

Northway School

The Fairway, Mill Hill, London, NW7 3HS

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Teaching since the previous inspection has improved consistently from already high standards. Most teaching is outstanding. Teachers demonstrate excellent skills as a result of close team work and regular focused training.
- Adults provide exceptionally well for the individual learning needs of each pupil. All adults skilfully and consistently use communication strategies to promote the pupils' understanding. They successfully overcome the barriers to learning experienced by the majority of pupils with complex communication and autistic spectrum disorders.
- Teachers plan precisely-adapted activities which are tailored for each pupil. These are underpinned by challenging targets for individuals. The targets are continually and rigorously checked to make sure each pupil is making the best progress possible.
- Pupils throughout the school, including in early years, make excellent progress. A rapidly growing majority of pupils make progress at significantly higher rates than those expected of pupils with similar learning difficulties.
- Pupils throughout the school, including early years, make outstanding progress in their communication. They make equally good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics and in their personal development.
- The subjects pupils follow are exceptionally well adapted to their learning needs and abilities. Leaders of subjects check the effectiveness of the curriculum very regularly and ensure it is adjusted, where necessary, to meet the needs of individual pupils and enable them to make even faster progress.
- Adults manage the pupils' behaviour outstandingly well. They have a very good understanding of each pupil. They consistently use carefully developed procedures for each pupil to ensure they can learn, free from anxiety or confusion about what they are expected to do.
- As a result, the pupils enjoy school and they feel safe and secure. Their attendance is high for the type of school.
- The experienced headteacher has made sure very high standards have been maintained and improved on over many years. She has built a team of senior and middle leaders who are outstandingly successful in helping to drive up rates of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
- Governors are exceptionally well informed about the school's work. They use their detailed knowledge to provide a strong level of challenge and support to the school's leadership.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons and parts of lessons, the great majority of which were joint observations with members of the senior management team.
- Meetings were held with teachers, middle and senior managers, a group of governors and a representative of the local authority. Frequent short informal discussions were held with pupils to gain their attitudes towards school.
- Inspectors took into account the school's surveys of parents' opinions, last conducted in December 2014. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be counted. The team also looked at the 39 completed staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including self-evaluation and development planning. Records of pupils' behaviour and progress since the previous inspection were analysed, as well as reports by senior leaders on the quality of teaching and the range of subjects taught. Inspectors checked pupils' attendance figures, as well as all procedures relating to the safeguarding of children.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, speech and communication difficulties and a small minority of pupils with severe learning difficulties. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs. A quarter of pupils are girls.
- There is a group of 10 children in the early years provision who attend full time.
- An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for additional government funding, the pupil premium. This is given for pupils who are entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority. In 2014, in Year 6, this group of pupils was too small to be reported on specifically.
- A large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, reflecting the make up of the borough. A similar majority speak English as an additional language.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure there is a consistent format across the school to record the comprehensive information adults use to note the very small learning steps made by pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The experience and expertise of the headteacher have enabled her, over many years, to lead the school to consistently higher levels of pupils' achievement and teaching quality. She has been very well supported by an outstanding team of senior leaders.
- Middle leaders, who coordinate provision in various areas of the curriculum, are very successful. They have clearly defined responsibilities which they approach enthusiastically. Middle leaders have had a significant positive impact on the quality of teaching and the rates of pupils' progress in their areas of the school's work. The early years provision is managed outstandingly well.
- Together, the leaders rigorously and regularly check on all aspects of the pupils' achievement and the effectiveness of teaching. As a result, the progress of most pupils, including in early years, is rapid. Teachers and other adults are enthusiastic about their contribution to the pupils' success. There is high morale.
- Leaders thus have a detailed knowledge of the progress and personal development of each pupil. Excellent leadership ensures that every child makes the best progress possible. Should a pupil's progress falter, this is quickly identified and swift help provided in terms of extra support or further adaptations to the activities. All the pupils are very well supported to do as well as they can. There is no discrimination and every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who receive additional funding, make equal progress to other pupils. The funding has been well used to provide extra individual support and to employ speech and language and occupational therapists.
- The management of teachers' work is robust and very well organised. Senior and middle leaders consistently check on the quality of teaching. Each adult has rigorous reviews of their performance, based clearly on national teaching standards, and these are appropriately linked to pay awards for good performance. Similarly, any work by teachers which falls below the school's high standards is quickly tackled through intensive coaching and further training. Governors are fully informed of outcomes and contribute effectively to raising the quality of teaching.
- All adults regularly update their skills through further training. For example, weekly sessions inform staff about developments in providing for pupils with autism, and there is continuing training in the use of symbols and signs used in the school. This ensures consistency in their use and has a positive impact on the pupils' understanding and confidence in their learning.
- The pupils' learning activities are exceptionally well adapted for each child. Pupils have precise targets which are challenging, but which develop their learning rapidly in small steps. The teaching of communication is a strength and this underpins the outstanding progress pupils make in literacy and numeracy.
- All the pupils' activities continually practise and build on communication, either through symbols or through developing speech. Reading, writing and number practice are built into every activity, including in early years, and this both reinforces and extends the pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. This in turn promotes excellent progress throughout the range of subjects. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The pupils make excellent progress in their independence and social skills. This is because of the high priority the school places on helping the pupils to become involved in the local and wider community. Pupils have personal targets which have high expectations of tolerance and friendliness towards others and in developing understanding of how to manage their own behaviour.
- Assemblies and regular personal, health and social education lessons are effective in developing the pupils' abilities to reflect on the lives of others and how they can be helped, for instance through donating to appeals. The school ensures that cultural differences are celebrated through visits and by visitors to school. The pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of social cohesion in the school and the wider world. They are very well prepared to take their place in modern Britain.
- The school makes excellent use of additional physical education and sport funding. Pupils have regular opportunities through lunchtime and other clubs to experience a variety of sports and physical activities, such as boccia, cricket and trampolining. The school provides very well attended dance and drama activities which add to the pupils' enjoyment and successfully develop their communication and confidence in socialising with others.
- The curriculum has a positive impact on the pupils' behaviour and their academic progress and physical well-being. The pupils make outstanding progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority maintains a light touch approach to the school and recognises its many strengths,

including the rigour of the school's monitoring of its own effectiveness and the drive to improve continually on the pupils' progress and well-being and the quality of teaching. The school's leaders are well aware, for example, of some inconsistencies in the methods teachers use to record assessment information. Action to improve this has been prepared as part of the school's detailed development planning.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Leaders ensure pupils are safe through exemplary procedures for safeguarding which are very well organised and monitored by the headteacher and a nominated governor.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are exceptionally well informed and have an excellent understanding of information on pupils' progress, how it compares with that of similar schools, and the management of teachers' performance. They are knowledgeable about, and fully involved in, how good performance is rewarded and any underachievement by teachers tackled. As a result, they contribute very effectively to the school's development.
 - They effectively oversee financial control, including the salary arrangements for teaching. They maintain close supervision of additional government funding and regularly check the impact on the pupils' progress and well-being. Governors are able to challenge school leaders very effectively. They take part in regular training, such as in aspects of child protection and safeguarding and in the use of performance information on pupils' progress. They ensure that all current statutory requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. All pupils, including those with communication difficulties and those with autism, have very positive attitudes to their learning. This is because activities are so well adapted to their stage of learning and challenge them to make rapid progress. Parents confirm that their children are enthusiastic about school and that standards of behaviour are high.
- As a result of the excellent use of communication, using pictures, symbols and carefully structured speech, pupils have a very good understanding of how to behave in the classroom and in the dining room and playground. Classrooms are generally quiet and pupils concentrate and apply themselves to work for relatively long periods. The dining room is calm. Pupils learn to socialise and share with their classmates. Where appropriate for individuals, adults provide symbols to help pupils choose their food and help them learn to sit in company with others.
- The pupils' behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Where appropriate, pupils have individual and detailed behaviour plans which are revised continually to ensure they are free from anxiety and learn how to behave in different situations. Records of all incidents are recorded in detail and used to help adults further adapt activities and approaches to support the pupils. As a result, there are very few recorded incidents of unacceptable conduct. Pupils enjoy their learning and the familiar structures of the classroom.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary and very closely monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are of the highest standards.
- Over time, the pupils develop a growing understanding of how to keep safe. There are stringent and very well organised procedures to ensure internet safety. Pupils often go into the local community. They learn to cross roads and conduct themselves safely when surrounded by strangers. There are regular assemblies and specific lessons to teach the pupils how to keep themselves safe and secure.
- There have been no recorded incidents of bullying or derogatory racial comments over a long period. Pupils who were spoken to were adamant that there was no bullying of any kind and that 'everyone is a friend'.
- Parents confirm the high standards of pupils' safety and express their overwhelming satisfaction with the school's procedures. Attendance is above average and high for the type of school. The school's attendance officer is diligent in quickly following up any unexplained absence.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much of the teaching over time has been outstanding. The quality of teaching has steadily improved since the high standards found at the previous inspection, and confirmed by detailed checks on teachers' performance. As a result of the checks, the high levels of professional development training are very

clearly focused on identified areas for further improvement. Currently the focus is on improving the already high quality in the teaching of aspects of science.

- Teachers have consistently high expectations of the pupils' progress. Very clear and challenging targets build successfully on the pupils' previous learning in small and achievable steps. All pupils, from different ethnic groups, those with complex learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language, are enabled and encouraged to make the best progress that they can.
- There is outstanding teaching of communication, through symbols and signs and through the use of structured well-organised simple language. All pupils make excellent progress in communication and this has a very positive impact on their progress, including those for who English is an additional language. There is outstanding use made of information and communication technology through sometimes innovative use of devices in encouraging and reinforcing communication. The use of this technology is expertly managed.
- Pupils make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics through outstanding teaching in each subject. Communication, literacy and numeracy teaching is exceptionally well planned in every subject. The school's leaders and governors have prioritised the development of reading through the construction of a library and an insistence on high standards throughout the school. This has had a significant impact on the pupils' progress and love of reading, both at school and to their parents.
- Classrooms are very well organised. Classroom teams of adults work exceptionally closely and effectively to check and promote the progress of each pupil. Each child receives a very high level of individual support. Adults very effectively use language, and sometimes symbols, to extend the pupils' understanding. They are very adept in continually checking each pupil's understanding and in quickly adapting their language or the learning activity to ensure the pupil knows what to do and how to do it. The pupils are consistently made aware of how to improve their work and what they will do next. This adds to the pupils' confidence and challenges pupils to improve as fast as they can.
- The recording of information on the pupils' progress through lessons in very small steps is excellent and enables teachers to focus their planning on tiny, but achievable, steps in learning for each pupil to ensure their rapid progress. Although all adults invariably record every bit of progress, there is no consistent format for the recording and, as a result, there is a variety of methods used. While these are all of high quality, they can be confusing for new teachers to the class and make it more difficult for senior and middle leaders to check on the quality of assessment.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The attainment of pupils remains below that expected of pupils in mainstream schools because of their severe and complex learning difficulties. Most pupils, however, make progress through the school at sustained and rapid rates, and above that expected nationally. Their progress is often significantly higher than that of pupils in similar schools.
- Children in the early years make excellent progress in communication and social development through outstanding teaching and carefully tailored activities for each individual.
- The pupils make outstanding progress towards challenging academic and personal targets. They make outstanding progress in their communication and in their literacy and numeracy skills. By Year 6, higher ability pupils write in gradually more complex sentences with correct spelling and grammar. Most of the older pupils read with increasing fluency. These skills are well applied in other subjects and help to ensure outstanding progress, for most pupils, throughout the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who are eligible for additional funding, make excellent progress. The school's records show clearly how the gap in their achievement has been narrowed. There are now no differences in their rates of progress compared to others. Pupils from different ethnic groups and the pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve very well. They make progress at the same rate as other pupils.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The children make exceptional progress in all aspects of their education and particularly in their development of communication and in their physical and social development. All groups of children, including those with autism, those who are in receipt of additional funding and those for who English is an additional language, make equally good progress. There are no gaps in achievement between any groups. The progress made by children in the early years ensures they are ready to access to the school's Year 1 curriculum.
- Teaching is excellent and based on detailed assessment of each child's stage of development. Activities

are very often personalised for individual children. These are accompanied by comprehensive and challenging targets which support the children's rapid improvement in skills. Adults are highly responsive to the needs of the children and take every opportunity to help them develop communication skills and their independence and confidence.

- The children greatly enjoy their learning. Facilities and resources are excellent, both in the classroom and in the outside learning areas. The children are invariably very well supervised and adults take every opportunity to extend the children's language. Adults maintain exemplary records of each child's progress and use these to plan activities precisely so that all the children undertake challenging and stimulating tasks.
- Children are effectively encouraged throughout the day to extend their independence skills and confidence. In a swimming lesson, they listened intently to adult instructions and were keen to try new things, such as swimming through a small tunnel, which required trust and a curiosity to attempt new challenges.
- The children are kept very safe and all procedures to ensure their safety are outstanding. The children's behaviour is excellent. Children are interested in their learning and their attitudes to activities and to adults and other children are very positive.
- Parents are made welcome and report that they feel regularly consulted and informed about their child's progress and well-being.
- The early years provision is managed outstandingly well. All staff work in very effective teams and the provision is characterised by the drive to make sure all the children achieve as well as they can. The training for staff is well developed and accurately focused on consistently improving outcomes for children.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101395
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	449544

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matt Dreisin
Headteacher	Lesley Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 June 2010
Telephone number	020 8359 5450
Fax number	020 8959 5812
Email address	head@northway.barnet.sch.uk

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