Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: New Bridge School

Roman Road, Hollinwood, Oldham, Lancashire OL8 3PH

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 February 2025

Outcome

New Bridge School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Gavin Lyons. This school is part of the New Bridge multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Clare John, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steve Williams.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school community is dedicated to ensuring that every moment counts for pupils. Pupils have numerous opportunities to develop their employability skills, as well as to hone their independence and communication skills. For example, an overseas trip enabled pupils to enhance their digital technology and enterprise skills while creating a prototype computer application used for business. Pupils rise to the school's exceptionally high expectations and achieve well across the curriculum.

The school fosters a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere, beginning with sensory activities each morning. These help pupils to feel at ease. Staff are exceptionally skilled in supporting pupils to regulate how they feel and to engage with their learning. Pupils develop strong relationships with others. In lessons, they listen attentively to others' opinions and learn from them. They are well mannered and polite.

Pupils eagerly embrace opportunities to play an active and influential role in improving the school's facilities through the school council and 'parliament'. The school enhances pupils' social, emotional and physical development through initiatives such as the 'transition festival' and engagement with Paralympians. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about taking part in football, rowing, basketball and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. These opportunities help to build their self-esteem and resilience.

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

The school is highly ambitious for pupils, who have a broad range of complex needs. Staff identify pupils' individual needs promptly. Information from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans is integrated within their highly personalised curriculum. Curriculums are expertly designed to enable pupils to build on their prior knowledge. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils study a diverse range of qualifications that prepare them successfully for their next steps.

Subject curriculums prioritise the skills that pupils need to access the world around them. Staff are skilled at adapting the delivery of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. They use their strong subject knowledge to explain new ideas clearly and revisit prior learning. Staff adeptly check pupils' understanding of key concepts to address any misconceptions. Pupils use a range of resources, including technology, with confidence in lessons. This further enhances their learning. Pupils gain a rich body of knowledge and skills over time.

Pupils learn to communicate exceptionally well. Staff use a wide variety of resources, including signs, symbols and assistive technology, to help pupils find their voice. The school has also cultivated a strong culture of reading. Reading materials are well matched to pupils' reading levels. Regular pre-reading and phonics sessions enable pupils who struggle with reading to catch up quickly. Highly trained staff provide targeted support to help pupils build their fluency in reading.

The school provides highly personalised support for each pupil, including a range of therapies. These help pupils to overcome their individual barriers. Pupils learn to be responsible and respectful through following the school's rules and routines. Most pupils behave exceptionally well. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to socialise with their friends or have some calm reflection time during lunchtimes. The school maintains a strong partnership with families. It provides effective support to help pupils improve their attendance. Over time, pupils' attendance rates have improved.

The personal development programme makes a significant contribution to prepare pupils for life beyond school. Enriching visits and trips, including to theatres and museums, greatly enhance pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils also learn vital life skills, including relationships, staying healthy and cooking. A range of visitors, for example those involved in the performing arts and sports, motivate and inspire pupils. Pupils celebrate religious festivals and explore equality and diversity through school assemblies. This fosters a culture of tolerance and respect that is deeply embedded in the school's diverse community.

The school promotes invaluable real-world work experience from the time pupils begin at the school. They benefit from high-quality careers education. The school actively engages with employers, colleges and supported living organisations to help pupils make informed decisions about their futures. Pupils acquire a broad range of transferable skills through supported work experience and internships, such as in a sport and leisure centre, a local hospital and a university. Following their internships, many pupils go on to paid employment, supported employment or further education and training.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They are highly supported in their professional development. Most staff feel that the school is considerate of their workload and well-being. The school is taking proactive steps to further reduce staff's workload. Trustees and local governors have offered astute guidance and support during the school's growth in recent years. They use their considerable experience to both challenge and support the school in equal measure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in February 2015.

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.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138697
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10348272
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	716
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	229
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Williams
CEO of the trust	Clare John
Executive headteacher	Gavin Lyons
Website	www.newbridgeschool.net
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased from 417 to 716. In addition, the number of premises has increased from two to four.
- There have been substantial changes in leadership and staffing aligned to the growth of the school in recent years. This includes the appointment of an executive headteacher, who was previously headteacher of New Bridge School, and some new heads of school and other senior leaders. In addition, there have been some changes in the membership of the local governing body, including a new chair.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school, operating across four sites, provides for a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, ranging from moderate learning difficulties to profound and multiple learning difficulties, including severe and complex learning difficulties. Throughout the school, pupils have additional needs arising from

physical disabilities, sensory differences, visual impairments, hearing impairments and specific conditions including autistic spectrum condition. Each site offers provision for pupils in a particular key stage with a specific range of special educational needs.

- The main site is at Roman Road, Hollinwood, Oldham OL8 3PH. It houses pupils from Years 7 to 11.
- A separate cohort of pupils in key stage 4 are based at New Bridge Pathways, at 1 Medtia Square, Phoenix Street, Oldham OL1 1AN.
- Students in the sixth form are based at New Bridge Learning Centre, at St Martin's Rd, Fitton Hill, Oldham OL8 2PZ. A separate cohort of students in the sixth form are based at New Bridge College, at Pennine House, 77 Union Street, Oldham OL1 1JZ.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with the CEO and members of the local governing body and trust board, including the chairs. He also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors conducted visits to all four of the school's sites.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. Inspectors took account of the views expressed by pupils in Ofsted's survey.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents and carers through Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Beaty	Ofsted Inspector

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