

Inspection of New Avenue School

62 The Avenue, Southampton SO17 1XS

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 July 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say they love coming to this school because the staff really care and understand them. Friendly and approachable staff understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs well. They create a calm and welcoming environment. This makes pupils feel safe.

There are warm, trusting relationships between staff and pupils. Staff use their knowledge of pupils' abilities and interests to create an ambitious curriculum that is adapted well for each pupil. This engages pupils, and they quickly make gains in their academic learning.

Pupils learn to engage positively with the outside world. They are encouraged to pursue their personal passions. Regular trips into the community help build pupils' confidence and independence extremely well.

Pupils benefit from ample opportunities to learn about themselves and how to interact with others positively. Consequently, behaviour is excellent. Pupils are very friendly with each other and readily celebrate each other's successes.

Several parents and carers commented on the positive difference the school has made to their child. One summed up the views of many: 'This is a place where children are inspired to learn, supported to succeed and empowered to become kind, capable individuals.'

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

Many pupils have had significant time away from their previous school because of anxiety. Because of this, pupils' induction into school is carefully paced. Staff work with pupils and their parents to get to know pupils' needs and interests very well. As pupils' confidence increases, they are supported to attend school more frequently. Consequently, once they start, pupils are rarely absent from school. This is a major achievement for pupils and is central to the school's success.

Pupils learn a broad academic curriculum. The school intends that pupils will study towards a suite of GCSE, functional skills and other qualifications by the end of Year 11. The content of each subject is designed to build pupils' knowledge systematically. High-quality resources support pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as they learn. Staff are adept at ensuring that learning is well matched to pupils' starting points, interests and emotional needs. Teachers skilfully check pupils' understanding. They constantly adapt what they teach to help fill pupils' gaps in learning. Because of the school's well-organised and nurturing approach, pupils try hard and fully participate in their learning. As one parent said, 'My child has found a love for their education again.'

Reading is prioritised. Pupils read high-quality texts, many of which reflect pupils' SEND and the diversity of the wider world. Pupils who require it learn phonics using

a rigorous programme that helps them to become accurate and speedy readers. However, currently, there is no well-embedded, whole-school approach to ensuring that older pupils use their phonics knowledge across the curriculum when spelling words. In addition, pupils do not get enough opportunity to practise their handwriting. Consequently, this limits their ability to write fluently and sometimes slows their learning.

The school's values of courage, curiosity, collaboration and compassion form the backbone of the school's approach to supporting pupils' positive behaviour. The school's approach helps pupils understand themselves and their emotions extremely well. Expert therapists support staff to know how best to meet each pupil's SEMH needs. Consequently, pupils rarely become distressed and are able to concentrate on learning. When pupils do struggle to control their emotions, staff know just what to do to help pupils get back on track.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life outside of school and for their future lives. 'Personal empowerment' lessons help pupils learn how to react in social situations. There are extensive opportunities to learn in the community. Pupils visit country parks, museums and shops. They challenge themselves by participating in many different sporting and adventure-based activities. Pupils are encouraged to pursue their personal passions and consider how these might lead to future careers. Consequently, pupils' self-esteem improves as they learn to manage their anxiety when in the wider world.

Staff are incredibly enthusiastic about the proprietor's caring ethos and approach. The proprietor body is made up of the headteacher and the operations director. They are knowledgeable and experienced in SEMH and SEND education. They have made sure that staff are very well trained and that their workload is well considered. A board of governors is being set up. This is already providing useful challenge and support. The school is well run and meets the requirements of the independent school standards consistently over time. There are thorough systems to record information and inform the decisions that the school takes about pupils' education and well-being. The proprietor body is in the process of streamlining how some of these systems are used. It has recognised that currently there is not a clear process for using these systems collectively to analyse patterns and trends over time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- The school has not ensured that pupils have enough opportunity to practise their spelling and handwriting skills. As a result, pupils do not spell and write as accurately and fluently as they could. The school should ensure that pupils are

well supported to improve their spelling and handwriting across the whole curriculum.

- The school operates several recording systems. This means that it cannot analyse trends over time as efficiently as it might. The proprietor should accelerate the steps that it is already taking to streamline these systems so that it has a fully accurate oversight of its provision.

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	150798
DfE registration number	852/6015
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10375014
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	AC SEMH EDUCATION LTD
Chair	Clare Priday
Headteacher	Anthony Merriman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,000
Telephone number	02380 011 631
Website	www.newavenueschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@newavenueschool.co.uk

Information about this school

- New Avenue School is a special school for pupils aged nine to 16 years who have an education, health and care plan for SEMH needs. Pupils have anxiety, and many have been out of education for a significant period of time before joining this school.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 15 August 2024. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions. School staff accompany pupils during their time at these provisions.
- The school is registered to admit 20 pupils. Most current pupils are placed by Hampshire local authority.
- The school's address is 62 The Avenue, Southampton, SO17 1XS.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 school opened after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 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 and the operations director, who are also the proprietors of the school. Inspectors also met with other senior leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the chair of governors and another telephone conversation with a representative of Hampshire local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (including reading), mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. Inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans in some other subjects.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, pupils and the local authority designated officer; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture of safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors undertook a tour of the school and visited the classrooms and social areas. Inspectors considered a range of school documentation and records. They also checked the school building and grounds against the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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