

Inspection of Newbury Manor School

Newbury Manor, Newbury, Near Mells, Frome, Somerset BA11 3RG

Inspection dates: 21 to 24 February 2023

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?

Newbury Manor School provides education and care to pupils with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). A significant proportion of pupils are 'pre-verbal'. These pupils are helped to engage and communicate with the world around them. As pupils develop, the school encourages more formal learning. Many pupils learn a range of traditional curriculum subjects. Regardless of their different needs, all pupils enjoy school and attend well.

The atmosphere in school is calm and supportive. Pupils trust the staff and are supportive of one another. Occasionally, the behaviour of individual pupils can become heightened. However, pupils and staff agree that any such incidents are quickly diffused. Bullying is rare, but staff are vigilant about it. They promote the importance of making others feel good.

The school's values are brought to life by two peacocks who live on the school grounds. Pupils are excited to be celebrated for living out their 'peacock values': perseverance, equality, aspiration, courage, opportunity, compassion and knowledge. There is a strong sense of community in the school. Pupils recognise staff for their efforts. Many pupils are eager to show leadership, for example by attending weekly meetings of the school council.

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

Staff read to pupils regularly, developing their love of literature. They think carefully about the texts they share with pupils. Staff make each reading a sensory experience, encouraging pupils to join in. Pupils develop their social skills through group reading experiences, taking turns to engage with textual details. All of this creates a great sense of occasion and fosters pupils' enjoyment of reading.

Leaders are focused on addressing any gaps in pupils' knowledge of phonics. The school uses a wide range of approaches to get pupils reading. Some are engaged through technologies; others thrive on one-to-one support. Leaders support pupils' self-esteem by providing age-appropriate reading books. As a result of leaders' tenacity, pupils' reading is steadily improving.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have redesigned the curriculum. This has helped staff to meet pupils' needs more effectively. Pupils now follow one of three curriculum pathways. The informal and semi-formal curriculums are built around pupils' needs, including a strong focus on learning to communicate clearly. The formal curriculum includes a broad range of subjects, often leading to accreditation.

Each pupil has an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) setting out long-term development goals. Leaders have carefully considered the small steps that each pupil must take if they are to achieve their targets. This 'golden thread' helps staff and parents to understand how pupils are progressing. However, leaders are not fully clear on the incremental steps pupils should make if they are to succeed in

subject learning. Consequently, some pupils do not build on their knowledge as well as they could.

Leaders are reviewing their careers education programme. Pupils considering their post-16 plans receive independent careers advice. They are aware of some local further education providers and have had the opportunity to visit. Where appropriate, leaders arrange supported work experience and travel training. Leaders recognise that some pupils would benefit from careers guidance starting earlier. The curriculum offered to pupils in key stage 4 is not always a good reflection of their talents, interests and future plans. This creates a delay before pupils are able to start working towards realistic goals.

Pupils who join Newbury Manor stay. Their attendance is excellent, despite the significant challenges associated with their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many pupils have had difficult past experiences of school. Some display risky behaviours. Typically, this reduces over time. Leaders' approach to risk assessment is effective. Staff undertake specialist training which helps them to manage behaviour effectively. Leaders are readily available to support pupils and staff as needed.

Leaders provide a wide range of social and cultural opportunities for pupils. During themed weeks, pupils come together to share in and try new things. For example, in a recent arts week, pupils worked with a visiting artist on a sculpture which leaders display proudly in school. There are regular visits to local amenities such as supermarkets and the swimming pool. This helps pupils to be more confident out in the community.

The curriculum for relationships and sex education makes a real impact on pupils. Pupils know how to recognise an unhealthy relationship. As pupils grow older, leaders help them to navigate relationships with their peers. Pupils learn about the lives of others, for example those of different faith, nationality and sexuality. There is a thriving club called 'Diversity Rocks' through which pupils promote equality for everyone.

Leaders in the school are ably supported by an experienced and skilled team of governors. Through the work of the governance team, the proprietor ensures that the school meets the independent school standards in full. Leaders and those involved in governance ensure that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school is well led, resulting in high morale among staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

An experienced team manages complex safeguarding matters skilfully. Staff with safeguarding responsibilities are supported effectively by representatives of the proprietor. There is an open culture in which 'no one makes a decision alone'.

Leaders identify where families need additional support and provide this. They help families with the challenges they face at home. This helps pupils to lead more settled lives.

The proprietor ensures that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable children and provides relevant training. Staff know what to look out for and how to report any concerns. Leaders' record-keeping is meticulous. They are diligent in following up on any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not fully considered how they can help pupils to build on incremental gains made in learning and engagement towards being able to learn and make use of valuable subject knowledge. For some pupils, this has a limiting effect on the progress they can make through the subject curriculums over time. Leaders should ensure that their ambitions for what pupils will know and be able to do are underpinned by carefully considered sequences of learning.
- The curriculum for some pupils in key stage 4 is not well matched to their aptitudes and aspirations. The relationship between pupils' future plans and the curriculum, including accreditation routes, is not sufficiently clear. As a result, there is unnecessary delay before these pupils are able to learn the most relevant content and solidify their career plans. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum offer in key stage 4 is informed by pupils' future plans.

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	131016
DfE registration number	933/6195
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10254645
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Services
Chair	John Anderson
Headteacher	Rebecca McArthur
Annual fees (day pupils)	£85,000 to 110,000
Telephone number	01373 814 980
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk/find-a-location/newbury-manor-school-frome/
Email address	rebeccamcarthur@aspriscs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 December 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has changed to Aspris Children's Services. The proprietor arranges for an operations director to act as chair of governors to the school. The operations director works with a wider team, including a chair for the proprietor, to provide governance.
- In September 2021, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed. In addition, an assistant headteacher has recently joined the school.
- The school is currently a residential special school with boarding accommodation for eight pupils. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2021 and judged to require improvement. The proprietor intends that the on-site provision for boarding will cease and is in the process of relocating the boarding pupils to an Aspris children's home nearby, which is currently unregistered.
- The school is operating outside of its registration agreement by legal direction. The agreement permits the school to admit 45 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 46 pupils on roll. The proprietor intends to reorganise the school to support a change to the maximum number of places.
- The school caters for pupils with a diagnosis of ASD or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. All of the pupils on roll have EHC plans. The school is included on the list of approved independent special schools, in accordance with section 41 of the Children's and Families Act 2014. Most placements are funded by local authorities in Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, and Wiltshire.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, organised into three curriculum phases: informal, semi-formal and formal. Pupils in the informal and semi-formal phases follow a curriculum to support development in four areas of need. Pupils in the formal phase follow a subject-based curriculum.
- The school caters for pupils aged six to 19. However, at the time of the inspection, there were no students of sixth-form age on roll.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant

headteacher and members of the governance team, including the chair for the proprietor and the operations director.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, communication and interaction, early reading, personal, health and social education and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school and met with the safeguarding team, including the designated safeguarding lead who is also the headteacher. Inspectors discussed the culture of safeguarding with pupils and staff. The lead inspector also considered a wide range of documentary evidence related to safeguarding.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of two local authorities on the telephone.
- The lead inspector checked the premises and considered policies, leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement, minutes from meetings of the governance team and risk assessments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. In addition, inspectors took into account responses to the questionnaires for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Mirams

Ofsted Inspector

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