

New Mills School & Sixth Form

Church Lane, New Mills, High Peak, Derbyshire SK22 4NR

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have transformed the standard of education at this school. The quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are good and improving rapidly.
- Teachers are committed to their own development. Teachers plan learning meticulously and consider pupils' needs carefully.
- Pupils make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics, across all year groups, including the sixth form. The most able pupils attain as well as others nationally in many but not all subjects.
- While the achievement of disadvantaged pupils remains a key focus for the school, the progress of these pupils is improving quickly. The difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others is rapidly diminishing.
- The support provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is sensitive and effective. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They are proud of their school and value the support and opportunities provided for them. They regularly make valuable contributions to the local community and charities.
- Pupils are accepting of differences and warmly welcome newcomers to the school. However, some pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths and cultures is limited.
- The restructuring of leadership roles has strengthened the leadership of pupils' behaviour. Leaders' new and effective strategies have improved pupils' attendance and reduced exclusions, but a small number of pupils remain persistently absent from school.
- While the sixth form is closing, students are supported well to achieve their post-18 aspirations. The study programmes are implemented effectively by leaders.
- Governance has strengthened since the previous inspection. Governors are skilled and ambitious and hold leaders to account effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching even further so that all pupils make consistently strong progress in all subjects, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers insist that the most able pupils tackle and complete more complex thinking tasks routinely in lessons
 - ensuring that all temporary teachers are monitored and supported to manage behaviour effectively
 - embedding successful teaching strategies consistently in science and geography to fully reverse the legacy of underachievement.
- Strengthening existing work to raise the attainment and reduce the persistent absence of targeted disadvantaged pupils, such as those strategies related to the work with parents.
- Ensure that pupils in all year groups know, understand and appreciate the faiths and cultures that make up modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have been successful in transforming the culture and ethos of the school since the last inspection. This school is now a place where learning is valued and high expectations are prevalent. The headteacher has been pivotal in this journey; she has provided essential, unequivocal leadership for staff. She is supported well by teachers, pupils and most parents.
- Leaders know and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and they have devised a sharp and detailed plan for further improvements. Those subject areas in which pupils had previously performed poorly are improving. Mathematics, for example, no longer requires additional support. Those subjects which continue to underperform, such as geography and science, are monitored closely and supported well by leaders.
- The leadership of teaching is strong and effective. The senior leader in charge has developed a range of training and development opportunities for all staff, which, combined with rigorous monitoring systems, ensure that teaching continuously improves. Leaders have successfully eradicated inadequate teaching.
- The headteacher has successfully managed the recruitment challenges in a small school by investing in training for teachers to teach their second subject specialism. Currently, the school is fully staffed, with most teachers teaching their first or second subject specialism.
- The headteacher has effectively restructured the leadership team. Together with governors, she has made astute appointments to the leadership team since the last inspection. The pastoral team, for example, has been strengthened by the introduction of the two roles of progress manager and year leader for each year group. This has contributed to closer monitoring of pupils' progress.
- The school has responded well to the challenges presented by the changing assessment and course requirements at GCSE. Subject leaders have devised robust curriculum plans, which span five years, in order to prepare pupils from Year 7 onwards for the greater examination demands. The tracking of pupils' progress against the subjects' 'threshold concepts' is proving successful. Underperforming pupils are identified early, due to this effective system.
- Subject leaders work well together and take their responsibilities to raise achievement for all pupils very seriously. They monitor the quality of teaching and support their team to continuously improve. Most subject leaders have undertaken additional leadership qualifications to further strengthen their skills. The 'good habits' check has contributed to greater consistency in teaching across the school.
- The senior leader in charge of the pupil premium provision is thorough and knowledgeable. After seeking evidence of good practice from partner schools, carrying out an audit and learning from educational research, she has devised sound plans to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils with the funds available. The strategies so far are proving effective and the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving, although leaders acknowledge that more focused work is still necessary to diminish the

attainment gap still further.

- Similarly, the Year 7 catch-up funding is also spent effectively. Pupils eligible for extra support for English and mathematics make good progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. The coordinator for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs has been supported well to develop her skills and knowledge. The funds to support eligible pupils are spent wisely and effective additional teaching support continues to improve pupils' progress.
- Leaders have developed strong links with feeder primary schools. A number of cross-phase activities from Year 5 onwards have helped pupils to settle in Year 7 well, especially those more vulnerable pupils. Leaders plan to develop their links with parents in primary schools to help targeted pupils, especially the disadvantaged, as early evidence suggests this is proving an effective strategy to promote better behaviour.
- New, sharper and more relevant appraisal systems have helped to focus teachers on the priorities for the school. The progress of disadvantaged pupils, for example, is a prominent target for most middle leaders. Staff are absolutely clear about the school's aims and how they will be supported to achieve them.
- The headteacher has worked successfully to improve communication and develop positive relationships with parents. Leaders have gone a long way to reverse the legacy of poor perceptions the school has endured. Parent forums, information evenings and newsletters have contributed to the school's improved image in the community. While the majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire are supportive of the school, a small minority remain dissatisfied. The concerns they raise are not well supported by the inspection evidence, but the headteacher and governors take any worries from parents seriously. The school's complaints procedure is adhered to rigorously.
- The local authority has provided good strategic support for the school. The support leaders have gained from links with a local outstanding school and the Peak 11 collaboration of schools has contributed to the school's improving performance. The local authority's quality reviews of the school are sharp and insightful.
- Pastoral leaders are effective. Year managers and progress leaders work well together to monitor the welfare and academic achievement of all pupils. Their work, including strategies implemented over the last academic year, has improved the attendance rates, and reduced the incidence of poor behaviour of many pupils. The introduction of The Bridge (an inclusion area), for example, has helped many pupils to access and succeed at courses which they would not have been able to do in mainstream classes. Leaders plan to develop their work with hard-to-reach families this year to improve the attendance of those few individuals who are still persistently absent from school.
- Leaders have devised a comprehensive careers programme for pupils, including students in the sixth form. A 'Futures Week', during which pupils engage with colleges and employers and have regular sessions from a careers adviser and visits to universities, are some of the successful aspects of the programme. A high proportion of pupils, compared to the national average, go on to sustained education, employment and training.

- The school's curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to achieve well and develop personal skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through subject teaching, tutorials and assemblies. Pupils understand well their social responsibilities and appreciate the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. However, some older pupils demonstrate limited understanding of the wide range of faiths, cultures and traditions practised and adhered to by citizens in the United Kingdom. This may hinder their preparedness for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is well run and made up of skilled and dedicated volunteers. Governors have developed their skills, so monitoring activities are now much more effective than previously.
- Governors have steered the school through difficult times and managed a deficit budget. They insist that all government funding is spent wisely and efficiently. The use of government funding associated with the pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and special educational needs is scrutinised carefully by governors. The senior leaders' reports to governors are sharp and evaluative.
- The governing body checks that the school's staff appraisal policy, which is linked to pay increases, is adhered to rigidly.
- Governors have made effective appointments to the senior leadership team. These senior leaders have made a significant difference to the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and pupils' outcomes. Their reports to governors are sharp and accessible.
- Minutes of meetings of the governing body show that governors regularly challenge leaders and insist that weaknesses, such as the progress of disadvantaged pupils in some subjects, are robustly tackled.
- Governors visit the school regularly and lead well separate committees to oversee the progress of the school. They use external reviews of the school astutely to triangulate their findings. Consequently, they have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors have ensured that safeguarding policies are implemented effectively. Leaders carry out their duties diligently; the designated safeguarding leaders are skilled and experienced.
- Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that any concerns raised about pupils are followed up promptly. Those pupils who are subject to child protection and who are looked after by the local authority are supported extremely well by dedicated pastoral staff. The school's documentation is coordinated well so that all appropriate authorities are kept informed about the welfare of identified pupils.
- Records show, and pupils confirm, that bullying is rare. Pupils interviewed by inspectors said that they trust the adults in the school to deal with such incidents. Prejudiced-based incidents are few because the vast majority of pupils are welcoming to

newcomers and accepting of differences.

- The school's curriculum supports the safeguarding culture well. Pupils regularly receive guidance to help them keep safe online; they are well informed about the dangers of online grooming. Leaders' well-chosen range of external speakers to the school helps pupils to learn from first-hand experiences how to protect themselves from a range of risks, such as those associated with extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers invest time and effort to improve their skills. They value the opportunities provided by the school to develop their practice. As a result, the quality of teaching across the school is predominantly good.
- The quality of teaching is strong and effective in English. Teachers consistently deliver carefully planned learning opportunities for pupils. Resources are used effectively to motivate pupils. Pupils engage with their learning well because teachers make the work relevant to them and teachers are enthusiastic about the topics. One teacher, while exploring the text of 'A Christmas carol', asked pupils to consider their own experiences of Christmas and compare them to that of one of the characters. Pupils wrote in more depth as a result.
- Pupils typically make good progress because teachers have strong subject knowledge and know and understand the course and assessment requirements well. Most teachers skilfully ask questions which help pupils to think deeply about the subject. Pupils in art and music, for example, are highly engaged because the teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and motivate pupils to do well.
- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly in mathematics and is now typically good. Teachers enable pupils to use their reasoning skills well by encouraging them to articulate regularly their methods of working out problems. Also, teachers use effective support strategies to improve identified pupils' mathematical skills. In particular, the 'KASH' conversations, which focus on pupils' knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits, have been successful. These mentoring sessions have been particularly effective in improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Teaching assistants are effective. They are deployed well in class and know the pupils they support well. Small-group interventions are successful in helping pupils to catch up. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with skilled support.
- Most teachers incorporate several opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills in lessons. Teachers emphasise subject-specific terms and pupils' writing skills are developed well across many subjects. English and history teachers, for example, share the same structure to analyse sources or texts, which helps pupils to master their writing skills.
- Teachers use a coherent assessment system which is well understood by pupils. Pupils say that the feedback they receive from teachers is helpful. Teachers check that their assessments of pupils' progress are accurate by comparing theirs with colleagues both in school and in other schools. In their subjects, most teachers accurately forecasted pupils' performance in the 2017 examinations.

- Teachers typically engender good social skills and most lessons are characterised by mutual respect and cooperation. However, temporary teachers do not always uphold the school's policies to manage behaviour and this hinders pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching in science is improving and much is now good. However, the quality of teaching in geography is too variable. In neither subject do teachers consistently insist that the most able reach the higher levels in their thinking and written tasks. Also, too many older pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills due to previous weaker teaching. Teaching and pupils' progress in both subjects in lower key stage 3 is now much stronger than in the past.
- Teachers' planning is usually meticulous and considers the range of pupils' needs. Most teachers ensure that pupils are provided with challenging tasks. However, not all teachers consistently insist that the most able pupils tackle and complete these more advanced tasks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils speak positively about their school, engage well with after-school activities, and the vast majority display good attitudes.
- Pupils get involved in a range of opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. Pupils take on leadership roles, such as sports and library leaders. They help others in the community, such as the elderly as part of the 'elderly friends' project. The school garden is maintained by several pupil volunteers. During the school's open garden weekends and the garden display at the Tatton Royal Horticultural Society event, pupils raise money for local charities.
- Pupils know and understand how to eat healthily and lead healthy lives. The school has adopted a new healthy eating policy, and tutorial lessons reinforce important messages about physical and mental well-being.
- The school helps pupils to appreciate British values in a number of ways. Voting in head boy and girl elections, listening to visiting local Members of Parliament, participating in mock general elections, engaging in debates in lessons, and learning about the dangers of extremism in assemblies have all contributed to developing pupils' sound values. Pupils are tolerant and accepting of differences. However, their understanding of the different religions and cultures that make up modern Britain is limited.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. Incidents of poor behaviour are few. This is confirmed by pupils and staff. Where these incidents do occur they are dealt with firmly. Pupils with a previous record of poor behaviour have improved their conduct and engagement with school.

- The proportion of pupils excluded from school has reduced significantly, as the school's strict behaviour policy has been implemented. The Bridge has helped pupils at risk of exclusions to modify their behaviour.
- Pupils who used the alternative off-site provision last year achieved a good range of qualifications and achieved more than they would otherwise have done. Those attending currently attend regularly and behave well.
- Pupils' punctuality to school and lessons is good.
- The school has worked successfully to improve the attendance rates of pupils. The overall attendance rates now compare favourably with national levels. Those persistently absent from school, currently predominantly represented by disadvantaged pupils, are targeted for support by the pastoral team. The team's work is proving effective with some pupils, but leaders acknowledge that their strategies require further development to ensure that all pupils attend school more regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the last inspection, GCSE results have improved year on year. In 2016, pupils' progress was above average. This represents a significant improvement compared to the results from 2015. Unvalidated results for 2017 show that high proportions of pupils reached their school target grades in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, which represents good progress from pupils' different starting points.
- Pupils' attainment compares favourably to national averages. Pupils with low, middle and high prior attainment attain well in their best eight subjects. Previous weaknesses in mathematics have been largely addressed.
- Pupils' attainment in physics, chemistry and biology has risen year on year. However, pupils' examination performance in core science remain a concern. Weak teaching and poor curriculum choices contributed to pupils' underperformance in this subject. While current pupils' progress in science is improving due to better leadership and teaching, too many older pupils are behind where they should be to achieve their target grades.
- Pupils' examination results in geography have continued to decline since the last inspection. Pupils are slow to acquire the right skills and knowledge because learning is not sufficiently challenging, especially at key stage 4. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress has historically been inaccurate, so pupils who were falling behind did not receive the right support.
- The 2017 provisional results show that the most able pupils attained as well as others nationally. This represents considerable improvement compared with previous years. Currently, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades 8 or 9, in both English and mathematics, is high compared to the proportion achieving the equivalent grades A or A* in previous years. The school's records show that the proportion achieving grades 6 and 7 in 2017 is lower than the school's expectations.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The support they receive is targeted well to their needs. Pupils who have more complex needs receive effective intervention from specialists.
- Pupils' reading and communication skills are promoted well in the school. Pupils with

previous weak reading skills are provided with specific support to help them read fluently and with understanding. Small-group teaching sessions, focusing on inference skills, for example, have improved pupils' reading comprehension skills. The library is used well and teachers encourage the love of reading during tutorials. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with others and articulate their reasoning. Inspectors observed pupils speak confidently and articulately during lessons and interviews.

- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. They follow a broad range of courses in both key stages 3 and 4 and achieve well in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The careers support that pupils receive helps them to make good choices, which support their aspirations.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has been, and continues to be, a school improvement priority. Work to address these pupils' barriers to learning is proving successful for many pupils. The difference in attainment between these pupils and others is diminishing in a range of subjects, especially mathematics. Where the attainment gaps are wider, such as in English and science, more targeted work is planned.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders have taken the difficult decision to close the sixth form by 2018, due to financial constraints. Students, including pupils in the main school and some parents, were disappointed. Leaders have ensured, however, that pupils have been supported well to make good post-16 choices. All pupils found a suitable placement in a school or college for September 2017.
- The weaknesses cited in the last inspection have been addressed as a result of strong leadership. Additional administrative support for the sixth form leader has helped to develop the study programmes, including students' work experience placements.
- The examination results for 2016 and the provisional outcomes for 2017 show that students make good progress from their starting points in most subjects.
- The proportion of students achieving the higher grades is now close to the national average.
- The quality of teaching is monitored regularly by leaders. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers understand their course and assessment requirements well. Just as in the main school, teachers have developed their teaching well to meet the challenges of the new curriculum.
- Students attend school regularly and conduct themselves maturely. Students say they are supported well by their tutors and receive good guidance to help them manage the range of risks they are likely to face as they grow up.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. They engage in a range of community projects and charity work to encourage them to make good contributions to society and become good citizens. The annual school trip to the Holocaust memorial at Auschwitz in Poland encourages students to recognise and understand the abhorrent effects of racism and extremist ideology.
- The small number of students who retake their English and mathematics GCSE

examinations make good progress and achieve at least one grade higher than they did at key stage 4. The quality of support provided by higher-level teaching assistants is effective in supporting pupils to make good progress.

- The majority of students achieved sufficiently to gain their first choice university place. Students are supported well to choose appropriate post-18 options, including apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	112936
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10031176

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	494
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Margaret Cole
Headteacher	Mrs D McGloin
Telephone number	01663 743284
Website	www.newmillsschool.co.uk
Email address	head@newmillsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. The proportion of pupils enrolled in the sixth form is much smaller than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average, as is the proportion of those eligible for an education, health and care plan.

- The school uses the Chapel-en-le-Frith pupil referral unit to educate a very small number of pupils.
- The school's sixth form is designated for closure from September 2018. There are no Year 12 pupils in the school.
- The school is part of two informal collaborative groups of schools in Derbyshire called Peak 11 & PEGS. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 parts of lessons as well as one assembly and four tutorials across all key stages. Almost all teachers were observed.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from each year group, including the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders, including the headteacher, all assistant headteachers, five representatives from the governing body and a selection of subject leaders. The lead inspector spoke with the local authority representative by telephone.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised: the school's self-evaluation report, the school improvement plans, information about current and previous pupils' performance, information about pupils' behaviour, minutes of the governing body meetings, monitoring records and external reviews of the school. The school's safeguarding policies and records were also examined.
- Inspectors took account of 75 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 71 free-text contributions. In addition, 46 responses to the staff questionnaire were considered. No pupils contributed to the survey because of a technical error but inspectors took account of the school's own surveys carried out previously.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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