

Inspection of New Mills School

Church Lane, New Mills, High Peak, Derbyshire SK22 4NR

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

New Mills School is a small and welcoming school where 'everyone gets on with everyone'. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school. Staff have high expectations of pupils. There is an ambitious curriculum in place. Teachers do not always provide enough support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some pupils cannot access the curriculum as readily as others.

Pupils benefit from the recently adopted 'ready to learn' policy. Behaviour in lessons is calm, and teachers create positive learning environments. Pupils said that although racist and homophobic language is not tolerated, sexist language can sometimes go unchallenged. Pupils feel safe in school. They trust teachers to deal with bullying. There is an active Pride club in the school and pupils value this provision.

The new personal development curriculum broadens pupils' learning. Some pupils are not yet secure in their understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy.

There is an increasing number of extra-curricular clubs at the school. Pupils experience wider opportunities, such as residential visits and trips abroad.

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

The curriculum is well planned and sequenced in most subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use a range of activities to support pupils with their learning. Sometimes, teachers do not give enough consideration to the knowledge they want pupils to gain. Leaders have introduced a new approach to assessment which enables teachers to check whether pupils know and remember more over time. Staff welcome this new system and its goal.

Leaders have identified pupils who require additional support. However, they have not ensured that teachers have the information they need to support all pupils with SEND. Some of these pupils have gaps in their learning. Not all staff help pupils with SEND to develop their knowledge over time. Leaders have recently introduced measures to ensure that all pupils with SEND have their needs met.

Many younger pupils access the library during break and lunchtime. It is a warm and welcoming space. Leaders are developing systems to support pupils who need extra help with their reading.

Pupils learn about different careers and how to prepare for the next stage of their education or training. However, some pupils would like further guidance about GCSE option choices. Pupils are beginning to benefit from the newly introduced personal development programme. Pupils do not currently have a clear understanding of the protected characteristics. They would like to learn more about different faiths and cultures.

Leaders have adopted a new approach to behaviour management. Behaviour in classrooms is calm and positive. Staff feel supported. They said that behaviour management systems are working in lessons. Pupils said that not all staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. Around the school site, some pupils engage in disruptive behaviour.

Not all pupils attend school as often as they should. Leaders do not yet have robust systems in place to record and monitor attendance. Some pupils are missing out on their education. Some pupils do not arrive punctually at the start of the day. Leaders use assemblies to encourage pupils to improve their attendance. This has not yet resulted in significant improvement.

Staff at the school feel well supported and that leaders are considerate of their workload. Teachers who are new to the profession value the support and guidance provided to help them in the early stages of their careers. Governors share the headteacher's vision for the school. They are enthusiastic about improving pupils' experiences. Governors do not always hold leaders to account rigorously.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe in school. Staff know the signs that suggest a child may be at risk of harm. They know how to report any concerns and do so promptly.

Safeguarding records do not always detail the actions that staff have taken in response to concerns about a pupil's welfare. Information is recorded on different systems.

Until recently, leaders have not always carried out robust checks on the welfare of pupils who attend alternative, off-site provision.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential risks. Teachers ensure that pupils understand what it means to be safe and how to protect themselves online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always have sufficient information about the needs of pupils with SEND. This means that teachers cannot always support these pupils in accessing the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the necessary information and strategies to meet the needs of all pupils.

- Not all pupils attend school as often as they should. Therefore, pupils miss out on accessing the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that there are clear monitoring systems in place and take effective action to improve pupils' attendance.
- While pupils are safe in school, there are weaknesses in the school's record-keeping. This means that communication and actions taken to support pupils are not always well documented. Leaders should ensure that the planned new system to record and monitor safeguarding issues is implemented effectively.
- Systems to check on the well-being of pupils who attend alternative off-site provision have not always been robust. Leaders have introduced a new strategy to check pupils' safety and well-being. They should ensure that these systems are embedded and consistently followed.
- There is a lack of clarity regarding leadership roles. Some leaders are overloaded. This means that oversight of some areas is ineffective. Leaders should ensure that leadership roles and responsibilities are clear and manageable.

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.

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	112936
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10242225
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained Community School
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	680
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Inman
Headteacher	Heather Watts
Website	www.newmillsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school appointed a new headteacher in September 2021.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers for some of its pupils.
- 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 qualifications and apprenticeships

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, physical education, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, the

inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for behaviour, personal development, safeguarding, continuing professional development, careers, alternative provision and the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors observed break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils across the school to discuss their experiences in school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. She reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's improvement plans and governor minutes.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body.

Inspection team

Roxanne Fearn-Davies, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Roche	Ofsted Inspector
Adrian Rollins	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Anderson	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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