set for pupils is not always sufficiently demanding to extend their knowledge and understanding quickly enough.
- Pupils have good access to computers in the classroom and demonstrate appropriate development in their skills. However, they do not always make sufficient use of available software to deepen their knowledge and understanding, or to present their work to a high standard.
- Teachers integrate aspects of science appropriately into classroom and outdoor practical activities. Pupils enjoy finding out about and identifying poisonous plants and helping to clear these from the paddocks during equine-related studies. However, the overall provision for science is not comprehensive or coordinated sufficiently to ensure that all pupils develop a systematic understanding of scientific knowledge and concepts.
- Individual pupils' needs are very varied. The school's provision from year to year is very responsive to the requirement to adjust to changes in numbers between pupils in key stages 3 and 4. The school provides an individual timetable for each pupil, initially dependent on the emotional, social and behavioural needs of the pupil.
- Staff vary the activities provided throughout lessons and build pupils' confidence by ensuring that they experience success. They use unit awards effectively to aid motivation and enable pupils at key stage 3 to experience success. Teachers are imaginative in the variety of learning experiences provided as they focus continuously on improving pupils' motivation and positive responses to their learning.
- The work in pupils' mathematics books mostly shows evidence of effective learning in which new activities build appropriately on pupils' previous work. Pupils at the start of key stage 3 demonstrate secure understanding of basic statistics, including the use of mode and median, together with the ability to interpret accurately from bar graphs. They can simplify number brackets, and identify and measure different types of angles.
- In English, key stage 3 pupils make good progress with the development of structure, accurate grammar, and appropriate use of tenses in their writing. They read texts appropriate for their age, but their ability to interpret and comprehend the meaning in a narrative is more variable. Pupils mostly produce well-formed and neatly presented handwriting.
- Teachers' planning ensures that pupils develop their knowledge and understanding in a logical manner, building effectively on their previous learning. Staff have a good understanding of the individual emotional and social barriers to pupils' success. They demonstrate patience and resilience in the management of learning activities.
- Staff maintain a continuous dialogue with pupils, using questioning effectively to challenge pupils to think more deeply and to develop their own ideas. Teachers identify misconceptions and uncertainty in pupils' answers and encourage them to reconsider and justify their answers.
- The quality of teaching in equine-related subjects is good. Staff have excellent knowledge

and strong personal experience of riding and practical work with horses. Pupils enjoy these activities, including learning to ride and to groom horses, and are motivated to ask questions and willing to answer confidently. The opportunity to work towards Pony Club awards, including first aid and map-reading, adds to pupils' motivation.

- The school has always admitted a small number of pupils at key stage 4 who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools. Staff teach these pupils effectively as they work successfully towards functional skills or GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. Pupils also benefit from appropriate access to vocational and practical courses which lead to BTEC qualifications.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils develop self-confidence and are willing to have a go. They respond extremely well to the challenge of riding and working with horses.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to work safely within the school environment. They wear protective clothing and behave appropriately when working with animals. They develop mature attitudes and demonstrate suitable respect for adults' instructions.
- Throughout the school, in classrooms and external working areas, pupils and staff develop trusting and cooperative relationships. The quality of mutual respect enables pupils to consider their personal responses and to adjust their approach to the school's expected standards.
- Pupils work well together. They respond well to continuous opportunities to work together in pairs or teams in practical activities and recognise their responsibilities to each other.
- Pupils are safe in school. Staff give them space and time to resolve any concerns or issues. Levels of staff supervision are high and contribute to pupils' safety and well-being.
- The school provides pupils with good support, including work with the external careers service, as they prepare to leave school. Pupils are provided with individual advice and guidance as they apply mostly for places on vocational courses in further education. They value the support that they receive.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour in lessons, during outside activities and around the school, is good. The school is an orderly community with little wasted time or distraction.
- Pupils make good progress over time with the management of their behaviour. They develop respect for the staff and appreciate the opportunities provided for them. They begin to gradually address the barriers which have restricted their previous progress.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and cooperate well with staff. The school manages occasional incidents of unacceptable behaviour appropriately. The school has clear procedures, understood by all staff, to manage any rare serious incidents. Staff maintain appropriate records of their work with families and external agencies to resolve concerns.

- Pupils' attendance is close to the national average. There are no concerns about persistent absence. The school maintains good relationships with pupils' parents and carers and ensures that any absence or lateness is followed up promptly and effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The majority of pupils are working below the standard expected for their age due to periods of absence or disaffection in their previous settings. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics once staff have established a good understanding of their current levels of attainment.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of good teaching that addresses their individual learning needs. Those that remain in the school for sufficient lengths of time begin to close the gaps in their knowledge and skills arising from previous barriers to successful learning.
- Most pupils read fluently at levels sufficient to provide a sound foundation for learning across a range of subjects. Staff are successful at motivating some older pupils to read for pleasure, both in and out of school.
- Pupils make progress mostly at a rate close to the national average. The good quality of teaching, including teachers' patience and creativity, motivates pupils to build on their successes, so the majority enjoy learning and are keen to succeed.
- Pupils, in recent years, placed at the school for sufficient periods at key stage 4, have made good progress towards external examinations in functional skills or GCSE subjects. These outcomes include grade C awards in GCSE English and mathematics. These pupils also achieve additional vocational qualifications, for example in BTEC land-based studies, catering and hospitality.
- While it was not possible to observe teaching at key stage 4 during this inspection, the most recent report from the local authority's external verifier judges that pupils demonstrate excellent achievement in their BTEC units. Pupils' outcomes in these awards confirm that they make good progress throughout the courses.
- Teachers retain strong evidence of pupils' good progress, for example in art and food studies BTEC courses. Pupils' work in art, for example, demonstrates successful use of shading, tone and line drawings, together with expressive and creative canvasses using well-chosen colour combinations and creative textures.
- Almost all of those who have left at the end of Year 11 in recent years have taken up successful placements at colleges of further education, or in employment with further training.

School details

Unique reference number	134395
DfE registration number	830/6027
Inspection number	10006102

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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Yvonne Evans
Headteacher	Yvonne Evans
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,635
Telephone number	01246 810456
Website	www.new-direction.org.uk
Email address	info@new-direction.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2012

Information about this school

- New Direction School is an independent special school, which was opened in September 2004, and is located on the outskirts of Clowne, a small rural town in Derbyshire.
- The school provides full-time education for pupils aged from 11 to 16 years with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, and associated challenging behaviour. Pupils placed at the school are at risk of exclusion from their previous schools. All full-time pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school also makes part-time alternative provision, generally for one day a week, for a small number of pupils who are on the rolls of maintained schools in the area served by the school.
- New Direction occupies premises within a complex that includes a farm and equestrian centre with provision for adults with learning difficulties, all under the same proprietor. There is some sharing of staff and facilities.

- The school does not use the services of any additional providers.
- The school's aim is to reintegrate pupils to appropriate education or to other suitable provision through a programme of personalised learning and a therapeutic approach. The school encourages pupils to change their attitude to learning, to attend well and to develop skills that will support them in their adult lives, whether socially and personally or through work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed classroom learning and practical outdoor activities provided for the small number of pupils in attendance during the inspection. He scrutinised examples of pupils' work across the range of subjects studied, including English and mathematics.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, the school manager and members of staff.
- The inspector held informal discussions with pupils present during the inspection. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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