

Inspection of New Barn School

Welford, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8HZ

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 January 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at this inclusive school. They develop positive friendships with their peers and enjoy playing football or musical instruments together at social times. Pupils like school and attend regularly. They enjoy the subjects they study. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards learning. When they become distressed, staff use several strategies to help pupils.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most pupils have experienced disruption to their education. Staff find out about pupils' interests, talents and individual needs. They gather useful information, which helps them to support pupils effectively. Over time, pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs are well met.

While this is a good school, several challenges, including staffing issues and recent changes at a leadership level, have led to an unsettled period. Staff and parents and carers feel frustrated. While some of these challenges remain, leaders have taken appropriate actions. Consequently, the school is becoming more settled.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme helps pupils to learn about several important topics. Pupils receive high-quality careers education. The opportunities and experiences pupils have help to prepare them well for the future.

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

Pupils attending New Barn School have a wide range of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Most have struggled in previous educational settings, and many have missed large chunks of learning. When pupils join the school, they settle in quickly and develop trusting and positive relationships with their peers and staff.

The school is ambitious for pupils. Pupils appreciate the broad range of subjects they learn. A carefully crafted curriculum successfully motivates pupils and fills the gaps they have in their education. Importantly, pupils gradually develop a love of learning and begin to see school in a more positive light. While the curriculum is generally well sequenced, recent adaptations that staff have made in the primary phase mean that the links between the curriculum in the primary and secondary phases are not as strong as they could be. As a result, the curriculum is not always precisely well matched to the needs of pupils.

Staff use pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plans to provide appropriate support for pupils. Staff break down pupils' targets into manageable steps, which helps pupils to achieve success. Therapy, pastoral care and education work together to provide appropriate support. Regular checks on what pupils know and can do help staff to adapt the curriculum, however the school's approach to checking pupils' learning is not fully embedded and is undergoing a period of change. Pupils achieve suitable qualifications and, without exception, continue in education, employment or training.

Pupils learn to read quickly. A focus on reading permeates the school. Pupils receive personalised phonics teaching daily, which staff are trained well to provide. Staff promote reading at every opportunity. A selection of high-quality books means that pupils read different types of texts regularly. Pupils learn to read confidently and fluently. If pupils fall behind, staff support them effectively. Pupils' reading skills develop as they move through the school, for example, older pupils use their inference skills when talking about the books they are reading.

Pupils attend school regularly. Strong attendance processes help staff to keep a close check on pupils' individual attendance and provide swift support to those whose attendance is lower than it should be. As a result, pupils' attendance increases over time. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Staff understand the SEMH needs of pupils. Staff are trained to use effective strategies that promote positive behaviour. This helps pupils to manage their feelings and emotions.

The school's comprehensive personal development programme ensures that pupils learn about important topics, including keeping safe online and relationships and sex education. Pupils learn the importance of physical and mental health. Independent living skills, such as cooking, are carefully woven into the curriculum. Pupils learn about equality, diversity and inclusion. Some pupils complete work experience. The careers education programme successfully prepares pupils well for adulthood. Consequently, pupils move on to suitable next steps, such as college or training.

The school is committed to providing a high-quality education and preparing pupils effectively for the future. The school takes staff workload and well-being seriously. Some staff are concerned that things are not as settled as they once were. While the proprietor body has acted appropriately to address these issues, developing more effective partnerships and communication is a priority.

The school meets all the independent school standards and fulfils the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum links between the primary and secondary phases are not as strong as they could be. This means that the curriculum is not always adapted precisely enough to the needs of pupils when they move from one phase to another. The school should ensure that the curriculum in the secondary phase builds carefully on what pupils learn in the primary phase.
- The school's assessment system is not fully embedded. As a result, the school is not using the information it gathers about pupils' progress through the curriculum

as well as it could. Therefore, the school does not always adapt the curriculum to meet the precise needs of its pupils. The school should develop a more robust assessment system.

- Communication with staff and parents is not effective enough. As a result, staff and parents feel frustrated and ill-informed about some of the school's decision-making and planned actions going forward. For staff, this leaves some of them feeling unsure about processes and who to go to for support. The school must improve communication and develop opportunities to increase partnerships and engagement with staff and parents.

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	144033
DfE registration number	869/6019
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10342122
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	P Bloom Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Lucinda Stonell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,680 to £87,680
Telephone number	0330 998 0435
Website	www.acornnewbarnschool.co.uk
Email address	newbarnschool@acornnewbarnschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 June 2022

Information about this school

- New Barn School is an independent special 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 SEMH. Many have a medical diagnosis, for example autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is based on three sites, all located within proximity of each other. These sites are Willow Farm at RG20 8HZ, Home Farm at RG20 8HR and River View House at RG14 2PS. The River View House site has been added since the school's last standard inspection.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in June 2022, when the school was judged to be good. Since then, there has been a material change inspection in March 2023 to increase pupil numbers and add the River View House premises. As a result, the school's capacity increased to 130 pupils.
- The school uses one unregistered 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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and staff, including the company's regional director and operations director. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the proprietor body by phone. He also met with a group of staff in addition to holding informal discussions held with staff throughout the inspection.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics, PSHE and the creative curriculum. To do this, they met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum planning, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read. The inspection team also considered some other subjects.
- 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.

- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at school. They observed pupils' behaviour and attitudes through the school day.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted Parent View and online surveys.
- The lead inspector had a tour of the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website. They scrutinised school records, including attendance and behaviour records.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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