

# Inspection of Hillcrest New Barn School

Welford, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8HZ

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2022

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| <b>Overall effectiveness</b> | <b>Good</b> |
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| The quality of education | <b>Good</b> |
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| Behaviour and attitudes | <b>Good</b> |
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| Personal development | <b>Good</b> |
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| Leadership and management | <b>Good</b> |
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| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |
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| Does the school meet the independent school standards? | <b>Yes</b> |
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school's values, which include, 'community, humility and working hard', flow through all areas of everyday life. Pupils feel happy and safe. They say there is some bullying, but staff deal with incidents straight away.

Leaders have high expectations. Staff skilfully support pupils to build trusting relationships and settle into positive healthy routines. This means that for the first time in their school life, pupils thrive, prosper and benefit from all that the school has to offer. One pupil shared, 'Everyone cares about us. Staff don't judge us which makes us all feel that we are valued and appreciated for who we are.'

The atmosphere around school is friendly and welcoming. Pupils like that they work with leaders to make important decisions that affect them. These include setting the lunch menu, voting on changes to the school uniform or buying equipment and games for the playground.

Pupils learn about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. They grow vegetables and salads which they use to create tasty meals. Pupils contribute well to the community. They make ornaments which they share with the neighbours. Pupils make flower arrangements for the church and sing regularly at the local care home.

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

Leaders, governors and the proprietor are ambitious for all staff and pupils. They have created a school where a palpable can-do ethos pervades. Leaders and staff have designed a vibrant curriculum. Pupils' individual education, health and care plans (EHCP) provide leaders with a starting point for deciding what and how to teach. The curriculum successfully combines academic subjects, careers information, personal development and preparation for life beyond school. Together, these aspects link well to form a coherent and well-constructed curriculum. Through their 'I CAN' folders, each pupil follows a carefully sequenced and personalised curriculum. Leaders update and adapt these folders as pupils' needs develop and change.

Pupils' mental health and emotional well-being are prioritised across all aspects of school life. Teachers and therapists work together to provide effective and timely support for pupils. Staff help pupils to understand themselves better so that they can manage their anxieties independently and successfully. Consequently, pupils learn to become self-aware and know how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have ensured that the school's relationships education programme complies with the statutory guidance.

Pupils look forward to lessons because they are interesting and exciting. Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn in each subject. Lessons are adapted routinely to meet the very complex needs of each individual pupil. However, sometimes, teachers do not routinely check what pupils have learned and

remembered. They do not always help pupils to make links with what they have learned previously. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Reading sits at the very heart of the curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils read a diverse and interesting range of texts in all subjects. Pupils enjoy listening to their teachers read and share books in lessons. This ignites pupils' interest and curiosity about different topics, and cultivates their love of reading. The phonics programme is well sequenced. Younger pupils are introduced to phonics right from the word go. Leaders make sure that the books that pupils read in lessons help them practise the sounds they learn. However, leaders have identified that some staff do not teach the phonics programme effectively. They are addressing this.

Pupils are kind and considerate. They work hard and are proud of their achievements. The atmosphere around both sites is harmonious. Staff are alert to the signs that may indicate that a pupil needs more support to regulate their feelings. Adults skilfully help pupils reflect on and make positive changes to their behaviour.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to understand current affairs. For instance, they debate topics such as the war in Ukraine, animal cruelty and food poverty. Extra-curricular activities including horse riding or learning to play musical instruments, such as the guitar, enrich pupils' wider experiences. They develop their leadership skills by participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award or through taking part in work experience opportunities. Pupils learn about British values, including the importance of diversity and the protected characteristics. They understand and respect different cultures and communities. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Governors and the proprietor, know and fulfil their responsibility to meet the independent school standards effectively. Governors challenge leaders about the impact of their actions to improve the quality of education. Staff feel well supported by leaders and say that they are approachable. They appreciate the steps leaders take to look after their well-being and ensure that staff workload is well balanced.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise pupils' safety and well-being. They make sure that staff are well trained and watch out for any signs that a pupil may be at risk. Leaders follow up on any safeguarding concern diligently. They work well with external agencies and make sure that pupils get the help they need.

Pupils have lots of opportunities in the curriculum to learn about keeping safe. For instance, they know how to keep safe online and when out in their community. Staff keep in touch with parents or carers so that any concerns are discussed immediately.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- There is some inconsistency in how well phonics is taught. Leaders should continue to implement plans for further training to develop staff's understanding and expertise of how to teach phonics. This will ensure there is a consistent approach to teaching early reading right across the school.
- Sometimes, teachers do not check and help pupils embed the important knowledge they need to learn well. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers are trained to teach and assess the curriculum effectively.

## 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 144033   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 869/6019   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | West Berkshire   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10214664   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other Independent Special School   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 6 to 19  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 65   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>          | 4  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | P Bloom Limited  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Max Turner   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Lucinda Stonell  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £46,663 to £77,800   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0330 998 0435  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.acornnewbarnschool.co.uk/">www.acornnewbarnschool.co.uk/</a>                   |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:Newbarnschool@acornnewbarnschool.co.uk">Newbarnschool@acornnewbarnschool.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 5 to 7 December 2017   |

## Information about this school

- New Barn is an independent school for pupils aged six to 19 years. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority, which funds their place. All pupils have complex social, emotional and mental health needs. Many have a medical diagnosis, for example for autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. Almost all pupils have an EHCP.
- The school is based on two sites that are located close to each other in a rural setting. Primary-age pupils are based at Willow Farm, RG20 8HZ. Secondary-age pupils are based at Home Farm, RH20 8HR.

- The school's previous standard inspection took place in December 2017, when the school was judged to be good. Since then, the school has had three material change inspections, in May 2018, November 2020 and June 2021. As a result, the Department for Education gave the school permission to increase the number of pupil places from 56 to 70.
- The school caters for some pupils who are accommodated in residential homes operated by the school's proprietor.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was using eight alternative providers.

## **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.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the head of services and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair. The lead inspector spoke with the proprietor via a telephone call. She also spoke over the telephone with managers from three of the care homes.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects as part of the inspection: English, mathematics, art and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, looked at curriculum design, visited lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. For the English deep dive, the lead inspector listened to some pupils read to staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes, and as pupils moved around the school. They met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors considered responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and additional free-text responses.
- The team inspector checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked with leaders responsible for safeguarding. The lead inspector considered safeguarding documents and records.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including policies and documents associated with the independent school standards. The lead inspector reviewed the school's website.

## **Inspection team**

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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