

# Newlands Hey

1a Huyton Hey Road, Huyton, Liverpool, L36 5SE

## Inspection dates

21–23 May 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that all regulatory requirements of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders and board members are ambitious for the school. They have identified and tackled the right priorities in this improving school.
- Good relationships between adults and pupils enable pupils to grow in self-esteem, confidence and in their ability to work alongside others.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Staff are well trained and have successfully established a calm learning environment.
- Attendance levels are high. Pupils enjoy being in school and say they feel safe and secure.
- Pupils benefit from an innovative, personalised curriculum, which captures their interest and enables them to make good progress both personally and academically.
- The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, as well as their appreciation of British values, is very effective.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to build on pupils' previous learning. This happens when staff questioning is not precise enough or when tasks for pupils are not set at the right level.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences at Newlands Hey. Parents and representatives from local authorities say children are safe and cared for well.
- Staff are vigilant in all aspects of pupils' welfare and safeguarding. Pupils are safe and secure and increasingly know how to communicate any concerns they might have.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, plans for improvement are not as effective as they might be. They lack clarity on how the impact of any changes will be measured.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - there is greater clarity about how the impact of changes and improvements will be measured.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - staff take every opportunity to develop pupils' learning
  - tasks set for pupils are consistently pitched at the right level for them
  - better use is made of questioning so that staff identify more precisely pupils' next steps in learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor, leaders and board members have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards. They have maintained a good standard of education since the previous inspection.
- The school's stated mission to provide a personalised curriculum that is, 'meaningful, enjoyable, inclusive and engaging' is at the heart of what the school does well.
- Despite recent changes in leadership, with an interim head of learning appointed to replace the previous headteacher, leadership remains strong. There is a firm commitment to providing the best opportunities and support for the pupils in their care. As a result, pupils make good progress during their time at Newlands Hey.
- Leaders' self-assessment is accurate. Board member and leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas that require further improvement. They have successfully tackled areas for improvement that were identified at the previous standard inspection. However, the current improvement plan is not as effective as it could be. Planned actions are not linked closely enough to how their impact will be measured.
- Staff performance is managed successfully, with more regular checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment than when the school was last inspected. These are used effectively to improve staff performance. Staff comment positively on the improvements made since the last inspection.
- Leaders work closely with parents, carers, social workers and local authority commissioning officers who place pupils at the school. Parents, in their meetings with the inspector and in their written and telephone responses, confirm overwhelmingly that the school has made a positive difference to their children's lives. They appreciate the regular communication between home and school. These effective links help to ensure that their children are safe and happy and make good progress. The inspector found parents' confidence to be well founded.
- Each pupil benefits from a bespoke curriculum, which builds on their personal interests to give them the knowledge and understanding they need in a wide range of subjects. It is carefully designed to meet their complex, individual needs. Most pupils arrive at the school after experiencing difficulties in their previous schools or settings, and have gaps and delays in their learning and skills. Consequently, the curriculum aims to fill these gaps as well as developing pupils' social, emotional, communication and life skills.
- The curriculum is enriched through a programme of extra-curricular visits locally. For many pupils, the ability to engage with the local community represents a huge step in their growing confidence and independence.
- Leaders support staff well in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Staff say this has improved over this last school year. All members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff survey said they are proud to work at the school and many commented that it had improved since the last inspection. They say they are supported well by the interim headteacher and benefit from the training that is offered, including safeguarding training, to help them improve in their own effectiveness.

- The premises are well maintained. Teaching spaces are bright and airy. The outdoor space is safe and secure, with suitable equipment available for pupils to use. Leaders deploy staff carefully to ensure that pupils are supervised closely throughout the day, including at break and lunchtimes. Staff manage risks appropriately so pupils can enjoy a wide range of games and activities.
- The school's staff keep detailed records of all pupils and their individual needs. These include personalised risk assessments and a careful check is kept on their progress. The school also provides detailed information to placing authorities when required, for example annual reviews of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of British values are threaded sensitively throughout the curriculum according to pupils' levels of understanding and stage of development. These programmes celebrate different beliefs and cultures as well as promoting equality of opportunity and diversity. In all classes and activities, a strong emphasis is placed on pupils respecting and valuing each other and making the right choices. This is helping pupils to prepare well for their future lives.

## **Governance**

- The school is overseen by board members. One member is based in the school and has regular contact with school leaders.
- The board makes good use of consultants to ensure that leaders receive an external view on how well the school is operating. As a result, the board has an accurate view of the school's provision, pupils' progress and where it needs to improve.
- Board members ensure that their statutory duties are carried out efficiently. These include ensuring that the legal requirements for safeguarding are met and checking all the necessary risk assessments are in place.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture that permeates the school. The policy is published on the school's website and arrangements take account of the latest guidance from the Secretary of State.
- Leaders with specific responsibilities for safeguarding pupils have a good understanding of their duties and act swiftly when they have concerns. The school liaises effectively with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding to ensure that pupils are safe.
- Parents, staff and pupils have confidence in the school and in the staff. Parents share important information with the school, as a result of the open communication channels that exist. Pupils know what to do if they are worried or concerned.
- All training in child protection and safeguarding is up to date and the school's thorough procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are implemented well.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Most pupils arrive at Newlands Hey having had unhappy educational experiences in their previous school or setting. They were unable to cope within their mainstream or special school group.
- Each pupil's needs are carefully assessed before they join the school. Based on these initial assessments and transfer records from their previous school, staff plan an individual timetable and approach for each pupil. Staff work effectively to fill gaps in pupils' previous learning and help their confidence and self-esteem to grow.
- Learning is closely aligned to the objectives contained in pupils' individual learning plans and their EHC plans. The evidence provided for annual reviews of these plans is detailed and helps to ensure that the provision for each pupil is appropriately altered to meet their needs.
- Observations of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and their records, and school leaders' records of teaching observations provide strong evidence that both teaching and pupils' learning are good across the school.
- Staff know pupils well and relationships are good. Staff plan activities which interest and engage the pupils. Lessons are delivered in a calm and encouraging environment, usually with individual pupils because many find it hard to learn alongside their peers. As a result of this approach, outcomes for pupils have continued to improve since the last inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively in lessons and around the school. Staff demonstrate great patience when dealing with challenging behaviour. Staff are skilled in de-escalating situations and avoiding confrontations. As a result, most classes are orderly, allowing for effective learning to take place.
- Visits in the local community are used well to enhance pupils' experience. These opportunities allow pupils to apply their learning to real-life situations. They also develop pupils' independence as, for example, when they buy goods from nearby shops or change their reading books at the local library. When pupils are ready they are given good opportunities to develop their independent living skills.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally high. Usually, there is a careful balance between the level of challenge and pupils' emotional state. However, there are occasions when learning opportunities are missed because the work set for pupils is not pitched at the right level. In addition, the effectiveness of the use of questioning by adults to check and deepen pupils' thinking is variable. Some do this well, but there are times when staff settle for 'yes' or 'no' answers instead of asking further questions that could identify more precisely what pupils need to learn next to accelerate their progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school and most make strong progress in managing their personal anxieties and emotional barriers to learning. They trust the adults they work with and are

supported well in their personal and social development. Staff give much thought to developing pupils' independence. They plan activities where pupils learn how to cope in different settings and begin to understand how society works.

- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff manage pupils well and humour is used to good effect to maintain pupils' interests. Staff also make effective use of rest breaks to encourage and reward pupils. This enables pupils to maintain their focus on learning.
- The school provides a stable environment where pupils can work with and confide in staff. Pupils show respect towards members of staff and this is reciprocated. The daily 'welcome' sessions, when pupils and staff meet as a group, is a good example of this. Initially, some pupils find this session difficult because they struggle to cope with the presence of other pupils. Through the encouragement of staff they trust and their growing self-esteem, most pupils take part in these activities, greeting all those present either verbally or using sign language. As the session ends, pupils' enthusiastic contribution to nursery rhymes using actions as part of a group is testimony to their increasing confidence.
- Trips, visits and off-site activities, including pupils using public transport, are used effectively to support pupils' independent living skills and enhance their experiences and understanding of risk.
- Pupils benefit from the therapies they receive. These help pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, their motor skills and to regulate their own behaviour.
- Pupils develop an understanding of healthy living and healthy eating is encouraged. A strong culture of safety is evident in the school. Pupils know they can approach any adult and have their concerns dealt with sensitively.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of how their positive behaviour is rewarded, especially the opportunity to choose what the reward might be if they are successful. These include a local visit or even a trip to a fast-food restaurant. Rewards are tangible and help in building up pupils' self-awareness and self-esteem.
- Pupils who display very challenging behaviour when they join the school learn how to manage their emotions and feelings. Strategies devised by leaders and staff are used effectively to help pupils return to a calm state. As pupils learn how to manage their behaviour the number of incidents falls significantly. Parents and representatives from local authorities are impressed with how quickly pupils settle into school life.
- Pupils who spoke with the inspector said there have been fewer upsets recently and behaviour is good for most of the time.
- Pupils flourish at Newlands Hey and their high levels of attendance and punctuality are testimony to how much they enjoy being at school. Pupils rarely miss a day.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils join Newlands Hey with significant gaps in their education, having experienced difficulties in their previous schools. This is often compounded by the severe and complex learning and emotional needs of many pupils. Pupils' starting points are well below those expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress towards the objectives set in their EHC plans because staff assess their needs accurately when they arrive and then provide a package of support that matches their individual needs.
- In the past, few pupils have been able to access courses leading to external accreditation. This is changing, with all pupils encouraged to pursue Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network courses. The courses are geared to personalised learning and choice, with the aim of enhancing learners' confidence, self-esteem and resilience. Pupils proudly share their certificates of achievement with visitors to the school.
- The school's own progress measures show that following a transition period, most pupils begin to address some of the deficits of the past, especially in their reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils become proficient readers during their time in the school and they enjoy choosing new books. However, for many their ability to explain what they have read does not match their ability to decode words in the book. For most pupils, their progress steps in all subjects are small ones but they increase the longer they stay at Newlands Hey.
- The school arranges for suitable, external careers advice and guidance to be offered to pupils. The relevance of the curriculum and the close working relationships with familiar staff are key factors in preparing pupils for each stage of their education, training or employment. Changes in routines can cause stress for pupils and increase their level of anxiety. Leaders and staff equip pupils with strategies to cope and do all they can to reduce these pressures.

## School details

Unique reference number	141888
DfE registration number	340/6003
Inspection number	10092585

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	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Anthony Gearty
Chair	Rob Gillespie
Headteacher	Martin McMeel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,146–£76,154
Telephone number	0151 4809000
Website	<a href="http://newlandsheyschool.co.uk">newlandsheyschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@newlandsheyschool.org">admin@newlandsheyschool.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	5–7 October 2016

## Information about this school

- Newlands Hey is a small, special school that provides education for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. In addition, pupils often have other needs, such as speech, language and communication difficulties, dyslexia and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to meet the needs of up to 10 pupils between the ages of eight to 19 years. At the time of the inspection, some pupils were older than the upper age range set out in the school's registration. The DfE



has granted permission for these pupils to remain at the school until the end of the current academic year.

- Two pupils are registered as disabled and all have an EHC plan or are awaiting assessment.
- The school was first registered in 2014 and is part of the 'IDEM Living' company. The company owns several children's homes.
- Places are funded through local authorities.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- The school's last standard inspection was in November 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in all classes. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the chair of the board, other board members, the assistant manager of a care home, a local authority representative, an external consultant, the interim headteacher and staff.
- The inspector had telephone conversations with parents and with local authority representatives that place pupils at the school.
- The inspector met with pupils both formally and informally. He looked at pupils' work and the school's records of their progress. He also listened to individual pupils as they read in class.
- There were insufficient responses to generate a report from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector took account of two written responses from parents.
- The inspector took account of staff views following discussions with them. There were nine responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including those available on its website. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.

## Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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