

North Ridge High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132905
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	360455
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julia Duffy
Headteacher	Mrs Bernice Kostick
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2008
School address	Higher Blackley Education Village Alworth Road, Blackley Manchester M9 0RP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 10 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with a small group of parents and carers, three members of the governing body, members of the school council and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including safeguarding policies, the school development plan, students' work and tracking data. Questionnaire returns from staff, students and 34 parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The relative achievement of different groups of students to determine how well all students are prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- The use of assessment to set individual targets and the quality of marking and feedback to inform students of the next steps in their learning.
- The impact of the provision on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and on their contribution to the wider community.
- The role of middle leaders in monitoring the effectiveness of provision within their areas of responsibility, and in promoting learning and progress throughout the school.

Information about the school

North Ridge High School provides for students with a statement of special educational needs for moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or complex medical or behavioural needs. The majority of students has severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most students are known to be eligible for free school meals. A large majority are White British with a few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority speak English as an additional language, with very few at an early stage of learning English. A few students are looked after by the local authority. The school continues to have a dual role as a special school and a specialist support centre for mainstream schools in the north of the city.

There have been a number of changes since the last inspection. The school has moved to new purpose-built premises located on a shared site with a new mainstream secondary school. The sixth form is now operating and there have been recent changes to the leadership team. The school has received a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools Gold status, the Rights Respecting School's award and the Cultural Diversity Quality mark at Gold level. The number on roll has increased significantly since the last inspection and the school is currently oversubscribed.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the school is moving from strength to strength. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their contribution to the community are outstanding. Community cohesion is promoted extremely well; there are excellent links with parents and carers and outstanding partnerships with local schools and within the community. Provision for care, guidance and support is also outstanding and has resulted in rapid improvements in students' personal development, particularly in their behaviour and attendance. All this is reflected in the very positive views of parents and carers, one of whom typically described the school as, 'Very warm and welcoming to parents, where staff go the extra mile to help the children.'

All groups of students, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, those with more complex medical needs, those at an early stage of learning English and those in the sixth form are achieving equally well. Students make good progress in their accredited courses and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The excellent provision for the community café, managed by students in the sixth form, is a particular strength in developing independent skills and preparation for the world of work. Students' learning and progress throughout the school are nearly always good because teaching is good. Behaviour management is very good because staff are well trained. Their particular expertise in this area, also forms the basis of their successful outreach work in other schools. Team work with teaching assistants is strong. Teachers generally use assessment well to match tasks and resources to the different learning needs of students. Very occasionally, this is not the case and a few pupils either struggle because the task is too hard or find learning activities too easy. The quality of marking is also variable across the school, so that students are not always informed how they can improve their work.

Students' behaviour is good and they have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They adopt very healthy lifestyles as a result of the many opportunities within the good curriculum to promote personal development.

Good leadership and management across the school and effective governance are based on accurate self-evaluation and close monitoring of all aspects of the schools' work, especially teaching and learning. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. The role of new middle leaders is not fully developed, especially in ensuring the consistency of teaching and the use of assessment across the school. Nevertheless, the school has good capacity for sustained improvement as demonstrated in the improvements in students' outcomes, in provision and through the very smooth transition to the new school site.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on students' achievement by ensuring that:
 - assessment information is always used to plan activities or match learning resources in lessons to the different needs of students
 - marking always informs students how to improve their learning.
- Ensure middle leaders develop their roles further by enabling them to:
 - monitor the impact of teaching and the use of assessment on students' learning and progress across the school
 - ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and the use of assessment within their areas of responsibility.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with very low levels of knowledge, skills and understanding due to the complexity and severity of their special educational needs. It is, therefore, inappropriate to judge their attainment against national norms. Their achievement is good because they make good progress during their time in school, particularly in their literacy, communication and social interaction skills, and in their personal development. In lessons, students are focused on learning and try their best to succeed. Those with additional more complex special educational needs, such as severe autism, make equally good progress from their low starting points. This is because teachers and support staff nearly always make good use of assessment in lessons to match tasks, learning resources and specialist approaches to learning needs. Very occasionally, this is not the case and a few students either struggle with learning or find it too easy. Older students and those in the sixth form make good progress in their examination courses, such as Entry level certificates in literacy and numeracy; Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards in personal and social development; and the Duke of Edinburgh award. All students leaving school in Year 11 or at the end of the sixth form move on to further education college placements relevant to their needs and interests, such as hair and beauty and car mechanics. All groups of students, including those whose circumstances potentially make them vulnerable nearly always make equally good progress towards their individual targets.

Students say they enjoy school, which is reflected in their high levels of participation in lunchtime activities and after-school clubs. They display an excellent understanding of healthy living by making healthy choices at meal times, and exercising vigorously at break times, lunchtimes, after school and in the planned physical education programmes. Their outstanding contribution to the community is reflected in running the excellent community café for the benefit of the school and the community. It is also seen in fundraising for targeted projects in the developing world. The very active school council is involved in interviewing new staff and makes a strong contribution to the school's rules for behaviour. Its views on what aspects of teaching students enjoy most and what could be further improved have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Through the school's work towards the Rights Respecting School award, students have developed a good understanding of rights and responsibilities. This has led to their positive contribution in keeping the school safe, as junior wardens. Students take every opportunity for reflection

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and show strong insight into the plight of others less fortunate than themselves. They develop very good collaborative skills, through for example, producing a chat show when they visited a local radio station. They have an excellent awareness and appreciation of diversity, not only through their fair trade project across the world but also through hosting Ukrainian students and their teachers, jointly with their co-located secondary school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Clear strengths in teaching include good subject knowledge, very good management of behaviour and strong team work with teaching assistants. Teachers make good use of specialist resources, such as objects of reference and communication aids, to ensure all students can access learning and they make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote teaching and stimulate learning. As a result, students are highly motivated to succeed and enjoy their activities. Staff have a thorough knowledge of their students and nearly always use this information effectively in planning activities and in using resources which are matched to different levels of ability, although this is not always the case. Students' written work is marked with positive comments but marking does not always inform them of how to improve their work.

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The curriculum has a strong emphasis on developing skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and personal, social and health education. The well-conceived individual education plans take into account the aptitudes and interests of students and ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the needs of all. Specialist approaches for developing communication skills are taught and supported effectively enabling students to make good progress in their learning. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors enrich students' learning. The school works in close partnership with the youth service and is an access centre for the Duke of Edinburgh award which forms part of the Key Stage 4 and sixth form provision. There are some good opportunities for integration and the school is exploring further opportunities for this with its co-located mainstream secondary school.

The school is highly successful in involving parents and carers in their children's education, with their very good attendance at annual reviews and full consultation and partnership in issues relating to their children's well-being. Excellent links with the Connexions service has led to highly relevant placements tailored precisely to students' needs when they leave school. Students who find themselves in potentially vulnerable circumstances benefit from excellent care, guidance and support, which enables them to make equally good progress as others. Excellent links with outside professionals, such as health, therapy and social services promote pupils well-being extremely well. The outstanding promotion of regular attendance through family meetings, the highly relevant reward system, target setting and peer support to promote attendance in classes, has resulted in a sharp reduction in unauthorised absence and broadly average attendance from previously very low levels.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

All staff share the same vision for the school and are driving improvements forward. The outcomes from lesson observations by most leaders are used to inform school development. New middle leaders are beginning to develop their roles but are not yet monitoring the consistency of teaching and the use of assessment and its impact on learning and progress across the school. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met. Members of the governing body monitor key aspects of the school's work closely, holding the school to account for its work. They visit the school and take the views of students, parents and carers into account for school development. The strongly positive views of parents and carers reflect the outstanding links the school has with them. Communication between school and home is particularly strong. Through the regular parents' support meetings in school, parents and carers benefit from support and advice and they make suggestions for training, such as fire safety in the home and behaviour management. The school has developed outstanding partnerships with local schools,

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colleges and within the community, which have resulted in significant improvements in the school's provision, such as the community café and as a centre of excellence for managing behaviour. As a consequence, the school has a strong reputation for its outreach services within its locality.

Equality of opportunity is promoted well as all groups of students nearly always progress at the same rate and all engage in the life of the school. Racial understanding is promoted very well with no incidents of racial discrimination. All requirements to ensure the safety and well-being of students are fully met and the school is vigilant and rigorous in ensuring the safety of students through high levels of supervision at all times and the promotion of safety across the curriculum. The school's thorough evaluation of the impact of its action plan to promote community cohesion has led to excellent initiatives locally, nationally and globally. These include paired links with a similar school in a rural location, links with a school in Africa and within the community to promote cultural awareness. Together these have led to the achievement of the Cultural Diversity Quality mark.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form are making good progress in their learning and in their personal development. All are on course to meet their targets and gain a wide range of accreditation through ASDAN, the Duke of Edinburgh award, the National Skills Profile and adult literacy and numeracy certificates. Good teaching and a good curriculum successfully builds on the provision at Key Stages 3 and 4. The development of independence skills is greatly enhanced through the excellent community café run by the students as a mini-enterprise. They budget, shop for Fairtrade products to sell and calculate how much these should be sold for to make a profit. They then donate the profits of this enterprise to specifically targeted Fairtrade projects within the developing world. Excellent guidance and

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support ensures that students always stay safe. They benefit from suitable work experience placements and are well prepared for life beyond school; all transfer smoothly to further education. Good leadership ensures that the provision has developed rapidly and is leading to good outcomes for students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost a third of parents and carers returned their questionnaires with nearly all expressing highly positive views of the school. They all agreed that the school keeps their children safe, that teaching is good and the school informs them of their children's progress. Nearly all agree that the school is well run, that their children are making good progress and that behaviour is managed well. A very few parents and carers expressed concerns which related to the progress of their individual children, the help provided to support their children's learning and the extent to which the school meets their children's needs. These were discussed with the headteacher. The overwhelming majority of parents' and carers' views are similar to those of inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Ridge High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 110 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	74	6	18	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	28	82	5	15	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	68	10	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	56	11	32	0	0	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	23	68	11	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	53	10	29	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	56	13	38	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	62	9	26	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	71	5	15	1	3	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	56	11	32	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	59	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	71	9	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	79	3	9	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of North Ridge High School, Manchester, M9 0RP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We were very impressed with your good behaviour and positive attitudes to school. We particularly enjoyed your presentation in assembly on fair trading. You told us how good your school is, how much you enjoy learning and how well you are doing in lessons. We agree that you go to a good school, and that you make good progress because teaching is good. Here are some other things we found out about your school. You receive excellent care, guidance and support, which enable you to make really very good progress in your personal development. The school is good in promoting your well-being. It has outstanding links with your parents and carers and excellent partnerships with other schools and agencies. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and you make an excellent contribution to the community, especially through your community cafe. Your school is well run, under the very strong leadership of your headteacher. To make your school even better, I have asked staff and the members of the governing body to ensure that:

- your teachers always use their very good knowledge of what you can do to plan challenging activities for you and to tell you how you can further improve your learning when they mark your work
- those teachers who manage learning across the school, check that teaching and how teachers use their knowledge of what you can do, is always as good as in the best lessons.

You can help by continuing to do your best. I wish you luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

Lead inspector

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