

Inspection of New Leaf Centre

Stroud Avenue, Willenhall, Walsall WV12 4EG

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Despite recent positive changes, pupils at New Leaf Centre receive an unacceptable standard of education. Pupils have been allowed to set the culture here. They often choose to wander between lessons, disrupting the learning of others. Too often, when pupils do attend their lessons, they do little or no work. The school fails to challenge much of this behaviour. This is sometimes because staff do not know how best to meet pupils' social and emotional needs. There is little improvement in pupils' behaviour during their time here.

The curriculum does not provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. The school does not know or find out enough about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, too often, pupils' needs are not met well enough. Consequently, pupils who have already experienced significant disruption to their learning become further disillusioned. They see little value in attending school, and many choose not to. Pupils in key stage 4 are placed at a range of alternative education providers. The school has not paid close enough attention to whether these providers are suitable.

Redundancies and low staffing levels have hindered the new headteacher's capacity to lead the urgently needed improvements across the school.

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

The recently appointed headteacher is passionate and determined. Staff here care deeply about pupils' well-being. However, leaders and members of the management board know that the school is failing pupils. The new headteacher has been quick to identify the school's shortcomings. Consequently, and very recently, leaders have begun to carve a path towards improvement. However, the changes that have been made are at a very early stage of development and are being hampered by a lack of capacity within the school's leadership team. Support from the local authority to resolve this has only very recently materialised.

There are many pupils at the school with SEND associated with their social, emotional and mental health. Leaders have recently begun to assess these needs more carefully when pupils join the school. However, staff do not always have all the information they need about these pupils. As a result, they do not know how best to meet the individual needs of pupils.

Leaders have begun to redesign the school's curriculum. However, at present, the curriculum is disjointed. While pupils can study a broad range of courses and qualifications, the curriculum is poorly implemented. Lessons do not build cumulatively upon prior learning. This limits the progress that pupils make. Additionally, many teachers lack the subject knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum well. Pupils' starting points are not accurately identified when they join the school. Pupils who need support to improve their reading are not given the help they need. This holds pupils back.

The school does not use off-site learning at alternative providers appropriately. While leaders make all relevant safeguarding checks, they fail to ensure that the curriculum provided by the placement is suitable for pupils. Too often, the school does not provide detailed enough information about each pupil and their individual needs to help the provider meet these needs. This means that pupils in key stage 4 receive a disjointed curriculum offer that does not enable them to make the necessary progress or to gain qualifications. Leaders are beginning to rectify this. However, this work is in its infancy.

Too many pupils are disengaged from their learning. These pupils frequently fail to attend school often enough, or at all. This severely limits their learning. Additionally, too many pupils languish on part-time timetables for too long. These pupils experience a significantly narrowed curriculum as a result. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have been slow to tackle these failings.

The school has begun to reshape the curriculum devoted to pupils' wider personal development. This work has been well thought out. However, at present, pupils do not receive enough information about the world of work. Additionally, pupils are not given the opportunity to engage in activities that support them to develop their passions outside of the classroom.

Members of the management board have not discharged their work well enough. They lack the capacity to perform their role and to hold leaders to account for their work. Much needed support from the local authority for the management board and school leaders has not come soon enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding at the school, and pupils are safe here. However, some staff responsible for the administration of safeguarding do not have a secure understanding of their role. Because of this, some of the statutory checks to establish an individual's suitability to work with children had not been carried out at the time of the inspection. Those responsible for governance had not checked this carefully enough. These issues were resolved before the end of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While there is a culture of safeguarding across the school, some staff involved in the administration of safeguarding do not have the knowledge they need to perform their role effectively. This leads to gaps in some of the safeguarding records, such as the single central record. The school needs to ensure that all staff responsible for the administration of safeguarding have the knowledge they

need to perform their role suitably well. Leaders should also check systematically that they are doing so.

- Leaders are over-stretched, under-supported and lack the capacity to lead and manage the improvements needed. Consequently, the changes needed to improve the culture, ethos and education at the school are not happening quickly enough. Those responsible for governance should ensure that all leaders have the capacity, skills and knowledge to lead improvements effectively and are appropriately supported in doing so.
- The school does not identify, assess, or plan for the needs of pupils with SEND well enough. This means that staff do not know how to best meet pupils' social, emotional, and learning needs. Consequently, too many pupils' needs are not being met. The school should ensure that pupils with SEND are accurately identified, that this information is shared with staff, and that effective strategies are routinely implemented to meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils do not attend school often enough, and too many pupils remain on part-time timetables for too long. This means many pupils are missing too much of their education. The school should work closely with the local authority, as well as other external agencies, to identify the barriers to pupils' attendance and focus on overcoming these to ensure pupils attend school frequently.
- The school has not ensured that the curriculum is well planned. Leaders are unclear about pupils' starting points. Because of this, pupils' learning is disjointed and does not build upon the things they already know. The school should ensure that it accurately identifies pupils' starting points and sequences the key building blocks of knowledge so that pupils make strong progress.
- Leaders do not check carefully enough on the quality of provision for pupils who attend alternative provision. Consequently, pupils' learning does not always build on the things they have already been taught before, and some pupils do not learn about all of the further education, employment and training options available to them. Leaders should ensure that they take full responsibility for pupils who attend alternative provision, checking on the quality of pupils' education and personal development to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and rich personal development curriculum.
- The school has not prioritised pupils' reading. This means that pupils who need help to improve their reading are not getting the support they urgently need. The school should ensure that it accurately identifies gaps in pupils' reading ability and supports pupils who need it to close these gaps so that they can access the curriculum.
- The school's work to improve pupils' behaviour has not had sufficient impact. Pupils are not making sufficient improvements in their behaviour. They show a lack of respect and self-discipline around the school. Consequently, pupils miss out on valuable curriculum time. Leaders should continue their work to review the school's approach to behaviour management. They should ensure that any expectations are clearly understood by all, and followed consistently by staff, so that pupils are supported to improve their behaviour.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	134523
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10290579
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Headteacher	Sarah Gould
Website	www.newleaf.walsall.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 May 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, New Leaf had pupils on roll from Year 4 to Year 11.
- New Leaf currently uses 15 providers of alternative provision for around 44 pupils on a full-time basis. The providers used are Alpha Training, Bespoke Training, Brightstar Boxing, Electric Palace, JP Alternative Education, Liminal Education, Nudge Education, Orion School, Remedy Education, Ryecroft Community Footprints, Sandwell Valley School, School of Coding, TP Tutors, Walsall College and Walsall Construction.
- Pupils attending New Leaf have been permanently excluded from their previous school. Some of them have an education, health and care plan or are undergoing an assessment for a range of needs.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the second 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 discussions with the headteacher, designated safeguarding lead and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the management board and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, reading, science and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited four unregistered alternative providers that pupils from the school attend. Inspectors also held phone conversations with the leaders of two other unregistered alternative providers.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils, formally and informally, at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

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