Inspection of New Horizon Academy

New Horizon School, 104 Summer Road, Erdington, Birmingham B23 6DY

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
The quality of education	**Requires improvement**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Requires improvement**
Leadership and management	**Requires improvement**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**No**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well cared for at this calm and nurturing school. Before joining the school, pupils often have faced significant disruption in their education and significant challenges in their social lives. Once at the school, pupils quickly settle, begin to feel safe, and build positive relationships with staff.

The school pays close attention to pupils' past experiences. Leaders give pupils the time and space needed to talk about their feelings. This work helps pupils to feel heard, and to quickly re-engage with their education. Pupils know that leaders will resolve any concerns they have quickly. Overall, pupils behave well. Staff challenge any poor behaviour in a calm, caring way, taking account of pupils' individual needs. Pupils' ability to communicate their feelings, improves well during their time at the school and their behaviour improves as a consequence.

Leaders are ambitious and they are driven to unlock the potential of each pupil. However, the school is in the early stages of planning their subject curriculum, and staff do not always have the subject knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum well. This holds pupils back.

The school understands the important role that pupils' wider personal development plays in securing their future success. Despite this, the range of opportunities afforded to pupils is at present limited. Leaders recognise this.

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

Leaders are creating a culture where academic success and personal growth are prioritised. While there is more to be done to ensure leaders' ambitious vision is realised, the headteacher has successfully galvanised her small team around this vision. Staff are proud to work here and committed to the task at hand.

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) associated with cognition and learning. Leaders work in close partnership with those who know pupils best, as well as a range of external agencies, to build a clear and comprehensive picture of pupils' SEND when they join the school. Through this careful work, leaders gradually identify previously undiagnosed needs, unpick pupils' barriers to learning, and begin to shape a clear picture of pupils' starting points. Leaders make sure that all staff are well equipped to meet pupils' individual learning needs.

Leaders have recently begun to refresh the school's curriculum. In subjects such as mathematics, where they have done this work, leaders have built a strong backbone to their curriculum, and made sure that the precise knowledge to be taught is clearly defined. Where this is the case, pupils make strong progress. However, across too many subjects, the small steps that pupils need to take to be successful have not been outlined and teachers do not accurately identify pupils' starting points in the subject. Consequently, teaching does not build upon prior learning well enough.

Additionally, in some subjects, teachers lack the subject knowledge needed to adapt the curriculum appropriately. Together, these factors limit pupils' progress.

Where the curriculum is well developed, leaders use assessment smartly to identify gaps in learning and resolve any misconceptions. However, this work is at an early stage, and too often teachers do not identify gaps in learning quickly enough before moving on. This limits the progress pupils make.

Reading is prioritised here. Leaders are quick to identify gaps in pupils' reading and provide bespoke targeted support to those who need it. This work is helping pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Alongside this, leaders provide ample opportunity within the curriculum to read. They have developed a well-stocked library which pupils have helped to curate and have rightly focused their attention on developing pupils' vocabulary across all subjects. This work is helping to shape a culture of reading.

Before arriving at New Horizon Academy, many pupils did not have a positive relationship with education. They did not attend school often and struggled to manage their emotions when in school. Leaders challenge these past behaviours well. Pupils now attend school regularly, and leaders' work to support pupils to manage their emotions is having a positive impact.

Leaders work to promote pupils' wider personal development is limited in its scope at present. Pupils have access to a small number of opportunities that aim to develop their confidence in unfamiliar social settings. For example, pupils recently visited a local aquarium, and took responsibility for purchasing train tickets, planning the visit, and travelling to the venue. This work is beginning to promote pupils' independence. Leaders recognise the need to grow these opportunities further. The school has not ensured that pupils benefit from a range of encounters with the world of work, and they have yet to build a clear picture of pupils' career aspirations. This limits pupils' horizons.

Leaders have not made sure that aspects of the premises are suitable or maintained to a high enough standard. For example, the space available for pupils to play outside is cramped and is a state of disrepair with weeds growing through the floor posing a tripping or slipping hazard. Additionally, the proprietor has not made sure that there is a suitable space for pupils to be taught physical education or to wash and shower should they need to.

The proprietor has high ambitions for pupils. The proprietor receives a range of information about the school. However, they do not always make good use of this information to challenge weaknesses in the school's provision. Consequently, the proprietor has not made sure that leaders meet all the independent school standards. The school meets its duties under schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Across too many subjects, the precise knowledge that pupils will be taught has not been set out clearly enough. Where this is the case, pupils' learning does not always build upon the things they have been taught before. This hinders learning. The school should ensure that the curriculum is well planned across each subject, and knowledge clearly defined so that pupils are able to make strong progress.
- Teachers do not always use assessment effectively to identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that, too often, learning moves on before pupils have understood everything they need to. This holds pupils back. Leaders should support teachers to use assessment effectively to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and adapt the curriculum and their teaching appropriately to make sure these gaps are closed.

  Opportunities to enhance pupils' wider personal development are limited in scope. Consequently, pupils are not aware of the broad range of opportunities that are available to them in the future and have limited understanding of their role and place within wider society. Leaders should ensure they provide pupils with a broad range of meaningful encounters with the world of work and a range of experiences that aim to enhance their independence and develop their understanding of their social and moral responsibilities.
- Across some subjects, teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to adapt learning activities to meet the intended learning set out in the curriculum. This limits the progress pupils make. The school should provide subject teachers with the subject knowledge enhancement they need to understand the subject content well and select appropriate learning activities linked to the curriculum aims.
- Leaders, including the proprietor, do not check carefully enough on the impact of their work. Consequently, they have not acted quickly enough to address some of the gaps in their provision and have not ensured that all the independent school standards are being met. Leaders should make sure that they develop systems and processes to monitor their work more effectively so that they can make the improvements needed.

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School details

Unique reference number	148929
DfE registration number	330/6139
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10284440
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	NH Care Ltd
Chair	Sukhjit Bains
Headteacher	Katie Davis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000 - £125,000
Telephone number	0121 448 3737
Website	www.newhorizon-academy.org
Email address	enquiry@newhorizon-academy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This was the school's first full standard inspection.
- The school is part of NH Care Ltd. The company operates several care homes across the country.
- The school provides education for up to 10 pupils aged between 11 and 16. The school caters for pupils who have cognition and learning needs. There are currently two pupils on roll, both of whom have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Presently the school does not use any alternative provision to provide education for pupils.
- The school does have a website. All polices and documents required under Part six of the independent school standards are available on the website.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and personal, social health and economic (PSHE) education. The inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also held discussions with leaders about other curriculum subjects taught at the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 reviewed school documentation.
- Inspectors met with a group of trustees, including the chair of trustees.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils at social times and in formal meetings. Inspectors reviewed the results of the online pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with staff.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
  - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
  - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
  - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
  - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
  - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 23(1)(c) suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable-
  - 29(1)(a) physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and
  - 29(1)(b) pupils to play outside.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

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