

Inspection of New Barn School

Welford, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8HZ

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 September 2025

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils at this school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Over time, pupils have not received the necessary stability and routines that they need to thrive. Too many pupils receive poor classroom experiences. Staff's expectations are low. Some pupils do not receive the support that is set out in their EHC plans. Teaching does not motivate pupils to learn. Staff accept too readily when pupils refuse to start or complete work, or when they are disrespectful. As a result, pupils do not achieve well. They fail to make the progress through the curriculum of which they are capable.

The school is beginning to take action to improve pupils' experiences. Pupils are beginning to benefit from this work. Increasingly, pupils are adhering to the higher expectations set out in the school's behaviour policies. For example, incidences of poor behaviour are reducing. Pupils attend school regularly and they are safe.

Effective pastoral care is a top priority. Pupils have trusted adults to work with. Pupils gain confidence through a range of wider experiences, such as boxing lessons, learning outside in local woodlands and through the Duke of Edinburgh's award. Secondary-age pupils study for qualifications, such as functional skills and GCSEs.

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

Many of the systemic weaknesses identified at the emergency inspection in April 2025 remain. Improvements have not taken hold quickly enough. That said, the proprietor is building momentum in implementing its action plan. For example, it has reduced the number of temporary staff markedly. The proprietor has prioritised bolstering the leadership structure as of September 2025. The school is working on the right actions in the right order. Staff apply their ongoing training in how to safeguard pupils with success. The number of occasions and severity of restrictive physical interventions and suspensions are reducing. However, when pupils find it difficult to manage their emotions the use of derogatory language and disrespectful behaviour is still frequent on the primary site.

Over time, the proprietor has failed to ensure that the school provides an acceptable standard of education. There remain considerable weaknesses in the implementation of the school's curriculum. The school has not implemented its policies effectively. The school knows this. It has a detailed programme in place to upskill staff in the teaching of reading, mathematics and to provide staff with the strategies to support pupils' SEND. However, much of this work is in its infancy.

Most staff have received phonics training. Additional, essential resources are being purchased. Specific teaching for pupils at the early stages of reading within the secondary phase is just starting. However, the development of early communication and language support is not effective for pupils with complex needs.

The curriculum across subject areas is not developing primary and secondary pupils' understanding and skills well enough. For example, when staff do not have sufficient subject knowledge, provide poor explanations or design inappropriate activities, pupils find it difficult to access learning. The school is working productively to remedy this shortcoming. However, not all schemes of learning for subject areas are adequately developed as is expected in the independent school standards (the standards). Currently, schemes of learning are not matched to pupils' aptitudes and abilities sufficiently well. This results in inappropriate provision and teaching for these pupils that does not meet their needs.

Staff do not use the information they have in pupils' EHC plans effectively. For example, some pupils have not received their speech and language support or benefited from adapted teaching strategies or lesson structure. A new clinical team is working productively to ensure that there is no shortfall in pupils' agreed provision in the future. This necessary work is at an early stage and is not having the required impact at this point in time.

Recently, the school has implemented an assessment framework, for example, in mathematics. However, there are weaknesses in how staff use the assessment information they have to inform teaching across other subject areas. Consequently, beyond mathematics pupils receive activities that are not matched to their needs or starting points.

The focus on ensuring pupils' academic potential is realised is limited. For example, in extended non-structured periods each day, learning time is not maximised effectively. In the primary phase, pupils can opt out of learning too easily. Across all three school sites, timetabled sessions are not implemented as intended. This restricts the time for teaching and limits the breadth of education on offer. To date, there has been too little oversight of how well the curriculum is implemented, despite this being a key part of the action plan submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in July 2025.

The programme in place to develop pupils personally is developing. Pupils learn about maintaining healthy relationships and about different cultures. This is enabling them to be prepared for life in modern Britain. The school delivers a suitable impartial careers programme. This includes careers advice, individual support for future destinations and opportunities to engage in the world of work. The pastoral support that is provided is supporting the development of pupils. This is particularly evident when supporting pupils to reflect on behaviour incidents.

Classrooms are newly decorated and have suitable lighting and acoustics. New classroom furniture has been ordered and spaces are being designed by experienced clinical staff for pupils who require bespoke support. Environmental and pupil risk assessments are in place as required.

Some on-site work during the inspection was required to ensure that the standards in Parts 3 and 5 were met. For example, the proprietor completed outstanding actions from a fire safety risk assessment, including checking the safety of a first-

floor fire exit stairwell. The proprietor needed to ensure that secondary-age pupils had access to suitable changing and shower facilities and that excessive clutter in shared areas and outside was removed.

The checks that the proprietor expects the school to have in place regarding alternative provision was subject to review and strengthening during the inspection. All safer recruitment checks to assure staff's suitability to work with pupils meets statutory requirements. However, the school made minor administrative amendments to the school's single central record.

While all these actions were completed by the end of the inspection, these weaknesses demonstrate a lack of rigour in the school's quality assurance systems and in the proprietor's oversight. The proprietor has not demonstrated the capacity to bring about necessary improvements quickly enough. It has not ensured that the school meets the standards consistently and continually over time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor has not ensured that staff have the skills and knowledge to implement the curriculum effectively. Activities are disjointed or poorly chosen. As a result, too many pupils are not motivated to learn or they opt out of lessons. The proprietor must take action to ensure that staff gain the subject knowledge and skills that they need to deliver the curriculum across all phases and subjects so that pupils receive a high-quality curriculum.
- The school's work to upgrade schemes of learning so that they meet pupils' needs and aptitudes is not complete. Pupils do not learn well across the curriculum. The proprietor must ensure that pupils learn the breadth and depth of subject knowledge they need to make the progress that they should across the curriculum.
- Staff do not use the assessment information they have to inform what they teach well enough. This leads to pupils completing tasks that do not match their individual needs and ability and inhibits their progress through the curriculum. The proprietor should improve staff's use of assessment to inform their teaching so that it better meets pupils' needs.
- The weaknesses in the implementation of the school's policies and practices are not being resolved quickly enough. Pupils do not receive their agreed provision as set out in their EHC plans. The proprietor must ensure that it assures itself that all the necessary resources are in place and highly skilled staff implement school policies and pupils' individualised plans effectively.

- Some staff do not adhere to delivering the agreed school timetable. Tutor times and what the school calls 'choosing time' are not used effectively. Some curriculum lessons are missed out. This restricts what pupils can learn. The proprietor must ensure that there is strong oversight of all aspects of the school day so that it takes action to address irregularities as soon as they arise.
- The proprietor does not demonstrate the capacity to improve the school quickly enough. It does not have sufficient oversight of the school. The school fails to meet standards consistently and continually. The proprietor must ensure that the standards are met in full and consistently over time.

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	10414805
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	P Bloom Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Faye Causer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,00 to 87, 580
Telephone number	01488 505145
Website	www.acornnewbarnschool.co.uk
Email address	newbarnschool@acornnewbarnschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 to 16 January 2025

Information about this school

- New Barn School is an independent special school for pupils aged 6 to 19 years old. There are currently less than five pupils in post-16 education.
- Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority, who fund their place. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have a combined diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactive disorder and autism. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is based on three sites. These sites are Willow Farm at RG20 8HZ, Home Farm at RG20 8HR and River View House at RG14 2PS.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in January 2025, when the school was judged to be good. There was an emergency inspection in April 2025 under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The inspection was commissioned by the DfE as a result of concerns. At this inspection, the school failed to meet the independent school standards in Part 1, 3 and Part 8.
- Since the school's previous standard inspection in January 2025, there has been considerable staff change. In March 2025, an interim headteacher and interim heads of school were appointed on Willow Farm and Home Farm sites. A different interim headteacher has been in post since May 2025. In September 2025, the leadership structure changed. There is now a deputy headteacher on the Willow farm and River View site. New assistant headteachers have been appointed with responsibilities for behaviour and attitudes, personal development and the curriculum.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school is no longer section 41 registered.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of 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.
- The inspection was conducted at no notice. It was brought forward due to concerns, including that the school did not meet the independent school standards, following an emergency inspection in April 2025. 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.
- The lead inspector spoke to the managing director of the company, who acted as the chair of the proprietor body's representative. The chair of the proprietor body was not available during the inspection.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education and the humanities. They met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum planning, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. The inspection team also considered additional aspects of the wider curriculum.
- 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 were gathered through discussions. There were no responses to the staff or pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors toured the three school sites to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website.

The schools progress in meeting previously failed standards

During the inspection we checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at its previous emergency inspection 23 April 2025

The school now meets the previously failed standards

- Part 1 – Paragraph 3(h), Part 3, Paragraph 9(b)
- Staff have received whole school training in following the school's behaviour policies, including for restrictive physical intervention. Incidences of poor behaviour are reducing. Some pupils do find it difficult to manage their emotions, use derogatory language and are disrespectful. However, the school is now following its policies effectively. The reporting of behaviour sanctions is consistently applied. Pupil suspensions and the need for restrictive physical intervention are reducing.
- Part 8 – Paragraph 34(1)(c)
- At the last inspection, the proprietor did not ensure that staff had the expertise to support pupils' well-being effectively. Since this time training has gone into place to ensure that staff follow school policies and provide pastoral support. This in

turn is increasingly supporting pupils' well-being and helping them to reflect on behaviour incidents.

The school continues to not meet the previously failed standards

- Part 1 – Para 3, 3(a) to (g)
- The proprietor has not ensured that the school has sufficient oversight of the quality of education it provides. The school is working systematically to upgrade the curriculum. However, schemes of work do not meet the abilities and aptitudes of pupils sufficiently. Staff subject knowledge is not secure. The school is in its early stages of using its assessment strategies effectively. Lessons are not well planned or implemented.
- Part 8 – Para 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)
- The proprietor has not ensured that they have acted quickly enough to bring about improvements in the school. There is a new leadership structure in place. However, their work is just starting. To date, there has been insufficient impact in ensuring the independent school standards are met. The proprietor has not had sufficient oversight of the school's work. The school cannot demonstrate how it is fulfilling the requirements of the standards in Part 1. Many of the standards that the school was judged to have failed to meet at the previous emergency in April 2025 inspection remain unmet.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sara Berry

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

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; and

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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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