

Inspection of New School Canterbury

New School Canterbury, Garlinge Green Road, Garlinge Green, Canterbury, Kent CT4 5RU

Inspection dates:

18 to 20 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this school. Parents who have chosen a Steiner Waldorf education are pleased that their children can receive the type of education they prefer. Pupils make the most of the outside environment in their learning and play, and feel nurtured and cared for. They care deeply about their environment and what they can do to sustain and protect it.

Children in the kindergarten play and work together well alongside their friends. Older pupils behave sensibly around the school and in class. Only occasionally, when their work is not enabling them to build the knowledge they need, does the quality of their engagement decline. They become distracted and inattentive but never disrespectful. There is very little bullying and pupils are confident that adults will help if they cannot sort it out themselves.

Pupils enjoy their walks in the local area and trips, such as a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. The oldest pupils take part in a residential Olympic experience with pupils from other schools following the same curriculum.

Leaders have been partially successful at raising academic expectations, including in reading. However, they have allowed their focus to drift away from safeguarding and health and safety. As a result, pupils are not as safe as they and their parents think they are.

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

There is too little leadership capacity to support the headteacher. Although the headteacher has managed to make some improvements to the quality of education, she has not been able to maintain a strong safeguarding culture. Health and safety and fire safety requirements have not been met or maintained.

Since the former chair resigned over a year ago, the trustees have lacked leadership. There has been no chair for over a year and the majority of trustees resigned when this inspection was announced. The few remaining trustees still in post during the inspection have good intentions and relevant skills. However, they do not have the knowledge and experience of safeguarding and the independent school standards that are required. Trustees have not ensured that leaders and staff have been held to account and, as a result, the school is not meeting all of its statutory duties or the independent school standards.

The school's curriculum is designed to develop pupils' 'heads, hearts and hands'. The younger children in the kindergarten are exempted from many of the learning requirements of the early years foundation stage. These children soon become accustomed to the homely nature of their classroom and the daily and weekly rhythm of the class. They take part in daily routines such as snack time and play with real purpose using the natural materials inside or in the ample outdoor environment. They enjoy listening to and joining in with songs and rhymes.

Older pupils in the kindergarten who are of statutory school age take on extra responsibilities such as helping to serve the porridge, honey and fruit tea at snack time. However, their curriculum does not vary substantially from that of the younger children in the setting or, for example, match the ambition of the national curriculum. There are missed opportunities to develop vocabulary and understanding through discussions with adults.

There has been a clear focus on improving reading. However, its success has been mixed. In Class 1 and 2 (Year 2 and 3), pupils learn to form their letters and begin simple phonics techniques. Despite receiving training, teachers do not model the sounds that letters make correctly. This hinders the progress of pupils who are new to reading. There are some pupils in these classes who are already confident readers, so the teaching of basic phonics is not appropriate given their starting points. As a result, some pupils do not pay attention and their behaviour is not as good. Nevertheless, despite the slow start, pupils are fluent and confident readers by the time they reach class 5 (Year 6).

As pupils move through the school, they enjoy learning about history, geography and religion through the main lesson each day. Pupils are often able to recall previous learning in these areas well. In German lessons, pupils learn well and on occasions achieve beyond the expectations of the national curriculum. However, pupils' learning in mathematics runs behind what may be expected in the national curriculum. For example, pupils in Class 4 (Year 5) are only just starting to solve problems with money and simple fractions. There is some practical science teaching in Class 5 (Year 6) which helps to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.

Teachers work hard to identify and meet the needs of the few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils ensure that everyone is included and gets along with each other well. Older pupils take on additional responsibilities as ambassadors. There are not currently any extra-curricular clubs or activities due to a lack of demand.

Staff are very positive about working at the school and about the support they receive. There are useful professional development opportunities, including mentoring for teachers who are new to their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Staff do not understand the latest statutory safeguarding guidance. The school safeguarding policy was updated when the inspection was announced without consulting trustees or staff, who were then unaware of the changes. The policy has many errors and refers to documents that do not exist. Staff do not know how to report concerns about a child if the headteacher is not on the school site.

Although the single central record of recruitment checks meets requirements, the recruitment procedures for a member of staff due to join the school imminently are extremely weak.

The remaining trustees have no oversight of safeguarding procedures, or the training staff have received. None of the current trustees are trained in safer recruitment.

Despite the significant risks perpetuated by these substantial weaknesses in safeguarding procedures, pupils say they feel safe at school. Although they do not use modern technology in school, pupils who use it at home know how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The board of trustees are no longer functioning adequately. As a result, there is no proprietorial oversight of the school, and leaders are not being supported or held to account. A number of independent school standards are not being met. Remaining trustees should take immediate action to strengthen the trust board and ensure that robust governance procedures are in place.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Staff do not have an adequate understanding of the most recent statutory guidance and were not aware of the latest school safeguarding policy. They do not know how to report concerns if the only designated safeguarding leader is not on the school site. Safer recruitment procedures are not robust. As a result, pupils are potentially at risk of harm. Leaders should take immediate action to ensure that staff are trained to understand and implement the latest statutory safeguarding guidance, the school safeguarding policy and local safeguarding procedures.
- There is a lack of leadership capacity in the school, with much falling to the headteacher to complete. As a result, statutory requirements and independent school standards go unmet. Any improvements in the quality of education are fragile and rely on external support from mentors and advisers. Trustees should take immediate action to strengthen the leadership of the school, to ensure that pupils are safe, all statutory requirements are met, and the quality of education improves.
- There is a lack of ambition in the curriculum for the youngest pupils of statutory school age in the Kindergarten and Classes 1 and 2. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. Sometimes, their behaviour is not good because they are bored and not challenged. Furthermore, some teachers do not have the subject knowledge to teach the planned curriculum in early reading accurately. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is challenging for all pupils and that teachers have the subject knowledge to teach it accurately.

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	147331
DfE registration number	886/6158
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10243559
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Number of part-time pupils	14
Proprietor	New School Canterbury Ltd
Chair	Vacant
Headteacher	Beth Cuenco
Annual fees	£8,109 to £9,240
Telephone number	01227 730067
Website	www.newschoolcanterbury.co.uk
Email address	info@newschoolcanterbury.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 January 2020

Information about this school

- The school's first standard inspection took place in January 2020, when the overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate and not all the independent school standards were found to be met. A subsequent progress monitoring inspection took place in July 2021, where all of the independent school standards were found to be met.
- The school offers a Waldorf (also known as Steiner) curriculum. The kindergarten comprises children aged three to six. There are three further classes. Class 1 and 2 which comprises national curriculum Years 2 and 3, Class 3 and 4 (Year 4 and 5) and Class 5 (Year 6).
- The school's proprietor is New School Canterbury Limited. The organisation has charitable status and is run by a board of trustees. The board of trustees is responsible for providing governance for the school. However, the trustees have not had a chair since October 2021 and the majority of trustees resigned when this inspection was announced.
- The school has an approved exemption from some aspects of the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- The school does not use 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher throughout the inspection. Inspectors held meetings with staff and pupils, and talked to pupils informally around the school.
- The lead inspector held an online meeting with two remaining trustees and the former chair of trustees.
- Inspectors explored the quality of education with a focus on reading, mathematics, history and German. Inspectors met with teachers, visited lessons, spoke to pupil about their learning and looked at examples of their work. Inspectors also visited the kindergarten.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking to members of staff and pupils. They also met with the

headteacher (who is the designated safeguarding lead) to examine her knowledge, records and actions. Inspectors scrutinised records, including those relating to the safer recruitment of staff, health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment.

- Inspectors looked at the school's website, toured the school premises, examined policies and associated documentation, and spoke to staff to consider if the school meets the independent school standards.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through consideration of responses to Ofsted's Parent View and accompanying free-text comments.
- The views of staff were captured through conversations and scrutiny of the responses to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kathryn Moles

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

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.
- 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].

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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