

Inspection of Newfield School

Old Bank Lane, Off Shadsworth Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 2PW

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement

This school was last inspected five years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at school. They experience high-quality care. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about how well their children are supported.

Staff ensure that all pupils get the support that they need to move around the school or to access the curriculum as independently as possible. This builds pupils' confidence. Staff help pupils to 'find their voice' through speech or their ability to use communication aids.

Leaders have begun to develop a curriculum that meets the diverse special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of pupils at the school. However, leaders have insufficient oversight of this curriculum to ensure that it is making a difference to their achievement.

Leaders' expectations are not high enough for some pupils. Leaders have not ensured that all pupils, including those in the early years and the sixth form, achieve as well as they should.

Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Even though some pupils find it very difficult to manage their behaviour due to their SEND, all pupils are expected to try their best. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils to focus well during lessons.

Pupils benefit from an effective personal development programme. Bullying is very rare because staff provide highly effective support during social times. If incidents do happen, they are dealt with effectively. Staff remind pupils to use 'kind hands and kind words'.

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

Leaders and governors have begun to design a curriculum that meets the individual needs of pupils, including in the early years and sixth form. Their starting point is each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Leaders expect teachers to implement a rich curriculum for the diverse needs of the pupils in their class. However, leaders provide insufficient detail for staff about what they expect all pupils to learn. As a result, some teachers concentrate on the specific targets in the EHC plans and miss out the other key knowledge that their pupils need to gain. This negatively impacts on how well some pupils and students achieve.

Teachers work together in small groups to produce curriculum plans for pupils with similar needs, from the early years through to the sixth form. This results in varying degrees of success. For example, some teachers do not use assessment systems

effectively enough to check what pupils already know and understand before planning what they need to learn next.

As a result of uneven curriculum planning, not all pupils are prepared well enough for their next stages of education, employment or training. The curriculum does not help some pupils to learn all that they will need in later life. In addition to this, some pupils, and students in the sixth form, do not have sufficiently clear plans in place for what they will do when they leave school at the age of 19.

There are some inconsistencies in how well pupils build up their knowledge of reading from the early years onwards. Right from the early years to the sixth form, teachers bring stories to life for pupils. Pupils told inspectors about how much they enjoy listening to stories in the school's multi-sensory studio. Teachers generally know when pupils have developed their language and communication skills sufficiently well to begin to learn phonics. The phonics programme is working well for some pupils. They remember the phonics knowledge that they have learned. They practise these sounds frequently, reading books that are carefully matched to the phonics programme.

Conversely, some staff do not place enough importance on the development of secure phonics knowledge. Similarly, not enough staff know how to deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Consequently, on occasions, some pupils who are ready to learn to read miss out. This limits how well they can communicate or access other aspects of the curriculum.

Leaders ensure that most pupils make strong progress in how well they communicate their opinions and wishes. Staff are adept at finding out what communication system works best for individual pupils.

There are well-established routines in place. This ensures that pupils know exactly what is expected of them throughout the day, whether this is taking an active part in lessons or in social activities. Leaders are skilled in identifying any additional SEND needs that pupils may have. They enable pupils to overcome many of the barriers that they face.

Leaders have ensured that pupils access a wide range of experiences that broaden their understanding of the wider world. This has been especially important as many pupils have not accessed enrichment activities during the last year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are now embracing the activities that leaders provide, such as fund raising or taking part in 'take over week'. Through these and other high-quality activities, pupils develop their understanding of being a good citizen. They follow school or class rules with ease. Pupils speak up for the rights of others when they can see inequality happening.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties. They are beginning to gain an increasing oversight of leaders' work to improve the school. They are cognisant of staff's workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors are clear about the vulnerabilities facing the school's pupils. They ensure that staff are well trained in how to keep pupils safe.

Staff are skilled at identifying potential safeguarding risks. They take swift and effective action when pupils' actions might put themselves or others at increased risk.

Staff use leaders' recording systems well to ensure that all relevant personnel are kept abreast of any recent safeguarding incidents or concerns. Leaders use this information effectively to make sure that pupils get any additional support they need. They work closely with other agencies to meet the complex needs of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- From the early years to the sixth form, leaders' plans for the curriculum are at an early stage of development. Consequently, some teachers do not identify what pupils need to learn unless it is specifically written in a pupil's EHC plan. As a result, pupils do not experience a consistently good quality of education and they do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders need to finalise and embed their plans for all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders and governors do not have enough oversight of the quality of education across the school. They have not provided sufficient training or support for staff in delivering a high-quality curriculum, particularly in the teaching of phonics. This means that pupils across the school do not build up their knowledge consistently well, including in reading. Leaders need to ensure that there are high expectations for pupils' achievement across the school in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils are well enough prepared for adulthood. Planning for education, employment or training is often left too late. This causes additional anxiety for older pupils and their parents. Leaders need to ensure that transition planning begins well in advance of pupils coming to the end of compulsory education.
- Some teachers do not make effective use of the assessment information available about each pupil to plan what they need to learn next. This means that some pupils do not learn the key knowledge that they need. Leaders need to make sure

that all teachers are well trained to use assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

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 school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	132051
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10199636
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sara Barr-Frost
Headteacher	Rik Robinson
Website	www.newfield.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 February 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the leadership arrangements. A new headteacher and a new chair of governors have been appointed. There has also been a restructuring of the senior leadership team.
- The school has significantly increased its number on roll. The school now also provides education for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder at another school nearby.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. They deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The impact of the pandemic was discussed with school leaders. This was taken into account by inspectors in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school, including the two deputy headteachers. They spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the school's central record of staff and visitors, staff training records, records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, language and communication, mathematical development, physical development and personal, social, health and economic education. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. In addition, inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. They also looked at several case studies of pupils across the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school. They also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, and the free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Eastwood	Her Majesty's Inspector

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