

Newlands Hey

1A Huyton Hey Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 5SE

Inspection dates

5–6 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The acting headteacher has worked relentlessly to improve all aspects of provision and has been effective in her efforts. She is well respected by the staff and very highly regarded by pupils and parents. Outstanding personal commitment, strong teamwork and dedication have ensured that the school continues to grow and provide a very personalised approach for each pupil.
- Leaders have a relentless focus on identifying, and then meeting, pupils' individual needs. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their learning, communication and personal development from their low and varied starting points into school.
- All staff are meticulous in providing for pupils' safety, including their emotional well-being. This is a strength of the school. Pupils behave well, feel safe and know that their teachers and education officers want the best for them.
- The board of directors has made a deliberate decision to build a large team of highly able support staff that enables them to offer a very flexible timetable that can be adjusted at short notice to suit the needs of pupils.
- Senior staff regularly check the quality of teaching but guidance does not always focus on what is working well and how pupils could make even more progress. Performance management is not formalised and does not always concentrate on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work are not fully embedded. Plans for improvement do not relate to the school's own reviews.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school's evaluation gives enough information so that proprietors and leaders can easily check that actions are having the desired impact
 - ensuring that the school's plans for improvement relate to the school's own reviews and the impact of its work are evaluated.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that feedback from lesson observations helps staff to understand what they are doing well and how they can improve pupils' progress further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and staff share a common vision to provide the best possible support for each pupil. They work hard to achieve this and are effective in their efforts. All adults care deeply about the welfare and personal development of pupils, both in and out of school. Consequently, the school is a safe place to learn and pupils like to attend. Leaders and managers have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Information on how pupils are doing is gathered in every lesson to help plan and prepare their next steps. This is used to monitor the progress of pupils and to tailor work more closely to pupils' needs.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise how well pupils improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. One carer whose child had previously presented with significant behavioural issues said, 'We have our son back. He is happy with life and loving school since he joined Newlands Hey.'
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life as citizens in modern Britain through well-chosen and planned activities in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and circle time. Themes including 'adventurer', 'explorer', 'traveller', 'voyager' and 'globetrotter' help to develop pupils' understanding of democracy, the rule of law, and respect and tolerance of others different to themselves.
- The well-planned curriculum supports all aspects of the pupils' development. Pupils have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have many interesting opportunities beyond the boundaries of the school to engage in a wide variety of stimulating activities which promote learning.
- Risk assessments and procedures for the many activities that pupils do are detailed and robust. Pupils are clear as to what is expected and how they must work with staff so that everyone is safe. These activities make a strong contribution to pupils' ability to take personal responsibility for their safety and to work together.
- Thorough assessment procedures are well established and leaders carefully record and track the progress of individual pupils within the school. Assessment focuses very much on the progress that pupils make in relation to their starting points and against their individual targets, which are broken down into very small steps.
- Post-16 provision is effective because of the highly adapted curriculum to support the development of life skills and growing confidence for all students.
- The advice and careers guidance provided for older students enables them to contribute to, and make informed choices about, their next steps after leaving Newlands Hey.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked by the senior staff, but guidance does not always focus on what is working well and how pupils' progress could be promoted even more. Opportunities are missed to share the best classroom practice already in evidence in the school, or to ensure that any weaknesses are quickly identified and followed up.

- Leaders' evaluations of the school's work do not always demonstrate an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, nor do they include information on the progress that pupils make. The improvement plans are not readily related to these evaluations. This makes it difficult for directors to measure pupils' achievements over time or to know precisely enough the impact of the school's work in reaching its targets.

Governance

- The passion and commitment seen throughout the school staff is also exhibited by company managerial staff, who care deeply that the school makes the best possible provision for its pupils.
- The managing director knows very well the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. He bases his office in the school in order to get to know the pupils and their families. He is keen for feedback and takes this seriously.
- Managers are rightly proud of the dedicated team of staff and work with them to ensure that their philosophy is translated into the practice of the school. Their belief that education should be specifically designed to meet the needs of the pupils is exemplified in the investment in resources and activities that focus on individual pupils.
- Managers acted swiftly to ensure that effective arrangements were put in place to provide good continuity for the school following the retirement of the substantive headteacher in August. Recruitment is underway for a replacement and the acting headteacher is well supported by an advisor for two days per week in the interim. Parents confirmed that there has been no negative impact on pupils since the changes in leadership.
- The managing director is highly supportive of the acting headteacher's determination to improve the school further. However, he also recognises that the school does not yet have robust systems in place to fully evaluate the effectiveness of its work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are scrupulously followed and the protection of all pupils is the major priority for all staff. Pupils are very well supervised at all times and risk assessments for all aspects of pupils' care are detailed and very well monitored.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is rigorous. Staff are very well trained and prioritise the safety and well-being of pupils, including their emotional well-being. All the required arrangements to check on the suitability of staff are in place and meticulously adhered to. All staff have first aid training and are trained to manage difficult behaviour.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good because staff think carefully about the ways in which they can help pupils to learn. Very strong and supportive relationships are founded on deep understanding of the pupils' needs and the challenges they have faced to date. Before arriving at Newlands, many pupils have had disruptions in their learning and very negative experiences. Through the sensitive approach of staff, they become interested and re-engage with learning. They become much more confident.

- The teaching of communication skills is integral to the school's work. Signs, symbols or written words are used at the correct level for each pupil to ensure that they can understand the routines of the day, communicate their ideas and feelings and access their reading, writing, mathematics and other activities successfully. Staff are trained in sign language to support those who experience the frustration of being unable to communicate meaningfully or effectively.
- Staff build on the positive relationships and mutual respect to help pupils develop good attitudes to learning. Staff are well trained in understanding the needs of pupils with autism. Very careful transitions into school and detailed assessments of pupils' abilities on entry ensure that staff have a good understanding of the learning, communication, social and emotional needs of pupils.
- This information is used to help set targets and plan activities to help pupils learn. Teachers and education officers use imaginative ways to engage and maintain pupils' interest in their learning. For example, for some pupils, this means achieving a reward for positive behaviour that allows them to take a bus ride to visit a comic shop to select their own reading material. Teachers capitalise on this enthusiasm by extending the reward scheme to home.
- Pupils receive constant feedback on what they are doing well and are then challenged to think for themselves and tackle their work independently. Signs, pictures and symbols as well as verbal comments are used as feedback mechanisms appropriate to the differing levels of understanding of each pupil.
- As self-confidence grows, pupils are prepared to tackle activities that previously they had refused. An example of this is the fact that, for some pupils, swimming has become an enjoyable and regular routine, after many years of avoiding water. This remarkable progress was achieved by the dogged determination of staff and very small incremental steps over many weeks.
- The high ratios of staff mean that pupils are well supported during their learning. Each pupil has a room that is designed specifically to cater for their interests and learning needs, with all the resources for each lesson and lots of alternative activities. For instance, one room has a mandarin diffuser and massage oil to relax pupils with heightened sensory awareness and protective cushions to prevent them banging their heads if they become anxious. This attention to detail and careful planning means that pupils remain engaged in learning for longer periods.
- Pupils make good progress with their understanding of number. They are given practical tasks using money to provide them with opportunities to develop skills which prepare them well for life in today's society. They are encouraged to use the skills learned to buy food at a local greengrocers.
- Staff exploit every opportunity to help bring learning to life for pupils. This is exemplified by the extended history topic that was developed following the visit of a previous owner of the building. Staff used his knowledge of the history of the house to help pupils understand what life was like in the second world war and also to develop an awareness of social and cultural traditions.
- Teachers provide bespoke timetables and are extremely adaptable, often adjusting lessons at a moment's notice to meet the needs of pupils.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils make good progress socially. Through regular routines they develop important skills which make them well prepared for adulthood. They enjoy their experience at school and parents and carers are very positive about it.
- The staff promote equality of opportunity very well. Every effort is made to provide a broad, balanced and personalised curriculum. Support for each pupil builds on individual needs and interests. This can be seen in the diversity of activities that pupils can take part in during the day and the many visits out of school that broaden pupils' horizons and also develop the life skills so needed for their futures. Staff have reached out into the community to offer training and encourage local shopkeepers and residents to understand autism, and this has helped pupils to access local facilities more easily.
- The wide range of activities pupils undertake also has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Shopping trips, visits to farms, travel training and activities like swimming, rock climbing and cycling build pupils' confidence, self-esteem and resilience.
- Raising funds to support different charities provides pupils with a strong sense of community and purpose in helping others in times of need. This was demonstrated by the successful coffee morning, when relatives and local residents were invited to share cakes made by the pupils. The decision-making, teamwork and communication skills used by the pupils for these events contribute well to their personal development.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop links with local businesses and the provision of regular work experience, enterprise and vocational activities enable pupils to develop the skills they will need when they move on. Such activities, together with visitors from public services to the school, broaden pupils' understanding of the world of work well.
- Transition arrangements for pupils are very carefully managed to ensure that placements are successful, and for some pupils this can include very small steps. The consequent improvement in pupils' self-esteem and confidence enables them to make progress in many other areas of their personal development.
- The school works closely with a wide range of therapists and education and health care professionals to support pupils and their families and ensure that provision for pupils is matched to their need.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and most demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their learning. The school's 'positive, proactive behaviour strategy' has helped staff to manage pupils' complex behavioural needs effectively. Lessons are generally calm and purposeful and pupils respond to teachers' requests appropriately. Vigilant staff make sure that potential incidents are tackled calmly and promptly, to minimise risks of escalation and to ensure that the learning of others is not disrupted.
- Individualised activities at the start of the school day enable pupils to overcome anxieties

that are barriers to their learning and good behaviour. The smooth passage from breakfast to circle time adds to pupils' preparedness for the next steps in the lesson. They enjoy the routine and gain a clear understanding of what activities they will be undertaking throughout the day, reducing anxiety and providing a calm start to learning.

- Pupils are treated with the utmost dignity and respect. Pupils who were able to express their views were enthusiastic about school and appreciated the many additional activities available to them. Furthermore, pupils who are able to access the internet have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using it.
- Attendance and punctuality are usually good, but related information is not always analysed effectively and this means that strategies to improve in this area are not clear enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school often with significant gaps in their education and this, coupled with their complex learning difficulties, means that they enter with very low starting points. After arriving at Newlands Hey, pupils achieve well because of the individual attention they receive and because staff manage to turn around their attitudes to learning so successfully.
- Pupils' work, observation of learning, teachers' detailed assessments of pupils' skills and their individual learning files show the good impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress over time. Good achievement is founded on the highly positive relationships that staff swiftly establish and the ways in which they build pupils' self-esteem so that they are inspired to have ambitions for themselves and become more independent.
- The school's detailed assessment information shows that nearly all pupils make the progress expected of them and some make more than expected progress towards meeting their individual targets. The steps are often small, but most pupils are closing big gaps in their previous learning.
- The focus on social communication, reading, writing and mathematical development means that over time pupils are developing the skills they will need to live independently.
- Staff work skilfully to develop pupils' ability to listen and interpret the meaning in the words of others accurately. Across a wide range of subjects and activities, they focus on pupils' ability to express their ideas and feelings through a variety of communication methods. Pupils learn to extend their vocabulary and to express themselves with increasing accuracy.
- Post-16 pupils gain confidence and are provided with opportunities to utilise their skills through daily activities that promote good progress and attainment from their often very low starting points. For example, they use their mathematical knowledge and understanding of money to buy items in the local shops.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements. They show pleasure in their accomplishments and those with more established communication skills are keen to show the results of their work.
- Pupils undertake work experience placements appropriate to their ability and receive good careers advice, which helps them to develop the necessary skills for future independence, employment or study. It also prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

School details

Unique reference number	141888
DfE registration number	340/6003
Inspection number	10008626

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anthony Gearty
Chair	Rob Gillespie
Headteacher	Sarah Maguire
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,600–74,200
Telephone number	0151 480 9000
Website	www.newlandsheyschool.co.uk
Email address	sarah.maguire@newlandsheyschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Newland Hey Independent School is a small special school that provides education for pupils who have autistic spectrum conditions. In addition to these difficulties, pupils often have other needs, such as speech, language and communication difficulties, dyslexia and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders (ADHD).
- The school caters for pupils aged 11 to 19 years and has places for up to 10 pupils. Many have been excluded from their previous schools or did not attend at all.
- At the time of this inspection, the pupils on the school's roll were aged between 15 and 19 years. Two of these pupils have been in the school since it opened two years ago and

the others had been in the school for less than six months.

- Two pupils are registered as disabled and all have an education, health and care plan or are awaiting assessment.
- The school was first registered in 2014 and is part of the 'IDEM Living' company. There is no proprietorial board. The company owns several children's homes.
- This is the school's first inspection.
- Places are funded through the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the consultant headteacher and the managing director.
- The inspector observed learning in lessons and around the school.
- The inspector analysed pupils' work in books and files.
- The inspector spoke with parents, pupils and staff to gather their view of the school.
- The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised information about achievement, behaviour and attendance and looked at a wide range of school documents and records relating to self-evaluation and the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The inspector took account of feedback from staff surveys, parent view and from records kept by the school.

Inspection team

Cathy Parkinson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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