

Inspection of New Barn School

Guildford Road, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex RH12 3PQ

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where expectations are high, but where pupils feel confident that they can 'go at my own pace'. Most pupils are very positive about New Barn. They feel that staff truly understand their barriers to learning and the additional anxieties that they often harbour. Inspectors found that teachers work hard to pitch learning at the right level for all. When pupils struggle, staff recognise the signs quickly. They are also skilled at refocusing pupils when a lack of confidence and self-belief hinders learning.

Students in the sixth form are equally positive. Those that have attended the school longer shared that they feel safe here because of the way staff communicate with students and also amongst themselves. Students shared that they feel free from any form of bullying because there are lots of 'eyes', as well as 'people who truly listen' at this school. However, they did acknowledge that friendships do need to be worked on occasionally.

For many pupils, attending this school comes as a relief after struggling in other settings or not attending school at all. One secondary-age pupil reflected that she knew she was, 'In the right school with the right teachers.' Others shared her sentiment.

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

This is a good school that has undergone much change in the recent past. Some of the change is still in progress. A new headteacher has been appointed and will join the school full time from January 2023. An acting headteacher is in place until then. Two additional assistant headteacher posts have recently been created. A new deputy headteacher was appointed at the start of the school year. Despite the turbulence, leaders have ensured that pupils across the school continue to access a curriculum that meets their needs well. This is also true in the school's small sixth form where students study for a range of meaningful qualifications.

Parents are very positive about the school. Those who replied to Ofsted's parent survey were happy about the range of subjects their children can study. Although some concerns were expressed about recent changes in leadership, all who replied would recommend the school to another parent. Additionally, much of the positivity from parents centred on the quality of the curriculum and the high expectations of staff.

Classroom visits found parents' opinions of the expertise of staff to be well founded. Teachers know pupils well. They plan learning that takes into account pupils' varying individual needs. Lessons that are taught to different pupil groups are delivered in subtly different ways to ensure that they engage successfully with the subject matter. Support staff are also used effectively. Often, this is to help pupils to focus when their resilience wanes, but mainly to ensure that pupils understand what they are learning and why.

Teachers respond to pupils' questions and misconceptions successfully in the 'moment' within classrooms. Inspectors witnessed staff in all phases of the school responding well to the 'here and now', including when pupils needed further support or clarification. Less clear is the school's ongoing assessment of pupils' progress over time. The school's current system is used inconsistently and does not always help staff to design learning based on what pupils already know and can do. Leaders are aware of this, but more needs to be done to strengthen this aspect of provision.

Pupils enjoy their mathematics and English lessons. Older pupils and students in the sixth form are entered for GCSE qualifications if appropriate. Others study successfully for functional skills qualifications that enable them to access college or further education. Younger pupils enjoy their phonics sessions. Staff have made developing pupils' vocabulary a priority across the curriculum. However, the school's work to promote reading for pleasure is less well developed. Pupils in the primary phase do not read as often as they might. One group lamented that they do not read or share books with the class teacher as much as they would like. Despite there being library areas in both primary and secondary phases of the school, leaders know there is more to do to promote books and reading.

Pupils' personal development is promoted successfully in all phases of the school. Much of this work is covered as part of the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. This includes relationships and sex education and is delivered as part of the school's learning for life (LFL) curriculum. LFL is delivered in an age-appropriate way, including in the sixth form where students access specific life-skills lessons, including the use of public transport or creating and cooking their own menus. Aspects of the programme include safe use of social media and the internet. Staff are also adept at designing bespoke pieces of work to address real-life problems when they arise.

The board of directors is very aware of the day-to-day workings of the school. One director is presently leading the school pending the arrival of a newly appointed substantive headteacher. Their strategic direction of the school is successful. Well-founded plans to increase the size of the school are in development. These will allow pupils to benefit from an even richer curriculum offer while maintaining the integrity of the 'small-school ethos' that New Barn benefits from.

A new local governing board was formed early this year. This includes representatives of parents and staff. The intention is that the local board will provide a layer of governance to support and challenge school leaders while leaving the directors to have a more strategic overview. The board is not yet fully functional. This needs to be a focus for the school and its wider community as a new senior leadership team becomes established and starts to build on the school's current successes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well informed. They understand what to look for when protecting the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Staff have confidence in leaders to respond to their concerns. They also understand that small things could indicate potential problems and are not afraid to act when they need to.

Processes to recruit staff are sound. Checks on adults at the school are carried out in a timely manner. The culture to help and protect pupils is strong. The school's directors recognise the importance of creating a calm environment where pupils thrive, but where the profile of safeguarding is always high.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Reading and the love of books and the written word are not as developed as might be expected. Recent changes have left the school without an overt, school-wide strategy to promote reading for pleasure. Pupils who used to enjoy reading daily with staff are not being immersed in the high-quality texts they once were. Sessions where pupils drop everything and read do not currently meet the hunger for books and their favourite authors that some pupils feel. Leaders should raise the profile of reading in all its forms, especially with engaging texts. This will enable pupils to share their enjoyment of reading with their teachers and their peers, as well as ensure that their lives are enriched by the widest possible exposure to the vast range of enjoyable and exciting books available to them.
- Systems to assess pupils' progress through the curriculum are inconsistent between different subjects and across different phases of the school. Leaders should review current systems to monitor pupils' progress over time. This will allow teachers to have a better understanding of what pupils know and can do. It will enable leaders to assess the progress pupils are making through the school's intended curriculum. It will also help pupils to know what they need to do to improve.
- Arrangements for governance are evolving. A new local governing board was established early in 2022. The rationale for the local governing board is sensible, with the intention of introducing a layer of governance with a degree of independence between school leaders and the board of directors. However, recruitment to the local governing board has been slow and some members have already left. Directors should re-prioritise establishing the local governing board so that their intended model of governance becomes firmly established and fully effective.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143400
DfE registration number	938/6002
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10243553
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Treehouse Educare Ltd
Chair	Graham Baker
Headteacher	Geoff Draper (Acting headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,000 to £65,000
Telephone number	01403 289 606
Website	www.newbarnschool.co.uk
Email address	info@treehouseeducare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 May 2018

Information about this school

- New Barn School is an independent special school for girls and boys with special educational needs and/or disabilities between seven and 19 years of age. All pupils are placed by local authorities and have education, health and care plans related to autism spectrum disorder and associated difficulties. Many have been out of education for long periods before joining the school.
- The school's previous substantive headteacher left at Easter 2022. The current acting headteacher is one of the school's four directors. A new headteacher has been appointed and will join the school in January 2023. A new deputy headteacher took up their position in September 2022.
- The last standard inspection took place in May 2018. In August 2019, the school had a material change inspection after which the Department for Education (DfE) approved an increase in capacity from 30 to 68 pupils. In September 2020, the DfE commissioned an emergency inspection prompted by information received by the DfE regarding another provision on the same site as the school. All standards that were checked during this inspection were found to be met. The school had a further material change inspection in February 2022 after which the DfE approved an increase in capacity from 68 to 80 pupils.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with three directors, including the chair of the proprietor body. He also talked on the telephone to a representative of a local authority which places pupils at the school.
- Inspectors talked informally and formally to different groups and individual pupils, as well as students in the sixth form, to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and science. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and

talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time.

- Inspectors toured the school's premises and accommodation. They checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff linked to the independent school standards.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- The lead inspector considered the views of parents submitted through the Ofsted Parent View survey. Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gareth Flemington

His Majesty's Inspector

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