

Inspection of New Line Learning Academy

Boughton Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9QL

Inspection dates:	13 and 14 May 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The head of school is Gary Cook. This school is part of Future Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Isabelle Linney Drouet, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Marilyn Hodges.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils recognise how the recent improvements made to the school are beginning to help them learn and achieve more. The school has high expectations for what it wants pupils to attain before they move on to their next stage of education, training or employment. Different opportunities are offered to develop pupils' talents and interests. However, current inconsistencies in the teaching of the curriculum mean too many pupils still find it difficult to articulate and apply their learning. The school's new leaders recognise this and are taking appropriate action to raise pupils' attainment across the school.

Pupils are certain that the school wants the very best for them. Caring staff are given the training and information they need that helps pupils to feel valued and well known as individuals. Pupils receive effective guidance and support to help them overcome any disadvantage. New pupils joining the school feel welcome and settle quickly.

The school's clear behaviour expectations help pupils to behave well. Pupils have high expectations of each other and understand how their behaviour has an impact on others. Pupils are respectful of each other and staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. This helps to foster the school's supportive and positive culture.

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

In the past, pupils have not achieved well enough in their key stage 4 examinations to be well prepared for their next steps. The school has taken action to address this. The recent development of the curriculum means that it is now logically ordered and precisely identifies what pupils need to know. This means teachers have a much clearer understanding of when to teach key information across all subjects.

However, while the curriculum is now well designed, there is inconsistency in how well it is taught. In some lessons, activities help pupils to remember the knowledge defined in the curriculum, and teachers make sure pupils build their knowledge systematically. However, where teaching is less strong, learning does not always match the intent of the curriculum. This diminishes how well pupils acquire and remember important subject content over time. As a result, too many do not achieve as well as they should.

The school is calm. Pupils know what the staff expect of them and rise to these expectations. Lessons are orderly. At breaktimes and lunchtime pupils enjoy each other's company and socialise sensibly. Pupils across different year groups know each other well, and this contributes to the positive community atmosphere.

Pupils' wider development is a priority. Teaching about important topics such as staying safe, respect, equality and diversity is carefully coordinated. 'Pathways' sessions build pupils' wider cultural capital and social skills. The school makes sure that all pupils can take part and benefit. Additionally, the school offers a range of trips and activities that help broaden pupils' experiences.

Careers education is frequent. The activities offered help pupils to understand the choices they have for their next steps. While the school aims to provide pupils with the required information about apprenticeships and technical education, pupils' participation in these opportunities is not carefully checked. As a result, some pupils are at risk of not finding out this important knowledge. The school therefore does not meet the requirements of the provider access legislation.

The school has recently introduced new processes to improve attendance. While many pupils now attend more regularly, some do not attend as often as they should. Support is also provided to remove potential barriers to regular attendance, including helping families recognise the importance of regular attendance. The school recognises the importance of this work to ensure pupils do not miss out on valuable education.

The school is highly inclusive and strives to remove any barriers to education. Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are well understood. These pupils are thoughtfully supported in class and achieve in line with their peers.

The new senior leadership team, governors and trustees have a shared understanding of their priorities for continued school improvement. They are working with staff to make the necessary changes. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel support is provided to manage their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum in some subjects is variable. Where this is the case, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school must ensure that teaching approaches match the intent of the curriculum and lead to pupils securing the necessary knowledge and skills across all subjects.
- A significant minority of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. As a result, they are missing out on vital learning. The school should ensure that its recently updated attendance strategy is implemented in a way that brings about more rapid improvements in attendance.
- The school does not check participation in careers education closely enough. This means that the school cannot ensure that all pupils receive the required encounters with approved providers of apprenticeships and technical education, as stipulated in the provider access legislation. The school must monitor and check which careers activities pupils attend and ensure that they all receive the required encounters.

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	135372
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10379842
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	820
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marilyn Hodges
CEO of the trust	Isabelle Linney Drouet
Headteacher	Gary Cook (Head of school)
Website	www.newlinelearning.com
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Future Schools Trust.
- The headteacher started in post shortly before inspection. All other members of the senior leadership team are new in post since the last inspection.
- The school currently uses two registered providers of alternative provision. Additionally, some pupils attend The Gateway. This is a provision on the school site that is operated by school and trust leaders.
- The school does not meet 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the head of school, other senior leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspectors met with a member of the trust board, the chair of the local governing body and the CEO of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, science, performing arts, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documents, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also visited lessons from a range of other curriculum subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Andy Rees	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector
Tom Neave	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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