

Inspection of Netherthorpe School

Ralph Road, Staveley, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S43 3PU

Inspection dates:	21 and 22 January 2025
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Helen McVicar. This school is part of the Minerva Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Bev Matthews, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Doyle.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in this school do not receive an acceptable standard of education. GCSE results in 2024 were poor, and significantly below national averages. The school is not as inclusive as it should be. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) significantly underachieve. The expectations of these pupils are too low. The school has not done enough to stem the decline in educational standards.

Disruptive behaviour is evident in some lessons. Some pupils routinely opt out of lessons and wander the school. This interrupts their own learning and that of others. Too often, poor behaviour is accepted or ignored by staff. That said, many other pupils behave well and are keen to learn.

Pupils are safe in school. They express confidence in staff to resolve any issues or concerns. Students in the sixth form feel extremely well supported. They have strong relationships with staff. They particularly appreciate the 'guided autonomy' they receive. This prepares them well for their next steps towards adulthood.

A broad range of extra-curricular clubs are in place. While many pupils enjoy these activities, not enough is done to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can benefit from the wider opportunities that they might not otherwise receive.

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

The school has experienced a great deal of change, including a change of trust membership. Frequent changes in staffing and a lack of capacity in the staff team have contributed to the decline in standards. The new trust is acting appropriately, and at pace, to address the weaknesses in the school. It is early days. There has not been enough time to assess the impact of this work.

The curriculum is inconsistent in quality. There have been recent developments to improve the curriculum ambition in some subjects, including in English and mathematics. Even so, the curriculum does not ensure that pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, gain the knowledge and skills needed to make effective progress through the curriculum. Many pupils are ill-prepared for their next steps.

The implementation of the curriculum is variable, including in the sixth form. Staff do not routinely have a clear understanding of pupils' starting points. Many do not check pupils' understanding effectively. This means that gaps in pupils' learning remain. Pupils continue to make the same errors. Many pupils do not have a solid foundation on which to build new learning.

The needs of pupils with SEND are identified but are often not successfully addressed. Some pupils with SEND do not receive the support that they need. Some experience a curriculum with little or no structure or coherence. Expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough.

The school collects a range of useful information about pupils' reading ability. A small number of pupils receive effective reading support. Their reading improves as a result. However, staff do not routinely use the information about pupils' reading ability to adapt pupils' learning effectively. Some pupils are unable to access the curriculum because they are unable to read the tasks that they are set.

The library is a real asset. It is a welcoming space for many pupils. The school has made great changes in a short amount of time. 'Genre Bingo' encourages pupils to try different books. The clubs held in the library are valued by pupils of all ages. Pupils said that this space is a 'special haven'.

The school has not resolved the weaknesses in behaviour identified at the previous inspection. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND that are suspended from school is far too high. Pupil absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, remains a concern. These vulnerable pupils are not in school often enough. Students in the sixth form, though, conduct themselves well. They are positive role models for the rest of the school.

The personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) curriculum is thoughtfully and logically sequenced. Pupils are taught about issues that may impact on them, such as the wider risks of vaping and the importance of consent. Pupils learn about protected characteristics. However, a few pupils do not recognise the full importance of equality and diversity. A small minority are not as respectful as they should be. Some pupils do not feel that their differences are celebrated or valued.

The quality of careers education and guidance is a strength of the school. Pupils, including in the sixth form, appreciate the helpful information they receive.

This has been a challenging time. Even so, staff feel proud to be members of Netherthorpe School. They appreciate the family feel of the school and leaders' consideration of their well-being. However, some concerns about staff workload remain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school knows its pupils well. Effective work takes place with external agencies to make sure that pupils receive the help that they need. However, records do not accurately reflect the actions taken to safeguard pupils' welfare.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not acted swiftly enough to stem the decline in educational standards. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection relating to pupils' underachievement and their poor behaviour persist and, in some respects, have got worse, particularly for

the most vulnerable. The school must ensure that it takes decisive action to bring about much-needed stability and swift improvements.

- The delivery of the curriculum is too variable, both within and across subjects and year groups. Too little attention is paid to pupils' starting points. Checks to determine how well pupils are learning the curriculum are often ineffective. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should across a wide range of subjects. The school must ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently and effectively in all subjects.
- The school's expectations of pupils' behaviour are too low. Pupils' poor conduct is often ignored. Too many pupils are allowed to opt out of lessons or to disrupt the learning of others. The school must make sure that staff have high expectations and manage pupils' behaviour consistently well, so that the school environment is suitable for learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND do not get the support they need. Too many of these pupils struggle to access the curriculum. They are suspended from school too often and many of them have poor attendance. Some do not receive the guidance needed to access the wider opportunities the school has to offer. The school must ensure that the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are met fully so that these pupils can thrive.
- The reading information collected through various tests is not used widely by staff to adapt pupils' learning. Some pupils cannot access the curriculum because they cannot read or comprehend the texts in front of them. Some pupils do not receive the expert support needed so that they can read fluently. The school must make sure that reading information is used expertly by staff to extend the support for pupils that struggle to read, to adapt learning, and to ensure pupils' equal access to the curriculum.
- The school takes suitable action to keep pupils safe. However, the procedures followed to track these actions lack rigour. Records of the school's work to safeguard pupils are sometimes incomplete. The school must ensure that it maintains comprehensive records of its work to safeguard pupils.
- Some pupils do not understand the importance of equality and diversity and why they matter. As a result, some pupils are not confident that their differences are recognised or valued. The school should nurture a culture of mutual respect, where all pupils are accepted for who they are.

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	137902
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10347521
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1043
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	188
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Doyle
CEO of the trust	Bev Matthews
Headteacher	Helen McVicar
Website	www.netherthorpe.derbyshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 October 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Minerva Learning Trust in December 2024.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and nine unregistered provisions.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the CEO and the chair of the board of trustees. She also met with a trustee and members of the local governing board.
- 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 put pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. Inspectors also visited lessons in other curriculum areas.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of information to evaluate the provision for SEND.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of information about pupils' attendance. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and at social times.
- The views of staff and pupils who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered. Additionally, inspectors reviewed the views of parents through Ofsted's Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Jayne Ashman, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Louisa Morris	Ofsted Inspector
Damian Painton	Ofsted Inspector
Jeremy Spencer	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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