

New School Canterbury

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

Inspection date

27 April 2023

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7–7(b), 11–12, 14–16(b), 25, 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous standard inspection, safeguarding was judged to be ineffective. Reasons for this included that staff did not understand the latest statutory safeguarding guidance. Safer recruitment procedures were not robust.
- Leaders' action plan to tackle these weaknesses indicated a range of steps that had already been taken, alongside further steps to strengthen safeguarding arrangements. These included, for example, additional training, engagement with external specialists and an audit of the school's safeguarding records.
- There has been a significant amount of safeguarding training for leaders, staff and trustees since the previous inspection. Staff have clearly benefited from the increased focus on safeguarding and the additional training. Leaders and staff say that they feel much more confident about safeguarding, and this is evident when speaking with them. Staff speak knowledgeably about how to identify and act on concerns, referring specifically to recognised good practice in terms of how to record and report issues.
- Leaders have commissioned external audits of safeguarding arrangements from suitably qualified people. The outcomes of these reviews have been favourable, both in terms of findings and in contributing to leaders' better understanding and practice. The school has a fully trained designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a deputy DSL in place.
- Records show that leaders and staff are vigilant in regard to pupils' welfare. They identify pertinent, small indicators that may be of concern or that could become concerning if they were part of a bigger picture. Although there is much improvement, leaders know that there is still more to do to ensure that records are of a consistently high quality. When regularly reviewing the records, the DSL and/or headteacher give feedback to staff as necessary.
- If in doubt, leaders rightly consult with external safeguarding partners. They are keen to act on advice and 'get it right'. The growing culture is not one of avoidance of difficult conversations, but a keener sense of, and acceptance that, 'it could happen here'.
- The headteacher, DSL and trustees have received suitable safer recruitment training. Records since the previous inspection show that appropriate recruitment procedures

have been followed and the necessary checks on the suitability of adults made. The new safeguarding trustee brings knowledge and expertise in the field from her professional role. The safeguarding policy takes account of relevant guidance and is published on the school's website.

- Leaders have recently revisited their risk assessments and procedures relating to morning 'drop-off' arrangements and the procedures that staff, parents and carers should follow if pupils are late. Leaders have made sure that parents are aware of these. Staff are on hand from the time the school gates open, and teachers greet their pupils at the classroom doors. Suitable attendance registers are maintained, with prompt action taken if any pupil is unexpectedly absent.
- The school commissions external specialist companies to carry out and oversee important health and fire safety arrangements. A specialist, external fire risk assessment in February 2023 concluded the overall risk rating to be 'low'. Leaders had already taken critical remedial action that had been previously identified, including a substantial investment in fire doors for the school's theatre.
- The school's current health, safety and risk assessment policies predate the previous inspection. However, the capacity for making the necessary health and safety checks regularly has been strengthened now, with more people responsible for specific aspects.
- All of the independent school standards (the standards) that were checked in this part, together with the associated paragraphs in parts 5 and 6, are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous standard inspection, the board of trustees was not functioning adequately. As a result, there was no proprietorial oversight of the school, and leaders were not being supported or held to account. There was a lack of leadership capacity in the school. Not all of the independent school standards were met. The action plan included a range of proposals to strengthen leadership capacity at trustee and school level.
- In its current form, the school has had a turbulent and disrupted short history. Except at headteacher level, leadership has lacked consistency and stability. Since it opened, the school has received two full standard inspections and was judged 'inadequate' at both. Although the school did meet the standards that were checked during a progress monitoring inspection following the first standard inspection, leaders were not able to sustain this success.
- The headteacher reports that she was not surprised by the findings of the previous inspection. She admits to feeling overwhelmed previously by the different demands on her time and being without sufficient leadership capacity around her. This situation has improved, but there is further to go. The school has created a new 'operations manager' position and has appointed to this role. However, the headteacher is clear that further support is needed for managing the site, the office and administration. Systems are new, are not fully embedded and thus still have a degree of fragility.
- Leaders have valued the visits the school has received from a local authority early years and childcare improvement adviser. The adviser has reviewed a range of areas, including

welfare and safety. Their feedback has served to support the improvements leaders have made and affirmed areas of existing stronger practice.

- The school's action plan included the appointment of an external school improvement partner to support and challenge the school. An experienced consultant has made two visits to the school and had conversations with the headteacher by telephone. However, at the time of this inspection, the role, status and extent of the engagement of this consultant as an ongoing school improvement partner had not been established. The understanding of what had been agreed varied between different people, and there was no formal agreement in place. There was, however, clear consensus that the school remains in need of this sort of support.
- In addition to tackling compliance issues, the appointment of the operations manager has enabled the headteacher to focus on the other areas for improvement that were previously identified. The oldest children in Kindergarten are receiving an increasing proportion of dedicated time being taught away from the younger children in a 'transition' group. Leaders and staff have been looking carefully at what these pupils are taught to ensure that it is suitable developmentally. There has been further training in phonics for staff. Class 1 pupils are learning sounds with enthusiasm, confidence and accuracy and using their blending skills to read.
- The trustee board is very new. The longest serving trustee had been in place for just over six months at the time of this inspection. Four out of five existing trustees have joined the board since the previous standard inspection. Trustees bring a range of experience, expertise and skills that are already proving a significant asset. They have achieved much in a very short space of time. For example, trustees have made focused visits to the school as part of their developing role in holding school leaders to account. Under the new chair, who has only been in this role for one meeting, the trustee meeting and reporting structure has already started to evolve. However, it is still very early days to see the sustained impact on ensuring that all of the standards and associated requirements are consistently met.
- The new chair is realistic about what has been achieved so far and what still needs to be established. Work to recruit a sufficient number of trustees to increase the likelihood of giving the school the quality, consistency and stability of governance that it has previously lacked is still under way. The chair and headteacher know that they need to shift their attention to creating a new school development plan to replace the existing action plan.
- Leaders have been prompt to take some significant steps forward to stabilise and improve the school. However, given the school's track record since it opened, it is too soon to judge that all the requirements are consistently met. Some of the improvements are very new and not yet established or embedded. Leaders themselves have identified further steps needed to strengthen leadership capacity. Weighing all of this up, the standard in this part remains unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	147331
DfE registration number	886/6158
Inspection number	10284190

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Waldorf (Steiner) School
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Number of part-time pupils	11
Proprietor	New School Canterbury Ltd
Chair	Sion Thaysen
Headteacher	Beth Cuenco
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,109 to £9,240
Telephone number	01227 730067
Website	www.newschoolcanterbury.co.uk
Email address	info@newschoolcanterbury.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	18 to 20 October 2022

Information about this school

- The school offers a Waldorf (also known as Steiner) curriculum. The Kindergarten comprises children aged three to six years. There are three further classes. Class 1 and Class 2 comprise national curriculum Years 2 and 3, Class 3 and Class 4 (Years 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.

- 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.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in October 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection in October 2022.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the school's October 2022 standard inspection.
- Following the previous inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) required the school to prepare a statutory action plan. Ofsted evaluated the action plan on 14 February 2023. The DfE wrote to the school to accepting the plan on 24 March 2023.
- The inspector had meetings with the headteacher, the operations manager and two teachers. He had a series of telephone calls, speaking with the chair of trustees, the safeguarding trustee and an education consultant who had recently visited the school. The inspector also spoke informally with other members of staff and pupils as he toured the school and made a short visit to a phonics lesson. He reviewed policies, records and other documents related to the standards that were previously unmet.
- The inspection was conducted without notice.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

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.

The school now meets the following requirements of the 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.

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)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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