

Inspection of New Direction

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

Inspection dates: 13–14 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

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?

The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are poor. Leaders have not followed the latest national guidance to make sure pupils are protected from harm. They have not made sure that the school site is safe. This has exposed pupils to unnecessary risks. Leaders have not ensured that they put into practice effectively their policies on health and safety and risk assessment.

Pupils say that they have strong relationships with staff. They say that staff understand them and care for them. This helps them to feel safe. Staff do not allow bullying.

The school's equine therapy approach helps pupils to improve their self-esteem and develop empathy. It helps pupils to understand why rules and responsibilities are important. There are inconsistencies in how staff manage pupils' behaviour. Staff expect pupils to behave better in the stables and yard area than in other parts of the school.

Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum meets pupils' individual needs. They do not consider what pupils do and do not know when planning what pupils will learn. Pupils do not receive specific help to fill the gaps in their knowledge and to achieve well.

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

The proprietor and other leaders have not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. The school does not meet standards that relate to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, the procedures for making recruitment checks on staff, and the school's curriculum, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils' academic achievement is not a high priority. Leaders' ambition for pupils' achievement is too low. Leaders have not made sure that pupils receive an acceptable quality of education across all subjects. Curriculum plans in the different subjects identify what pupils should learn. However, they do not always set out how and when pupils should develop their understanding of this knowledge. The plans do not take into account pupils' current academic ability or their individual needs. They do not provide teachers with information about how they should adapt what they are teaching in light of each pupil's learning needs. Leaders do not check that the provision pupils receive is appropriate. They do not check how well pupils are achieving.

Until recently, leaders have not checked what pupils know when they first arrive at the school. They have not considered how pupils' past school experiences may have resulted in them having gaps in their knowledge. Pupils do not receive enough support to help fill any gaps they may have. For example, there is no programme to support pupils who have gaps in their phonic or spelling knowledge. Leaders have

now introduced an assessment system to check what pupils know. However, they do not yet use this information to help provide a curriculum that meets pupils' needs.

While teachers have the necessary subject knowledge, their lessons do not regularly follow a planned sequence. Teachers do not adapt what they teach to meet pupils' individual needs and to ensure that all pupils know and remember more.

Leaders do not use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans effectively when planning to meet pupils' behaviour, welfare, or academic needs. They do not check the effectiveness of any support which pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive. Leaders have begun to review pupils' EHC plans to ensure that the curriculum is better suited to these pupils' needs and aspirations. However, this work is recent.

Pupils' behaviour varies. Staff manage some poor behaviour well. Yet, their expectations of how pupils should behave is inconsistent. For example, staff expect pupils to behave well when they are working with and around the horses. Pupils follow these expectations. However, staff do not maintain these high expectations of pupils' behaviour in other parts of the school. They do not manage behaviour in these other areas of the school as well as they do when pupils are around the horses. The school's policies for managing behaviour do not reflect what happens at the school.

The school's equine therapy approach is central to pupils' personal development. Through this, staff support pupils to become more confident and to improve their self-esteem. The school's curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) sets out how pupils will learn about democracy, respect and the rule of law. However, leaders do not check that teachers cover the school's PSHE curriculum in full. There are too few occasions for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures and to learn about the full range of protected characteristics. The careers advice and guidance for pupils is weak. Pupils do not receive independent guidance about their future options. Opportunities for pupils to undertake work experience are limited. Such opportunities do not enable pupils to explore fully their ambitions or career interests.

The proprietor has not ensured that the school and its facilities are appropriate and safe for pupils' use. Leaders do not test the school's fire alarms or fire bells, for example, to check that they work. They have not ensured that there are shower facilities available. They have not made sure that the hot water in the washing basins in the toilets is not too hot and does not pose a scalding risk to pupils.

Leaders have not ensured that, over time, they have maintained school buildings and grounds to an appropriate standard. For example, inspectors found building materials lying in the school grounds within pupils' reach. Leaders resolved some of the issues related to the school site during the inspection.

Leaders have not ensured that risk assessments identify all possible risks and provide appropriate guidance on how to mitigate against any such risks. The admission register does not contain all the necessary information.

The school's policy for safeguarding pupils is available to parents on request. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders' procedures for keeping pupils safe from harm do not follow the latest national guidance. Leaders do not keep detailed safeguarding records. For example, they do not record any follow-up actions they have taken in response to safeguarding concerns. Some policies related to safeguarding, including whistle-blowing, are not appropriate to the school's context. Not all staff know what to do if they have concerns about leaders or the school's proprietor.

Leaders have not undertaken all the necessary recruitment checks for new staff and supply staff before they begin to work at the school. Leaders do not know all the checks that must be completed and are unaware of how to undertake some additional checks. They have not recorded on the school's single central record all the checks that they have undertaken. Leaders have not assessed the risks posed by other adults who are present on site during the school day to attend a provision which the school offers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor has not made sure that pupils are kept safe from harm. They have not prioritised pupils' health, safety and welfare. Their actions to keep pupils safe and their recruitment checks on new staff and supply staff do not comply with the latest statutory guidance. They have not assessed the possible risks posed by other adults who are on site to attend provision that the school offers. These failings expose pupils to unnecessary risks. Leaders must ensure that their procedures for keeping pupils safe and for recruiting new staff and engaging with supply staff comply with the latest guidance.
- The proprietor has not maintained the school's facilities to an acceptable standard over time. Leaders do not undertake all the necessary checks to ensure that the facilities are safe and appropriate, including all necessary fire-safety checks and checks on the temperature of hot water. They have not ensured that they store any building materials safely out of pupils' reach and that the buildings are maintained appropriately. Inspectors found an exposed wire in a classroom that pupils were using. Such conditions pose a risk to pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders should ensure that the school's facilities consistently meet the independent school standards and provide a suitable environment for pupils to be safe and to learn.

- The proprietor and other leaders do not understand all the expectations of the independent school standards. They have not taken the necessary action to ensure that the school meets all the standards, including over time. Leaders must ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and experience so they can make sure that the school consistently meets all the standards.
- The school's curriculum does not meet pupils' needs. Leaders have not considered pupils' prior attainment or the gaps in pupils' knowledge when deciding what pupils should learn. This limits what pupils can achieve. Leaders must make sure that the school's curriculum meets all pupils' needs and that teachers understand how to follow and adapt this curriculum, so that pupils achieve well.
- Leaders do not use the information from pupils' EHC plans to plan appropriate support and provision. This can limit what pupils with SEND can achieve. Leaders must make sure that the provision for these pupils is appropriate to meet their behaviour, welfare, and academic needs.
- Staff do not consistently follow the school's policies for managing pupils' behaviour. Their expectation of pupils' behaviour is inconsistent. Leaders must make sure the school's behaviour policies are appropriate to the school's pupils, setting and ethos, and that staff follow these policies, demonstrating consistent expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- The school's curriculum for personal development is not broad enough. Leaders are not checking that pupils are covering all the content in the school's PSHE curriculum. This limits opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders must make sure that pupils have regular opportunities to learn about the different protected characteristics, faiths and cultures. They should ensure that pupils receive impartial careers advice and guidance.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	134395
DfE registration number	830/6027
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10201287
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Yvonne Evans
Headteacher	Yvonne Evans
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,025
Telephone number	01246 810456
Website	www.new-direction.org.uk
Email address	admin@new-direction.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 June 2017

Information about this school

- The school is operating beyond its registration agreement. The school is registered to admit pupils aged between 11 and 16. There are post-16 students currently on the school's roll. The school has exceeded the maximum number of pupils that they are registered to admit.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for pupils aged 11 to 16 with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils currently on the school's roll are pupils with SEND. All have EHC plans.
- The proprietor offers a provision on the same site for adults with learning difficulties.
- The school provides part-time alternative provision for pupils who attend other local schools.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school's headteacher is also the proprietor.
- The school is situated within a working equine yard.
- The previous standard inspection took place on 13 and 14 June 2017.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- We checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. This included touring the school's premises and looking at various documents and policies.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in our evaluation.
- We looked closely at the quality of education in English, history, PSHE and science. This involved talking with the leaders, visiting lessons, and viewing samples of pupils' work and curriculum documentation.
- We scrutinised various documents and records relating to safeguarding. We checked the single central record and the school's recruitment procedures.
- We held various meetings with the proprietor, senior leaders and other staff. We spoke with pupils and visited classrooms. We observed pupils in the school's equine yard and during social times.

- Inspectors considered the two responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire.

Inspection team

Helen Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephanie Innes-Taylor

Her 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.
- 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)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 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(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.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
- 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
- 9(a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour;
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 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].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
- 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and

- 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

■ 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–

- 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction.

■ 19(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–

- 19(2)(a) a person offered for supply by an employment business to the school only begins to work at the school if the proprietor has received–
 - 19(2)(a)(i) written notification from the employment business in relation to that person–
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(aa) that the checks referred to in paragraph 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vii) and (b) have been made to the extent relevant to that person;
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(dd) that, where that person is one for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, it or another employment business has obtained such further checks as appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
 - 19(2)(c) before a person offered for supply by an employment business begins work at the school the person's identity is checked by the proprietor of the school (irrespective of any such check carried out by the employment business before the person was offered for supply);
 - 19(2)(d) the proprietor, in the contract or other arrangements which the proprietor makes with any employment business, requires the employment business to provide–
 - 19(2)(d)(i) the notification referred to in paragraph (a)(i).

■ 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.

■ 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–

- 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications;
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
- 21(5) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to supply staff–
- 21(5)(a) whether written notification has been received from the employment business that–
 - 21(5)(a)(i) checks corresponding to those referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vi) and (vii) have been made to the extent relevant to any such person; and
 - 21(5)(a)(ii) an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check;
 - 21(5)(c) where written notification has been received from the employment business in accordance with a contract or other arrangements referred to in paragraph 19(2)(d) that it has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate, whether the employment business supplied a copy of the certificate to the school.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
- 23(1)(c) suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

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)(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)(d) following an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, a copy of the report of the inspection (if it has been sent to the proprietor) is published and maintained on the school’s internet website, and provided to the parents of each registered pupil, by any date specified by the body who conducted the inspection;
 - 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(1)(k) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the requirement to provide remote education in paragraph 2 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 Provision of Remote Education (England) Temporary Continuity Direction given on 30th September 2020 by the Secretary of State for Education are published and maintained on the school’s website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents(5).
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(g) a copy of the report of any inspection carried out under sections 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act or section 87(1) of the 1989 Act.

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.

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