

Inspection of Derrymount School

Churchmoor Lane, Arnold, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG5 8HN

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Some pupils have poor experiences in school. Sometimes, pupils are detained in a secure 'chill-out' room against their will. Leaders said this is to protect pupils from themselves and others. Some pupils said that being placed in this room is very distressing.

Staff routinely lock classroom doors. Leaders say this is to protect those inside from other pupils who display challenging behaviours. When pupils struggle with their emotions, staff do not always help them to manage their own behaviour appropriately. Staff are too reliant on short-term methods, such as physical restraint and the chill-out room for some pupils. These strategies are sometimes harmful to some pupils' dignity, safety and emotional well-being.

Older pupils often use racist and misogynistic language towards others. They say it is 'just banter' that goes unchallenged by adults. Girls are frequently subject to sexist and derogatory language from boys. Consequently, girls do not always like being at school.

Pupils enjoy taking part in 'adventure schools', work experience and activity afternoons. They like the choice of clubs on offer, and enjoy cooking and art.

Sixth-form students are proud to be treated 'more like adults' and value having 'more freedom around school'. They have ambitious plans for their futures. Some want to go to college and others want to go to work. They are proud of their work experience and say that the sixth form supports them in preparation for their next stage in life.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance are not taking effective steps to support pupils to behave well. Leaders do not monitor the frequency of, and reasons behind, poor behaviour. This means that they are unable to respond to support, with precision, pupils' behavioural needs. Leaders do not routinely review and update pupils' risk assessments each time a pupil is restrained and placed in the chill-out room. There is little evidence to demonstrate that the use of restraint and the chill-out room is always in pupils' best interests or having a positive effect on pupils' behaviour.

The quality of education across subjects and across the two sites, including in the sixth form, is variable.

Leaders have prioritised developing pupils' love of reading. Teachers have developed reading areas in classrooms and in the outdoor 'quad area' to make reading enjoyable. However, leaders have been too slow to address the weaknesses in the

teaching of early reading. There is no curriculum in place for this, and teachers have not been well trained. Teachers are left to decide for themselves how to teach early reading. Teachers do not routinely check what sounds pupils know and can remember. This means that pupils do not read from books which contain the sounds they know. Most younger pupils cannot yet read fluently.

In mathematics, leaders are yet to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils. Some pupils are unable to solve mathematical word problems because they cannot read well enough to be able to read the question. This limits pupils' mathematical capabilities. In a range of other subjects, the curriculum does not clearly set out what pupils should know and be able to do. This also applies in the sixth-form provision. However, in some other subjects, such as personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and history, the curriculum is well planned. This supports pupils to build important knowledge over time in these subjects. Some pupils achieve accredited qualifications, such as GCSEs.

Some teachers in some subjects use 'I can' statements to check pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, leaders do not routinely check what pupils know and can remember across all subjects. This means that leaders cannot identify weaknesses to make the necessary improvements to the curriculum.

Leaders do not consider pupils' broader needs well enough. They do not use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to support staff to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff do not consider some pupils' wider needs, such as communication, sensory needs and fine and gross motor skills, as well as they should.

Staff do not routinely follow the school's behaviour policy. They do not always challenge pupils' poor behaviour or inappropriate language. This can affect the learning, or school experience, of other pupils.

Pupils have opportunities to volunteer in the community, for example at a local café. They enjoy options afternoons, when they can take part in activities such as adventure skills, art, dance and cooking. Pupils receive relationships, sex and health education that is well matched to their specific needs.

Staff speak positively about leaders' approach to supporting their workload. Staff feel supported and teachers are given time to carry out their duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders and governors do not always fulfil their statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding. Leaders do not keep a close enough check on the well-being of all pupils while they are in school. They are unable to demonstrate that routinely

locking classroom doors, physical restraint and use of the chill-out room are appropriate, effective or proportionate to the needs of the pupils.

Some aspects of safeguarding are effective. Staff are confident in raising concerns about a child. They know the signs to look out for. Leaders take appropriate action in response to child protection concerns. They involve external agencies as appropriate. Child protection records are detailed and appropriate. Leaders carry out the necessary employment checks on adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors have not fulfilled their statutory responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. They have not ensured that pupils' well-being is always promoted at the school. They do not hold leaders to account for their actions. Governors should ensure that they are vigilant in carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Leaders do not support staff adequately to manage pupils' behaviour. Leaders do not have oversight of the use of strategies such as physical intervention, the chill-out room or the locked classrooms. Leaders have not ensured that these strategies are always used appropriately or proportionately. As a result, pupils are routinely deprived of their liberty and dignity. Pupils do not learn to manage their emotions and behaviour. Leaders should ensure that they establish a positive environment and high expectations for pupils' behaviour, and that these are applied consistently and fairly.
- Leaders have been too slow in tackling the weaknesses in the teaching of reading. They have not ensured that all staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to teach reading effectively. Pupils are given books that do not match the sounds they know and they cannot read with fluency. Leaders should ensure that all staff teach reading well and that pupils get the support that they need to become confident, fluent readers.
- In some subjects, and across both sites, the curriculum is not always well planned and sequenced. Pupils do not build up an accumulation of knowledge and skills over time. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is well sequenced and sets out the key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember.
- Leaders and staff do not routinely check that the curriculum is being learned. This means that they are unable to recognise the weaknesses in the curriculum to inform them of the changes that need to be made. Leaders need to regularly check that pupils have learned the curriculum and adapt the curriculum according to what pupils need next.
- Leaders do not use pupils' EHC plans to support staff in the delivery of the curriculum. Some pupils' needs are overlooked. Leaders should ensure that staff know and understand pupils' wider needs beyond behaviour.

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	122949
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10211580
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carol Painter
Headteacher	Cathy Clay
Website	www.derrymount.notts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Derrymount School provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, including those with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Some pupils have additional needs, such as autism spectrum disorder, attachment, trauma and sensory and communication needs.
- Almost a quarter of pupils are looked after by the local authority and are placed in foster care and residential care homes.
- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan.
- The school is split across two sites. The lower school site is primarily for pupils in key stage 1 to key stage 3. The upper school site is located two miles away and is primarily for pupils in key stage 4 and post-16.
- The school has recently undergone an expansion with additional classrooms to increase pupil numbers.

- At the time of the inspection, the school had no pupils on roll in the early years or key stage 1.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior and curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils as they visited classes and throughout the school day.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, religious education, including social studies, and PSHCE, including 'options' and the 'strands curriculum'. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils reading aloud to members of school staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start of the school day, during breaktime, in lessons and as they moved around the school throughout the day.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils about expectations of behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation and school improvement documentation, minutes of governing body meetings, pupils' behaviour plans and incident logs, records of physical restraint and pupils' risk assessments.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans and reviews of EHC plans.

- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers expressed through the online confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text service. Inspectors evaluated the views of staff, through meetings and via the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Clive Lawrence, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Gayle Bacon Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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