

Inspection of a good school: New Directions

The Storey Centre, Woodman Street, North Woolwich, London E16 2LS

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2022

Outcome

New Directions continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Some pupils join this pupil referral unit for a short time, until they return to a mainstream school. The majority, however, arrive in Year 11. They usually remain at the school to complete their GCSEs and other qualifications.

Leaders have a clear vision to ensure that pupils settle into life at the school very quickly and re-engage in learning. Leaders strive to make sure that pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. Leaders work closely with the local authority and local secondary schools to help pupils reintegrate successfully into another maintained secondary school where possible.

Pupils are happy at the school. They prefer the smaller class sizes and they value the help they get to learn how to manage their emotions and engage with lessons. Pupils make friends during their time at the school. They often feel more settled than at their previous schools.

The school has a calm, orderly and safe environment. If pupils get distracted from their learning, teachers and other adults help them to focus again and complete their work. Pupils are safe. Pupils trust staff to deal with their concerns quickly. Should bullying occur, leaders deal with it effectively.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They have designed a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Subject leaders have thought carefully about what to teach and when. This is also the case for pupils who may only be at the school for a short time. Pupils who stay longer are supported to gain the qualifications and skills they need for the next stages of their lives.

When pupils join the school, leaders assess their knowledge and identify any gaps. Teachers use this information well to address pupils' bespoke learning needs. Teachers

check regularly to make sure that pupils have remembered important knowledge before moving on. Teachers have expertise in the subjects that they teach.

Some pupils start at the school without being able to read fluently. Leaders have introduced a structured phonics approach to teach reading. Those pupils who need to catch up benefit from individual sessions from a trained coach. However, not all teachers have completed their phonics training. This means that pupils are not supported consistently well in all lessons when they are required to read. As a result, some pupils do not gain reading fluency and confidence as quickly as they could.

Leaders have designed the curriculum so that pupils receive personal, social and health education (PSHE) through other subjects. Pupils are also taught about important issues, such as tolerance and respect for others, during assemblies and in individual sessions. However, leaders have not clarified who is responsible for setting out the different parts of the PSHE programmes. This means that individual teachers sometimes teach what and when they decide. As a result, pupils are not consistently taught the same content as their peers.

Pupils join the school because they need extra help to regulate their behaviours and emotions. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum supports pupils' emotional and social development as well as their academic progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and nurturing. Leaders place a high priority on this and invest in staff professional development and support. Staff, therefore, implement the school's emotional support and behaviour management strategies consistently well. Staff engage with individual pupils calmly, and any problems are quickly sorted out. As a result, pupils learn to regulate their emotions better over time. These improved attitudes help pupils to gain new knowledge and understanding effectively.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about tolerance and respect for other people's lifestyles and points of view. They have opportunities to experience a wide range of activities and visits. For example, this term, the whole school was involved in a project at Thorpe Park related to Black History Month.

Staff are very positive about working at the school. They feel that their workload is manageable and that leaders take their well-being into account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a good understanding of the extra risks that pupils at this school may face. They ensure that staff are trained in these contextual issues and how to spot signs that pupils might be at risk.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, including the police and children's services. They make referrals appropriately and seek advice when necessary.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They learn about the dangers of gangs, online safety and the harm caused by substance abuse. Leaders keep detailed records of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding issues. They analyse these to identify any possible links between them.

Leaders follow the proper procedures for vetting candidates' suitability to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified clearly what pupils should be taught and when in PSHE lessons. This means that pupils are not consistently taught the same content as their peers. Leaders should ensure that teachers have sufficient guidance on the exact content and the order in which to teach the PSHE programme.
- Some pupils who join the school are not fluent in their reading. However, some teachers lack the necessary expertise to teach phonics effectively. As a result, the support for pupils is inconsistent. Leaders should make sure that all staff gain expertise so that the programme can be implemented effectively across the school, supporting all pupils to read with confidence and fluency.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2012.

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	134919
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	10242147
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Headteacher	Kirsten MacLeod
Website	www.newdirections.newham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the head of school. They also met with the chair of governors, one other governor and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, PSHE, and art and design. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.

- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, the inspectors considered how pupils are kept safe. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks on staff.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and they observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff about safeguarding, behaviour and their workload. Inspectors also took account of the responses from pupils, staff, parents and carers to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Francis Gonzalez

Ofsted Inspector

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