

Newfield School

Oldbank Lane, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 2PW

Inspection dates

23–24 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Outstanding |
| Early years provision | Outstanding |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school has improved in every aspect since its last inspection. This is due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and his exemplary senior team.
- The collective desire of all adults associated with the school to settle for nothing but the best is the added impetus behind the excellent achievement of pupils who attend Newfield School.
- Pupils start at the school with very low levels of skill due to their complex needs. However, they achieve exceptionally well in their communication, literacy and numeracy skills and also in a range of other subjects.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Their preparation for life beyond school and for their next steps in education is first-rate. Well-planned activities are used frequently to stretch pupils to apply their social and communications skills.
- Pupils make rapid progress due to leaders' robust monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection. Teachers and support staff use feedback on their own performance well to improve their teaching skills.
- The governing body is effective in providing support and challenge for the school.
- Parents agree 'Newfield is an exceptional school'.
- The provision for children in the early years is outstanding. Children benefit immensely from adults' focus on providing sensory stimulation in a calm and purposeful environment.
- Learners in the sixth form make rapid progress due to teachers skilfully matching activities to their particular needs. Learners grow in confidence and make choices about their life after Newfield.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding because adults model superbly the school's values of 'Inspire, Support, Achieve, Together' in everything they do.
- Pupils' welfare needs are met exceptionally well. The school's excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes well to their strong social and emotional resilience.
- Thorough risk assessments and strong procedures ensure children are safe in school. A small proportion of adults do not have a solid understanding of how to identify signs of radicalisation in this group of pupils.
- Leadership at all levels is strong. Leaders acknowledge that their precise analysis of the impact of their actions on pupils' learning could improve their effectiveness further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership still further by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors evaluate precisely the impact of their actions on pupils' learning and take action promptly to secure any improvements necessary
 - all adults have a secure understanding of how wider safeguarding issues, such as the government's 'Prevent' agenda, relate to the specific needs and safety of pupils at Newfield School.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Newfield is led well by a headteacher with a strong vision for excellence now and in the future. His vision is shared with, and delivered by, all adults who work at the school. The staff team is on board to provide nothing but the best for this group of pupils.
- The priorities of personal and social development and academic progress are balanced effectively to ensure each pupil develops holistically into a well-rounded young person by the time they leave the school. High expectations are the norm across the school so that even those with the most extreme needs increase their rate of progress. As a consequence, a high proportion of pupils make excellent progress in their personal and academic development.
- Underpinning the school's work is a 'person centred approach' in which the child's voice is the hub of any decisions made. Leaders and other adults have a clear picture of what is key in the life of each pupil. Leaders use this information effectively to build learning and care programmes which are matched precisely to pupils' specific needs.
- Leaders' accurate and rigorous self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has made a strong contribution to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress since the last inspection; an example is leaders' actions to ensure teachers' assessment of pupils' basic skills when they start the school and as they move through the school are accurate. Pupils' progress in mathematics, reading, writing, communication and personal development is excellent because teachers use their accurate assessments well to plan activities which match pupils' specific needs precisely.
- The school's curriculum concentrates very effectively on pupils' basic needs, often related to their communication skills, physical development and health. Leaders adapt the curriculum well so that pupils benefit from a broad range of subjects in formal lessons, such as English and mathematics, along with a topic-based approach to subjects such as art, science and humanities. Flexibility in leaders' approach to their planning of the curriculum enables pupils to take part in a wide range of other activities, such as performing on stage at the Lowry Theatre, for example. This contributes strongly to pupils' outstanding personal development.
- Additional extra-curricular activities such as lunchtime activity clubs make a strong contribution to pupils' social, emotional and physical development. For example, pupils and learners take part enthusiastically in a regular lunchtime dance club which promotes their involvement and enjoyment in physical activity. Other activities, such as a residential visit to Bendrigg Outdoor Education Centre, challenge pupils to apply their skills in a broad range of settings. One member of staff said 'The pupils involved have flourished during the residential visit; their personalities have shone through and their achievements have been amazing. They have overcome fears and developed as individuals through their involvement in the residential.' This high level of support and challenge undoubtedly contributes to improvements in pupils' self-esteem and their positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are prepared well for their life in modern Britain. They are often given opportunities and encouraged to make their own choices from the minute they start the school. One boy, in an early years class, was given a choice of tools to use with his plasticine, for example. As a result he was interested in what he was doing and was beginning to recognise simple shapes that he had cut. By the time pupils leave the school they are often able to give their viewpoints and consider the thoughts and feelings of others.
- Parents are supportive of the school. Those spoken to, along with the vast majority of those who responded to the online survey, praise highly the effectiveness of the school. Parents said 'regular reviews give us information about how well our son is doing in school and how we can help him at home', and 'my child is well looked after and really enjoys school. His education and needs are well catered for', for example.
- The leadership and management of teaching across the school is strong. Improving teaching quality in order to improve pupils' outcomes has been the key to success in moving the school to outstanding. Leaders rigorously use their system for setting performance management targets for teachers and middle leaders. These targets are closely matched to the school's priorities and used to inform leaders' decisions when awarding pay increases to teachers. Frequent training for teachers and support staff has ensured that teaching, through the use of effective questioning and behaviour management strategies for example, is of a constantly high standard throughout the school.

- Leaders use additional government funding, the primary physical education and sports grant and the pupil premium grant for example, well to promote enjoyment, equality of opportunity and success in learning. Examples of additional interventions paid for with government grants include: hydrotherapy, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, reading programmes, computer-based mathematics programmes and the use of sensory stimulus equipment and outdoor play equipment. These combine well to promote pupils' physical development and support them to overcome their barriers to learning. As a result, pupils from different groups, including disadvantaged pupils, perform and progress equally well across the school.
- Leaders and teachers work well with a number of other schools in order to support pupils with complex needs and autistic spectrum conditions in a mainstream setting. This action is valued highly by the local authority.
- Teachers and leaders also use their links with other similar schools across the region to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are accurate. Consequently, leaders' systems to monitor pupils' progress are robust. Leaders swiftly identify those pupils at risk of falling behind so that they are able to take effective action to close any gaps in pupils' learning. However, leaders recognise that they do not always use the wealth of information they have about pupils' progress to evaluate precisely the impact of their actions on learning.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance of the school is strong. The governing body has undertaken a review of its effectiveness since the last inspection and has introduced a committee structure in order to boost the quality of its work. The governing body's expertise is used well to hold leaders to account about their actions.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the school's work. They know how additional government funding is spent, for example. Governors receive frequent reports about the work of the school from leaders and other staff in the school. They also choose to make frequent visits to the school, including 'shadowing days' when governors spend time observing learning. These actions enable governors to form a view of the school's effectiveness for themselves.
 - Governors make effective use of an independent consultant in determining the headteacher's pay and the setting of future performance targets. Governors have an appropriate understanding of leaders' administration of the school's performance management policy.
 - Governors do not always evaluate the school's actions in terms of their impact on pupils' learning. The school development plan does not make clear how leaders will monitor the impact of their actions on learning. Consequently, governors sometimes do not make fully informed decisions about the effectiveness of their spending.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's single central record of employment checks, carried out to verify the suitability of all adults who work at the school, is exemplary. Staff are well trained in child protection. All new staff undertake a thorough induction programme which includes child protection training along with other training related to the care of this group of pupils. Frequent refresher training adds to adults' knowledge of how to keep children safe. A small proportion of staff, however, do not have a thorough understanding of how the government's 'Prevent' agenda can be applied to keeping pupils safe at Newfield. The school's systems to report and record concerns relating to the safety of pupils are extremely detailed. These provide a secure evidence base by which leaders can make decisions on how best to proceed when a welfare or safeguarding concern is raised. The school's very detailed records show leaders take appropriate action and will not hesitate to contact other external agencies when the need arises.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is outstanding**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are prepared well for their next steps through school and for life beyond Newfield. This is because high-quality teaching in all subjects and at all key stages is responsive to pupils' specific needs.
- Teachers and support staff know the pupils extremely well. Teachers combine their assessment of what pupils can do with their strong subject knowledge to plan learning experiences which capture the interest of pupils while providing an appropriate level of challenge. Consequently, almost without exception, pupils are keen to learn. They make strong progress in their personal and academic development in a wide range of contexts.

- Well-planned lessons with age-appropriate activities are typical across the school. For example, learners in the sixth form discussed an article which described a car accident. These learners answered adults' well-structured questions to demonstrate their understanding of the feelings of others and the morals associated with drink driving. The response of this group of learners was an example of the outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development which is a characteristic of the school.
- All adults hold very high expectations in terms of what this group of pupils can achieve. Adults demonstrate high standards in everything they do. At every opportunity, adults model pupils' specific methods of communication. As a result pupils grow in confidence and they are often quick to initiate communication with their peers and adults. This is a strong indication that pupils' basic communication skills develop rapidly due to adults' planned interventions.
- Effective teamwork is a strong characteristic of the school. Teachers and teaching assistants work seamlessly together to ensure that opportunities for learning are rarely missed. For example, in one lesson pupils with autistic spectrum conditions were reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The teacher and teaching assistants worked closely with all pupils to ensure they remained focused on learning. As a result of these skilful interventions by teaching assistants, this group of pupils progressed well in their basic reading, communication and numeracy skills.
- Interventions such as those by specialist therapist teams, along with other programmes such as those designed to promote improved communication skills, sensory reaction and physical development, contribute significantly to pupils' overall personal and academic progress. Therapists are embraced as part of the teamwork approach. Therapists often provide bespoke programmes to pupils, devise classroom-based strategies to support individuals and groups of pupils and deliver training for adults in specific interventions, for example. As a result, pupils strengthen their resilience to the difficulties they encounter due to their specific needs, their independence grows and their self-esteem blossoms.
- Adults' consistent approach to the meeting of pupils' specific needs is a result of effective communication between teachers, support staff and specialist staff such as the medical team. This approach serves to develop pupils' social skills. Visitors are welcomed into the school by the vast majority of pupils. Pupils will readily converse with visitors, give their opinions and respect the views of others. This is an indication that pupils trust the judgement of the adults who work with them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school's promotion of pupils' rights and responsibilities is exceptional. By the time pupils leave the school, they have developed into well-rounded young people able and willing to make a positive contribution to society.
- Adults are adept at providing a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. Visits into the local community, to find and buy items for projects for example, along with opportunities to take part in special events in school, such as the 'Art Explosion Week', allow pupils to hone their personal skills in real-life situations.
- Newfield's values of 'inspire, support, achieve, together', are married well with the fundamental British values of tolerance and respect in every aspect of the school's work. Whole-school focus days, such as a harvest festival, remembrance and Children in Need, are used sensitively to deepen pupils' understanding of what it is to be British.
- The school's own records, along with published figures, show that all pupils stay at the school until the end of sixth form. These learners receive impartial careers guidance which helps them to make informed choices about their next steps. The school's records show that all but a very few learners make a successful transition into their post-19 placements.
- Pupils are cared for well by the highly trained staff team. Medical professionals ensure that medication is administered appropriately. Pupils' welfare needs are dealt with sensitively, following the school's well-thought-out policies and procedures.
- The pupils spoken to, along with those who responded to the school's latest survey of pupils, feel safe in school. Their parents say they feel this is the case also. Pupils spoken to were clear about who they would speak to if they had a concern or felt unsafe. They also agreed that bullying in school does not take place. Leaders' records, along with the inspector's observations, indicate that this is highly likely to be an accurate viewpoint.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils, including those in the early years and sixth form, is outstanding. Pupils, learners and parents spoken to, agreed that this is the case. During the inspection, inspectors saw nothing but exemplary behaviour. Pupils are polite and courteous towards one another and towards adults and other visitors, usually with little or no prompting from supporting adults.
- The air of calmness around the school is punctuated frequently by pupils' desire to be successful learners. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptional. Pupils move quickly, often excitedly, from one area of the school to another and also from one activity to another. There is a real sense that pupils enjoy their learning and have no desire to waste time unnecessarily. Testament to this is the high proportion of pupils who have the highest levels of attendance at the school.
- Leaders are effective in meeting pupils' specific needs as a means of ensuring their behaviour remains at the highest standard. The school's own records show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The school does not use exclusion as a means of managing or responding to poor behaviour. On the rare occasions when leaders identify incidents of a pupil's deteriorating behaviour, appropriate steps are taken swiftly to identify the root cause and to implement actions to ensure the pupil is supported appropriately.
- The excellent relationships between adults and pupils are undoubtedly the key to pupils' outstanding behaviour in and around the school and when off-site on visits to the local and wider community. Adults' knowledge of pupils' specific needs is exemplary and is supported by the additional information provided by parents in the home-school communication book. As a result, adults are skilful in taking swift action to meet pupils' specific and immediate needs as a means of averting a potential crisis.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils enter Newfield with skills and abilities that are well below those typical for their age. In almost all cases, pupils who join the school are several years behind their peers in mainstream school. However, from these very low starting points, a high proportion of pupils make the small steps they are capable of to reach standards at least in line with, and in many cases beyond, national expectations.
- Inspectors' analysis of the school's records show that the rate of pupils' progress has increased over the last three years. The proportion of pupils making better than expected progress, based on their starting points, has increased since the last inspection and is now above that of their peers in mainstream schools. Furthermore, a higher proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant reach the standards expected for their starting points in English and mathematics, compared to their peers nationally. In addition, despite being in the minority, girls make outstanding progress too.
- Evidence of pupils' work in their files, books and displayed in classrooms and corridors, shows excellent progress in basic literacy and numeracy skills by all age groups and in a wide range of subjects. For example, a Key Stage 2 pupil could be seen to have progressed, in a short period of time, from being almost able to count up to five to measuring the volume of liquids and the lengths of different parts of the body. This is an example of rapid progress for this pupil and substantiates leaders' progress information.
- Information provided by leaders shows also that other groups of pupils, including those identified as the most able, are not disadvantaged when compared to their peers in school. Pupils identified as the lower attaining pupils, often with extremely complex needs, make excellent progress from their starting points. Furthermore, a higher proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant reach the standards expected in English and mathematics, compared to their peers nationally.
- Key Stage 4 pupils are prepared very well for their transition into the school's sixth form. Last year all Year 11 pupils achieved units in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Transition Challenge Award. As a result this group of pupils have a high success rate with their personal learning pathways by the time they leave school.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- The early years leader has acted effectively to improve the provision. She has used external support and guidance well to build a provision which supports this group of children effectively. For example, adaptations to activities enable all children to learn about the day's topic in each activity that they take part in. Children experience a range of activities based on a specific topic. This ensures children spend

time mastering their skills in different contexts and is an example of strong and effective practice.

- Leaders' information shows that children start in the early years provision often with very low starting points. However, a high proportion make rapid progress in their basic communication and early reading, writing and numeracy skills. Some children with autistic spectrum conditions begin to develop their social skills and on occasions manage their own emotions. Outstanding teaching in this area of the school is a result of teachers' excellent use of their assessment of pupils' specific needs to plan lessons which capture pupils' interests and encourage them to learn well. This in turn leads to outstanding outcomes for children.
- Adults are particularly effective in establishing the routines these children require in order to begin to build strong relationships. Children were observed responding quickly to adults' requests and actions at the end of the school day. As a result these children were prepared well for their transition out of the classroom and on to their transport home. Children with autistic spectrum conditions were observed to use picture exchange cards as a means of communicating their choice of activity. This group of children benefited from the routine because, as a consequence, very little time was lost between activities, pupils' anxiety levels remained low and they enjoyed their learning.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. The early years provision benefits from being at the heart of Newfield and as a consequence children are helped to be kept as safe as pupils elsewhere in the school. Outstanding leadership of early years ensures that the well-trained staff care for the well-being of this group of children in a sensitive manner. Adults who work with children with autistic spectrum conditions use their understanding of pupils' specific needs well to ensure these pupils remain safe both inside and outside the classroom.

16 to 19 study programmes

are outstanding

- The quality of teaching in the school's sixth form is outstanding because teachers effectively use their accurate assessment of what learners can do. They plan lessons and activities which provide an appropriate level of interest and challenge for all learners. Each learner has a personal programme which is matched expertly to their specific needs and interest. This is a culmination of the school's excellent approach to person-centred planning across the school.
- All learners are supported effectively to achieve an appropriate standard in English and mathematics by the time they leave school. Learners often leave school with qualifications at an appropriate level. Last year all leavers achieved units in the ASDAN Personal Progress Award at either certificate or diploma level, for example.
- Newfield's sixth form provision has a clear focus on building learners' independence skills. All learners experience and learn about the local and wider community. Learners take part in a variety of activities such as dancing, horticulture and ground maintenance, for example. Some learners have visited a local educational farm to experience working with small and large animals. Learners in the sixth form have the opportunity to undertake independent travel training and take part in work experience placements. As a result, when learners leave Newfield they make effective use of independent guidance in order to choose their next placement. This is an outstanding achievement for this group of learners.
- Leadership of the school's sixth form is excellent and has contributed to the improvements seen since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is monitored with the same rigour as throughout the rest of the school. As a result teachers focus on making learning relevant to learners' needs and circumstances. In mathematics, for example, learners apply their measurement skills to shoe and clothes sizes and their number skills to the preparing and sharing of fruit and vegetables in cookery lessons. This action is preparing learners well for their life beyond Newfield.
- Learners in the sixth form are safe. The frequent well-planned visits into the local and wider community are effective in ensuring learners strengthen their social skills. These visits also serve to demonstrate learners' outstanding behaviour and their positive attitudes to learning. When appropriate, adults provide fitting guidance to enable learners to begin to act independently, when finding and buying ingredients for a cookery lesson for example. Consequently, learners' personal development is also outstanding.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 132051 |
| Local authority | Blackburn with Darwen |
| Inspection number | 10003797 |

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | All-through special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 147 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 33 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Stuart Davey |
| Headteacher | Geoff Fitzpatrick |
| Telephone number | 01254 88600 |
| Website | www.newfield.org.uk |
| Email address | GFitzpatrick@newfield.blackburn.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 November 2012 |

Information about this school

- All pupils attending the school have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Pupils at Newfield have complex learning needs. Some pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school has a fully integrated unit to support children with autistic spectrum conditions.
- The majority of pupils are boys.
- A majority of pupils do not have English as their home first language.
- A majority of pupils are from Asian backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The school holds National Autistic Society Accreditation, Arts Award, Leading Parent Partnership Award, Quality in Study Support, Rights Respecting Schools Award and Inclusion Quality Mark Flagship status.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed several part lessons, two of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- The inspectors observed all aspects of the school's work including the beginning and end of the school day.
- They also looked at pupils' work and at the school's records of their progress.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff, pupils, parents and a range of other professionals. Additionally, they scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school.

Inspection team

Drew Crawshaw, lead inspector

Linda Griffiths

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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