

## School inspection report

21 to 23 October 2025

### **The New Forest Small School**

1 Southampton Road

Lyndhurst

Hampshire

SO43 7BU

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

## Contents

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	4
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....	6
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	8
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	10
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>11</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	12
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>13</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	13
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>16</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. The school is a supportive and caring environment. The proprietor and school leaders work closely together to prioritise the wellbeing of pupils throughout the school.
2. Leaders and staff develop mutually respectful relationships with pupils so that they feel known, valued and secure in the school environment. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem.
3. Leaders in the early years provide a rich and stimulating curriculum which reflects the seasonal change in the school's woodland setting. Staff employ well-planned activities and self-directed learning to ensure that communication and numeracy skills are taught effectively.
4. Leaders promote pupils' wellbeing through a distinctive core curriculum which incorporates timetabled weekly yoga and forest walks for all pupils and psychology for all secondary pupils. However, the restricted range of optional co-curricular activities provided after school and at lunchtime offers limited opportunities for pupils to develop varied skills and interests.
5. Children in the early years make effective progress in their social, emotional and personal development. In a mixed-age class including pupils from Nursery to Year 1, the youngest children develop self-esteem and self-confidence as they learn and play alongside older pupils.
6. Teachers provide regular and detailed individual feedback so that pupils know how to improve their work. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and closely monitored so that they make good progress.
7. Pupils are polite, friendly and behave well. Throughout the school, pupils are grouped in mixed-aged classes. Leaders set high expectations that older pupils will model kindness and respect towards their younger classmates. In lessons, teachers encourage pupils to be mutually supportive through collaborative learning and respectful debate. As a result, misbehaviour and incidents of bullying are rare.
8. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme is carefully planned. Pupils learn about the values of tolerance, respect and inclusion in line with the school's aims and ethos.
9. Leaders provide careers education through the PSHE programme. However, this programme does not offer pupils sufficient breadth of information on the range of academic and vocational courses and career opportunities which are available to them.
10. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff are well trained so that they are confident about how to report any safeguarding concerns which may arise. Leaders ensure that the arrangements for the recruitment of staff are secure and robust.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

The proprietor should:

- ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of co-curricular activities to enable them to develop new skills and interests
- strengthen careers guidance so that pupils are prepared effectively to make informed choices about a broader range of academic and vocational pathways and future careers.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. The proprietor ensures that school leaders have the skills and knowledge necessary for the fulfilment of their roles and can draw on the support of external expert advisors when necessary. The proprietor reviews all school policies and works closely with school leaders to ensure that policies and procedures are effectively implemented so that Standards are consistently met. A recent strategic review resulted in the development of a broader and more structured approach to governance through more regular meetings of the advisory governing body and the appointment of designated educational and safeguarding governors, who provide support and challenge for school leaders.
12. The proprietor and school leaders develop a nurturing culture which actively promotes pupils' wellbeing. Staff build and maintain respectful and supportive relationships with pupils. Teachers are alert to pupils' mental health needs and take effective measures to identify and address these, and support pupils. Leaders ensure that pastoral care is well resourced, for example through the provision of staff trained to support pupils' emotional needs and through the development of welcoming spaces to accommodate pupils needing access to a quieter environment.
13. School leaders identify creativity, wellbeing and achievement as key elements of the school's ethos. Promoting these values shapes their evaluation of the school's current provision and the strategic development of the school.
14. Leaders promote a thorough approach to the management and mitigation of risk and take suitable actions to reduce any potential risk to pupils. For example, following a recent review of the safety of the school site, leaders have improved the boundary fencing around the school. In the early years, daily checks of the setting are recorded and action is taken to address any identified issues. Training is given to the wider staff body so that they can review risk assessments appropriately and make any required amendments. Leaders, including those in the early years, ensure that appropriate risk assessments and high staffing ratios enable pupils to access a broad range of educational experiences, from trips to the seaside for the youngest pupils to adventurous play in the school's playground and in the forest.
15. Leaders provide parents with appropriate information through the school's website. They maintain clear policies so that parents and staff understand the school's practices and procedures. In the early years, parents are provided with regular updates on their child's progress through an online platform and regular conversations with teachers. The school provides parents of older pupils with an annual written report on the progress their child is making.
16. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities and meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders maintain an appropriate accessibility plan which is regularly reviewed and sets clear targets and timescales for action.
17. Leaders maintain a suitable complaints policy which provides a three-stage complaints procedure. Any formal complaints which are registered are managed effectively and in line with the school's policy. Leaders keep suitable records of any formal complaints, including of any subsequent actions which are taken.
18. Leaders maintain appropriate links with external agencies and provide the required information to the local authority relating to the provision and funding for pupils who hold an education, health and

care plan (EHC plan). Leaders ensure that the local authority is notified when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.

19. The early years setting is effectively led and managed. Leaders ensure that there is a stimulating curriculum and carefully planned activities which are aligned with the needs and interests of the child. As a result, all children make good progress towards their early learning goals (ELGs).

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

- 20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The school offers a suitable and well-planned curriculum designed to prioritise pupils' wellbeing. As a result, activities such as weekly timetabled yoga sessions and a Friday afternoon forest walk form part of the core curriculum for all pupils.
22. The curriculum for each mixed-age class is planned as a two or three year cycle to ensure that pupils make age-appropriate progress in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The curriculum is adapted for those pupils whose needs require individualised provision. Pupils with higher prior attainment are provided with appropriate challenge. Staff support pupils who need further consolidation effectively so that their individual needs are met consistently. As a result, pupils make good progress in their work.
23. The curriculum enables pupils to explore cross-curricular links between subjects. For example, in the early years, children develop their literacy through narrative journeys in yoga sessions and their numeracy through counting activities in Spanish. Older pupils gain confidence when using Spanish vocabulary through dance and song. In art lessons pupils develop creative responses to topics studied in Spanish lessons. As they progress through the school, pupils apply their creative cross-curricular learning to their individual research. For instance, pupils in Year 10 prepare presentations relating Japanese art, history and culture.
24. Teachers plan lessons effectively. Teachers' careful planning enables pupils to apply reasoning and critical thinking through practical scientific investigations. Teachers plan lessons which enable pupils to demonstrate independence and work collaboratively. For example, pupils write creative stories about sea creatures and support each other in developing the ideas for their stories. Teachers of younger pupils employ a structure of 'plan, do, review' and provide resources to enable pupils to generate their own ideas on a given theme and to realise those ideas by designing and producing an artefact. For example, pupils construct their ideas for working spinners using building kits and other materials. Pupils record, reflect and review their progress so that they develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning.
25. Leaders ensure that children in the early years have natural and tactile resources to encourage them to fully explore and engage their senses. Teachers place an emphasis on active exploring. Well-trained staff develop pupils' learning by encouraging dressing up and role play and suggesting ways of developing imaginative ideas through construction and art activities.
26. The school monitors and tracks pupils' progress in each subject effectively. A school-devised assessment framework, drawing on national literacy and numeracy schemes, measures progress in key skills. In examination years, written and verbal feedback is detailed and clearly linked to assessment criteria so that pupils know how to improve their work. Subject leaders share information on pupils' progress at weekly meetings so that academic leaders can identify and implement additional strategies for pupils in need of further support.
27. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. They consult closely at all stages of pupils' educational development so that skills in core subjects are carefully planned and monitored. Pupils develop effective literacy and communication skills throughout the school. Leaders draw on the resources of an external theatre company to develop the provision for drama so that pupils

demonstrate physical and vocal confidence in presentation and achieve success in LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) examinations.

28. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND co-ordinates the work of teachers and learning support assistants, providing strategies and monitoring their implementation. Assessment data is closely monitored so that pupils requiring additional support can be quickly identified. As a result, pupils who have SEND are effectively supported and make good progress.
29. Teachers build intra-personal skills and physical literacy through structured games and more informal activities. Lengthy lunch and break times allow pupils the freedom to play, chat and relax with informal music and craft activities. Pupils show initiative and independence by organising activities such as the fantasy board game club. However, the programme of co-curricular activities is underdeveloped and does not currently provide a sufficiently broad choice of options for pupils to develop a wider range of skills and interests.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

- 30. All the relevant Standards are met.**



## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

31. Leaders actively and effectively promote pupils' wellbeing. They create an environment of mutual trust and respect. Leaders promote pupils' wellbeing through initiatives such as the 'wellbeing wall' which provides an opportunity for pupils to spot and share examples of how they consider their own state of mind and share the success of others. The close, informal relationships between staff and pupils within the supportive school community mean that pupils readily share their concerns with adults. Leaders place 'worry boxes' in classrooms to provide pupils with opportunities to express concerns anonymously with the pastoral team.
32. The school implements a suitable PSHE curriculum which incorporates an age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) programme. Leaders teach topics such as healthy relationships, body image and consent. A half-termly newsletter informs parents of the topics to be covered in RSE and staff arrange coffee mornings for parents to view resources. PSHE work for younger pupils is structured around the theme of similarities and differences and includes topics such as 'children around the world' so that pupils develop a respect for diverse beliefs and lifestyles. The programme is taught by specialists who ensure that pupils' progress in PSHE is regularly assessed. Teachers use a range of appropriate resources and consult with pupils so that the topics covered are relevant to their needs and interests.
33. In the early years, leaders encourage an understanding of religious diversity. For example, they provide colourful Diwali materials, with stories and attractive and colourful materials which promote curiosity and questions about different religious celebrations. Older pupils study the beliefs of major world religions and consider broader philosophical and ethical concepts by reflecting on broader questions such as the nature of truth and the purpose of existence.
34. Leaders plan the curriculum carefully so that pupils develop self-knowledge and self-esteem. In English lessons, pupils explore the concept of peace through the experience of forest bathing which is a reflective relaxation practice. Yoga sessions provide pupils with opportunities to practise mindfulness techniques. Regular communal forest walks allow pupils to gain an appreciation of their natural surroundings.
35. Leaders ensure that the supervision arrangements for children in the early years are appropriate. Teachers know pupils well and maintain close oversight of them in class and at breaktimes so that minor differences between pupils are quickly picked up and acted upon. As a result, pupils play and interact together happily and respectfully.
36. The school has an appropriate behaviour policy and an effective anti-bullying strategy. Teachers address any behavioural incidents at an early stage using a restorative approach which helps pupils to develop empathy and an understanding of differing perspectives. Leaders with pastoral responsibility maintain a detailed wellbeing, behaviour and learning log so that pupils' needs can be considered from a broad perspective.
37. Premises are secure, well-maintained and suitable for learning. All staff undertake health and safety training as part of their induction. Health and safety concerns are reviewed in the weekly senior leadership team meetings and in half-termly advisory board sessions so that progress on any action points identified is regularly monitored. Robust systems are in place to manage the risk of fire and

regular fire evacuation drills take place. Leaders provide regular training sessions on fire awareness. An annual fire risk assessment is completed and fire alarms are tested weekly.

38. The school provides appropriate medical facilities. Staff receive suitable training so that first aid is administered competently. In the early years, all staff complete paediatric first aid training.
39. Leaders maintain suitable admission and attendance registers. Attendance rates are reviewed on a weekly basis and leaders inform the local authority of any concerns. The school's provision for flexible schooling is monitored in collaboration with the local authority.
40. Leaders encourage an inclusive approach to physical education (PE). The focus on outdoor learning for children in the early years is a key part of the physical skills development provision. During these sessions they are able to mix and play with older pupils which enables them to learn games such as dodgeball. Children develop their physicality and creative abilities through climbing on adventure equipment, riding tricycles and building structures with large equipment such as drainpipes. They develop their fine-motor skills through, with assistance, making pom-poms or building with twigs and leaves.
41. The PSHE syllabus supports pupils' understanding that physical exercise promotes positive mental health. Younger pupils study the importance of being active so that they gain an understanding of the role that physical movement plays in emotional regulation. In PE lessons, teachers encourage pupils to be competitive and to reinforce their skills and techniques through playing sport together. For example, pupils develop their communication, team work and problem-solving skills through tactical gameplay in touch rugby.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

- 42. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

43. Leaders develop a culture of kindness and respect. Pupils are supportive towards each other and celebrate diversity, individuality and difference. The PSHE programme is planned effectively to support pupils' understanding of respect and tolerance. Pupils listen carefully to others when they explore moral and ethical topics and engage in constructive disagreement and debate.
44. Pupils study psychology which enables them to deepen their understanding of human behaviour. In history, they explore the clash between democratic and authoritarian control when they learn about the rule of law in the United Kingdom through the discussion of key topics such as the Magna Carta and the Peterloo Massacre. Through balanced discussion of the role of political protest, pupils explore challenging questions about political violence, justice and the rule of law in a democratic society. This supports pupils' understanding of right from wrong and develops respectful and tolerant attitudes.
45. Pupils develop an effective understanding of money and economics. Children in the early years act as shopkeepers and begin to learn about the value of coins. Pupils study a topic about money in PSHE lessons which develops their understanding of spending, saving and the purpose of money and banking. Older pupils explore budgeting and taxation so that they are prepared for the financial responsibilities of adult life. In history lessons, pupils learn about the macro-economic factors which influence the relationship between Britain and the European Union.
46. Leaders provide a programme of careers education in PSHE lessons and evaluate careers provision against the Gatsby benchmarks. Pupils are introduced to potential careers through interviewing their parents about career paths and leaders invite parents into school to talk about their jobs. However, the school does not give pupils sufficient breadth of information for them to be able to make informed choices about potential academic and vocational pathways and future careers.
47. In the early years, leaders aim to make children feel comfortable in the environment and amongst their peers to promote their social development. Teachers work sensitively with the children, modelling politeness so that pupils learn to share and take turns with their peers and understand the importance of acting kindly and responsibly towards others. Teachers support children's understanding of social responsibility in the wider world by inviting members of the emergency services to visit the school to talk about their role in helping the community.
48. The school provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to contribute to their local community. For example, pupils take part in community litter picking and donate food items to the local foodbank. Pupils raise money for charity by baking cakes and making bracelets to sell at the school's Pride celebration. Leaders support pupils' fundraising ideas such as when they raise money to support a charity which provides care for domestic animals.
49. Leaders provide suitable opportunities for pupils to make suggestions which will benefit the wider school community. Pupils represent the viewpoints of their peers, including in the early years. Leaders listen and respond to pupils' requests such as when they provide improved outdoor play equipment.

## **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

**50. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

51. Leaders promote a thorough safeguarding culture. Leaders have a clear understanding of local thresholds and seek advice from local safeguarding partners when necessary. The safeguarding team maintains up-to-date safeguarding records, using a rating system to monitor whether the few incidents which occur meet local thresholds. The confidential safeguarding log works in conjunction with the welfare log which monitors pupils' wellbeing and is shared with all staff.
52. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are trained appropriately for their role. They consult with local safeguarding partners and refer safeguarding concerns to them, if required. The safeguarding team maintain detailed safeguarding records which reflect the latest statutory guidance.
53. Leaders provide staff with effective safeguarding training, including at induction. Staff complete 'Prevent' duty training so that they are alert to the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. They attend regular meetings and receive weekly updates from the school's safeguarding team. Staff consider safeguarding scenarios and participate in quizzes which test their safeguarding knowledge such as how to respond to and report low-level or more serious safeguarding concerns. As a result, staff demonstrate a confident understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures such as those required to report low-level concerns.
54. Leaders carry out all required safer recruitment checks on staff before they begin working at the school. These checks are recorded on a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR). Staff receive specific training so that the school's safer recruitment procedures reflect the latest statutory guidance. The proprietor maintains thorough oversight of the SCR.
55. Leaders monitor pupils' use of the internet effectively. The internet filtering and monitoring system alerts leaders about any suspicious online activity. Any alerts are investigated and suitably recorded. Pupils learn how to stay safe online through PSHE lessons. For example, pupils are taught about how to deal with online misinformation and disinformation. Leaders consult with pupils and adapt their teaching in response, such as by revising the PSHE syllabus so that pupils broaden their knowledge about the benefits and potential dangers of artificial intelligence.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	The New Forest Small School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	850/6075
<b>Address</b>	The New Forest Small School 1 Southampton Road Lyndhurst Hampshire SO43 7BU
<b>Phone number</b>	023 8028 4415
<b>Email address</b>	nfss@newforestsmallschool.com
<b>Website</b>	www.newforestsmallschool.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Greta Alp
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alex James
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 17
<b>Number of pupils</b>	67
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 to 29 September 2022

## Information about the school

57. New Forest Small School is a co-educational day school situated in the heart of the New Forest. The school has three mixed-age primary school classes and two mixed-age secondary classes. Since the last inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2023. A new proprietor was appointed in March 2025.
58. Early years provision for nine children is organised in a single class of children of mixed ages, from three to six years and is modelled on a European kindergarten model.
59. The school has identified 19 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Seven pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
60. The school has identified that no pupils speak English as an additional language.
61. The school states that its aims are to offer a nurturing, environment which gives children the opportunity to develop academically, socially and emotionally.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

21 to 23 October 2025

62. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

63. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

64. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.



**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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