

Highbury Grove School

8 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EQ

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Senior leaders and the governing body have failed to improve low standards over time. They have not ensured that pupils make good enough progress from their starting points.
- Leaders do not hold teachers sufficiently to account for poor pupil outcomes. Procedures to check the quality of teaching are not robust.
- The quality of teaching across different subjects is highly variable. In a range of subjects, teachers have low expectations of pupils and the quality of work they produce. Consequently, outcomes in some subjects, including mathematics, are too low.
- Leaders do not routinely check that the spending of pupil premium funding is having an impact. Disadvantaged pupils make far less progress than other pupils do nationally.
- Leaders have not placed sufficient importance on improving literacy across the school. As a result, some pupils do not receive adequate support.
- Groups of pupils, including the most able, make far less progress from their starting points than pupils nationally.
- Leaders have not ensured that the conduct of pupils around the school site is consistently good. Some pupils' poor behaviour leads to unsafe situations. Pupils have concerns about the level of bullying. Fixed-term exclusions from school for poor behaviour are high. Consequently, safeguarding is not effective.
- Attendance is too low. Too many pupils attend school sporadically. Leaders' attempts to stem the decline have been ineffective.
- Governors do not sufficiently challenge leaders in order to secure the necessary improvements. They have been too accepting of information provided by the headteacher.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the quality of education they are providing.
- Leaders have not established a positive, well-ordered culture across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The 16–19 study programmes are good. The sixth form is well led and benefits from being part of the Islington IC6 consortium. Students achieve well and successfully go on to chosen university courses and apprenticeships.
- Pupils are given a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities, including sport and organised outdoor education activities.
- A high priority is given to participation in music events. All pupils learn to play an instrument.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders must:
 - establish a consistently well-ordered environment so that pupils behave well, attend well, are safe and can learn without interruption
 - ensure that their judgements about standards across the school are accurate and are based on rigorous, reliable monitoring systems
 - support and challenge teachers to improve their practice so that all pupils and groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, make good progress across the range of subjects.
- Teachers should:
 - consistently apply the school's behaviour management policies at all times
 - ensure that they challenge and engage pupils more effectively, particularly in mathematics, so that they make good progress across all year groups and subjects
 - demonstrate high expectations of all pupils to encourage positive attitudes and rapid progress
 - offer appropriate literacy support to pupils who need it.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leaders and the governing body have failed to improve low standards over time. Progress for all pupils in 2015 and 2016 was significantly below the progress made by pupils nationally. Information provided by leaders indicates that progress for current pupils in Years 10 and 11 remains too low.
- Leaders have not established a sufficiently ordered environment to enable pupils to thrive and achieve well.
- School leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of education they are providing. Leaders do not base their assessment of the school's effectiveness on solid evidence because their monitoring processes are not rigorous. They have failed to take into account the progress pupils have made over time and the variable quality of teaching and learning across the school. Consequently, improvement plans have not been effective because they have not focused sharply enough on the areas requiring swift and significant change.
- Following a restructure of leadership responsibilities and the appointment of new senior leaders, there are now clear line management roles. However, procedures for holding staff to account are not robust. Leaders do not collect reliable information about staff performance in a consistent way. Performance targets and professional development opportunities are not linked closely enough to expectations for pupils' progress.
- The poor academic progress pupils make hinders many from moving on to the next stage of education and training. Leaders have not ensured that teachers' expectations across the school are consistently high or that work is sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able pupils.
- School leaders do not analyse carefully enough the impact of pupil premium spending on outcomes and progress for disadvantaged pupils. While leaders keep a detailed record of funded initiatives, they do not link this strategically to the poor progress made by many disadvantaged pupils at the school. Leaders have been too slow to identify the needs of particular groups of disadvantaged pupils and provide bespoke support. Attendance for this group continues to be low and fixed-term exclusions are high. Leaders agree that they need to do more to address the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have recently launched a new key stage 3 assessment system. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of how this will help them to track the progress made by pupils and groups of pupils. However, processes for checking the accuracy of assessments are not in place across all departments. Consequently, leaders do not identify pupils at risk of underperforming rapidly enough to offer effective support. Moreover, it is not clear how effectively middle leaders and teachers are using this new process. Some middle leaders are unsure about how this system helps them understand the quality of teaching and learning in their department. Thus, they cannot hold teachers to account for how well pupils are achieving.
- Middle leadership is variable in terms of experience and skills. Individually, middle leaders are keen for pupils to make better progress in their subject areas and value the autonomy the headteacher gives them to make decisions. However, they lack the strategic direction and support to carry out their roles effectively. Senior leaders do not

hold them sufficiently to account for pupils' underperformance.

- Leaders have failed to improve attendance. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school and this has a detrimental impact on the progress they are making.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are aware of the 'Prevent' duty and are vigilant in identifying any pupils at risk of radicalisation and extremism. They work hard to promote British values effectively and help pupils understand the rules of law and democracy. However, leaders have not created a safe and supportive learning environment for staff or pupils. Too many report that they feel unsafe, particularly during informal times of the day.
- The school collects the views of parents via internal surveys. These, and the results of the Parent View survey during the inspection, show that parents are generally happy with the quality of education provided by the school. However, staff and pupils raised some serious concerns during the inspection, particularly around behaviour. Inspectors agreed that these concerns are well founded.
- Leaders of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and inclusion recognise that this is a growing group of pupils. They are frustrated that the staff team for these pupils has been reduced over time. They say that this has put pressure on their capacity to provide bespoke support for individuals. While pupils in the nurture groups have made better progress, others are not receiving adequate support.
- Pupils' access to reading interventions and initiatives funded by Year 7 catch-up funding is not systematically checked. Assessments to check progress for this group are not regular enough to determine how effectively this funding is supporting pupils' needs.
- A number of pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders monitor the progress and attendance of these pupils, receiving half-termly reports and visiting each placement termly.
- The local authority issued the school with a warning notice in September 2015 due to low standards. Local authority advisers have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done and have been carefully monitoring leaders' actions to bring about change. As a result, they have brokered external support from a strong local provider.
- The revised curriculum, particularly at key stage 3, is giving pupils better opportunities to hone their skills across the full range of subjects. Changes to the amount of time allocated to the teaching of some subjects, such as humanities, mean that pupils are able to study specific subjects in more depth. Leaders believe this will have a positive impact on pupils' achievement as they start GCSE courses.
- New teachers are positive about the support they receive. They welcome the generic initial induction programme, and the allocation of an individual mentor. Extended professional development meetings are based in their own subject areas and this give teachers the chance to share practice and focus on different elements of teaching. While the school provides these opportunities for professional development, they are not having enough impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, particularly at key stage 4.
- The new heads of school who took up post in April 2016 are ambitious for change. They have started to implement a number of new initiatives that will allow them to strategically check the quality of provision and ensure it is of a high quality. However, these initiatives are in the very early stages of delivery and as such the impact is yet to be seen.

- Leaders believe they have high ambitions for pupils and this is reflected in numerous opportunities in the wider curriculum for pupils to learn new skills, become involved in musical and sporting events and experience new adventures. For instance, the sports academy is valued highly by many, and all pupils have opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument.
- A new leader of key stage 3 has brought recent and renewed rigour to this area of the curriculum. A focus on rapid improvement from Year 7 upwards means that some pupils are beginning to make better progress. However, evidence from work scrutiny and observation of teaching indicates that, while the processes and systems are now in place, practice in the classroom is still very variable.
- Newly qualified teachers should only be appointed following discussion with Her Majesty's Inspector.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has not ensured that leaders' actions have secured rapid enough school improvement. At times, governors have challenged the headteacher's decisions, but they have often been too accepting of information and evidence presented to them, particularly in relation to teachers' salary and pay progression. They have not followed up their challenges with actions to make sure that improvements are swift enough. Equally, although aware of the poor progress made by many pupils at the school, governors share the headteacher's overgenerous view of the quality of education provided. While they are ambitious for the school, attempts to redress the situation have lacked urgency. As a result, current pupils, particularly at key stage 4, are continuing to make less progress than they are capable of.
- Governors have supported the headteacher to make new leadership appointments and restructure staffing to enable the school to become financially more stable.
- Governors take their statutory safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. They regularly monitor that checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in line with current guidance. Some have undertaken safer recruitment training. The chair of governors has undergone appropriate child protection training and is currently ensuring that all governors and staff understand the updated safeguarding guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education 2016'. While safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, governors have failed to hear the concerns of pupils and staff regarding potentially unsafe conduct around the school site. Consequently, they have not ensured that pupils are kept safe at all times.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Some pupils' behaviour around the main school site puts other pupils at risk. Incidents of bullying are frequent. Staff and pupils voiced their concern about their own safety. The behaviour policy is implemented inconsistently across the school. Inspectors witnessed conduct that put others at risk during the inspection. Records kept by the school indicate that these incidents are too common.
- Records of checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school meet statutory requirements. Safeguarding referrals to the local authority are very regular and actions are followed up appropriately. Leaders have established an appropriate system with the local authority to take pupils off roll.

- Leaders provide regular safeguarding training for staff. They know what the prevalent risks to pupils at the school are, including gang affiliation, neglect, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Staff have received training on the 'Prevent' strategy and understand their statutory duty to report concerns appropriately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching and learning across the school is highly variable. Consequently, many pupils make inadequate progress compared to pupils nationally.
- Teaching in some subject areas, particularly mathematics, is a concern. While the recently appointed head of mathematics is clear about the high standards expected, there is a discord between this and what happens routinely in classrooms. The implementation of new policies has not been consistent and systems to check staff practice have not been robust enough. This is not limited to mathematics, but occurs in other subjects too. These include science, geography, Spanish, art and design, and English.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and the presentation of their work is too low. As a result, some pupils have little pride in the work they produce. Graffiti and unfinished work is prevalent in some books. Opportunities for extended writing are rare.
- Challenge for the most able pupils is lacking in many subject areas. Some activities do not build on what pupils already know or encourage them to think deeply enough. Pupils find the work easy or repetitive. While many enjoy the activities, their work does not stretch them to achieve higher levels of attainment.
- Teaching for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those who speak English as an additional language, does not always meet pupils' often complex needs. There is not always enough emphasis on improving their literacy skills so that they can access learning across the full curriculum.
- Fortnightly professional development sessions allow departments to share best practice and focus on different aspects of teaching and assessment. This gives teachers opportunities to share their practice.
- Regular changes in staffing and issues with recruitment have made it more difficult for middle leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across their departments is of a consistently good quality.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Leaders have not established a safe learning environment. A large number of pupils and staff report that boisterous and, at times, aggressive pupil behaviour, including regular fights, makes them feel unsafe, particularly during break and lunchtimes.
- Instances of bullying are common. Staff work hard to solve conflicts and actively encourage pupils to show respect, tolerance and kindness towards each other. However, some pupils do not believe that staff will deal quickly and effectively with their concerns.

- Leaders acknowledge the prevalent issues that might hinder some pupils from engaging or excelling in their learning. However, they have not been effective in providing enough support for those pupils who are disadvantaged, disengaged or vulnerable. As a result, some of these pupils are failing to develop the personal and social skills they will need for the future.
- The school actively tackles homophobia and is a Stonewall Champion School. Leaders have ensured that there are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss issues of equality. Some pupils also consider such issues during a weekly Paperclip Equality and Diversity group, run by pupils. Wall displays are a constant reminder of the school's stance on promoting equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development through a range of activities across the curriculum. The MISST-sponsored music programme enables all pupils at key stage 3 to learn how to play an instrument and participate in music performances. Some pupils value this opportunity highly. Annually, the majority of Year 9 embark on a week in which they enjoy organised outdoor education activities.
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme covers a wide range of issues and is flexible enough to address school-specific themes as they arise. For instance, leaders identified that boys' attitudes towards girls were becoming an issue. Consequently, staff use assemblies and tutor periods to explore these issues.
- However, the provision for SMSC and PSHE is not having sufficient impact as some pupils show little respect and tolerance towards each other and staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Some pupils' conduct around the school site is not of a high enough standard. Staff do not routinely remind pupils of the need to behave appropriately. Poor behaviour often goes unchecked. This is particularly true during break, lunch and at the end of the school day.
- Attitudes to learning in class vary depending on whether activities are pitched at the correct ability level or are interesting. Where these activities fail to engage pupils, low-level disruption often prevents pupils from making good progress in their learning. Staff regularly send pupils out of class. Staff patrol the corridors and collect these pupils, removing them to work in the 'Exit room'.
- The headteacher has implemented a whole-school 'behaviour for learning' strategy in an attempt to improve pupils' self-regulatory behaviour. However, large numbers of pupils across the school feel strongly that staff do not use this consistently or fairly. They believe staff apply sanctions more liberally than rewards. While staff report some improvements to behaviour in lessons, leaders have failed to ensure that pupils' conduct around the school is consistently calm and orderly.
- Attendance is too low overall and for many identified groups, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' attempts to improve attendance are ineffective. Some pupils regularly arrive to school late.
- Fixed-term exclusions from school remain high. Leaders explain that this is due to increased expectations around pupils' behaviour.
- The 'behaviour support centre' caters for those at risk of a fixed-term exclusion. Staff monitor pupils' attendance carefully during their four- to six-week placement. While leaders can cite individual success stories, they have not evaluated the impact of this

initiative as part of a wider school strategy to improve behaviour. Leaders carefully monitor the attendance and behaviour of those pupils attending alternative off-site provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is just below the national average. When pupils left Year 11 at the end of 2016, their attainment across a range of subjects (now known as Attainment 8) was below the national average. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who achieved five GCSE grades C or above, including in English and mathematics, was just in line with the national average.
- Attainment across many subjects in 2016 was significantly lower than the national average. These include subjects such as art and design, economics, English language, English literature, geography, religious studies, information technology, Spanish, media studies, additional and core science and mathematics.
- Other than in chemistry, the proportion of the most able pupils attaining the highest grades was below the national average in 2016.
- Progress over time, particularly in mathematics, has been below the national average. In 2016, the proportion of pupils making the average progress across a range of subjects (now known as Progress 8) was overall below the national average. Middle- and high-ability pupils on entry to the school made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils, particularly disadvantaged able and middle-ability pupils, made significantly less progress than did pupils nationally. For the most able disadvantaged pupils, their progress was in the bottom 10% nationally. Leaders have not ensured that pupil premium spending has had an impact on the progress these pupils make. They do not routinely check the links between funded initiatives and outcomes. Consequently, progress over time for this group has been inadequate and continues to be so.
- While the least able pupils on entry to the school made good progress in mathematics in 2016, the most able and middle-ability pupils made significantly less progress than pupils did nationally in both 2015 and 2016.
- Progress across a range of other subjects was below the national average in 2016.
- In 2016, pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan made less progress than all pupils nationally across a range of subjects. This was similarly true of pupils receiving special educational needs support.
- While pupils who speak English as an additional language made better progress than their peers at the school in 2016, collectively all pupils were below pupils nationally.
- In 2016, Black Caribbean and Black African pupils made significantly less progress than pupils did nationally.
- Information provided by school leaders indicates that the pattern of poor pupil progress across a range of subjects will continue for the current Years 10 and 11. This is particularly true for middle- and high-ability disadvantaged pupils, and boys. While interventions are now in place to accelerate the progress pupils make, school leaders agree that much remains to be done in order for these pupils to make the significant progress needed to catch up with pupils nationally.

- At key stage 3, information provided by the school indicates that pupils are beginning to make better progress in several subjects, particularly in Year 9. However, this information has not yet been standardised, so the accuracy of the assessments is not secure.
- Inspectors carried out an extensive review of pupils' work in lessons across year groups and subjects. In addition, a focused scrutiny of work was carried out with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The quality of work seen and lessons observed was variable across and within subjects. Inspectors found that progress made by current pupils was not adequate overall.
- The special educational needs coordinator oversees reading interventions for those reading below their chronological age. While there are clear procedures for identifying those requiring support at the start of the year, there are inconsistencies in who has access to reading programmes and which pupils make the necessary progress to catch up with their peers.
- The library is well resourced, popular with pupils and often busy.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- 16 to 19 study programmes are good. The sixth form benefits from being part of the IC6 consortium with three other local schools and is based in a purpose-built block away from the main school. The curriculum offer has breadth and students can opt for different combinations of academic and vocational courses. Strong leadership of the consortium through the executive management group, which meets monthly, maintains high standards. Effective checking procedures ensure that students access good-quality provision irrespective of where they undertake their studies and which school they choose as their 'home school'. A bespoke governing body checks that the quality of provision is consistently high.
- The new deputy headteacher has responsibility for the sixth form and offers strong leadership. She quickly identified and addressed a number of issues and her actions have already had a significant and demonstrable impact. These included improved attendance, progress on mathematics courses and entry requirements.
- Leaders now expect students to register every morning and attend a tutor session. Though some students were initially not happy with this new arrangement, it has increased attendance significantly. Tutors now know students very well. The 'Sunday bulletin' sent to each student informs them about the content of their Monday tutor session, 'Week ahead and World outside', which covers topical issues in the news, events or celebratory days. For instance, the most recent topic was on raising awareness of Aids.
- The IC6 consortium runs an evening event for students in the locality and then each school promotes its own courses and provision. This ensures that students make informed choices. To ensure that students have the ability to achieve highly on academic and vocational courses, the sixth form leader at Highbury Grove has tightened entry requirements for some courses, particularly mathematics and sciences. Equally, regular assessment in the first term ensures that students have the ability and interest to succeed on chosen courses. This has increased the retention of students from Years 12 to 13.

- Leaders in the sixth form systematically check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through both learning walks and student voice. Consequently, achievement in the sixth form over a three-year trend has been good across many subjects, both vocational and academic. Equally, the majority of those re-sitting GCSE English in 2016 successfully improved their grade.
- The Access Project aims to raise students' aspirations and provide practical advice, guidance and experience at applying to universities or for apprenticeships. Employability skills are explored through work placements, workshops and visits to different institutions. As a result, all students in Year 13 in 2016 successfully achieved chosen university places or apprenticeships.
- To widen students' skills for higher education, all students in Year 13 are now supported to undertake an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
- Opportunities for enrichment are wide, including music, theatre, culture and sport. Students are encouraged to be involved in the full life of the school and they do so enthusiastically, acting as reading mentors, raising money for charity and involving themselves in House activities. Students were vociferous in their enthusiasm for the opportunities the sixth form provides.
- Students have high aspirations for their futures and are determined to achieve highly. Consequently, they are focused, diligent and hardworking. Excellent relationships with their teachers ensure that they make good progress over time. Their conduct is mature and consistently polite. The sixth form provides a calm, safe and nurturing environment for its students. Safeguarding arrangements in the sixth form are effective.
- The sixth form area offers very good facilities. Student support ensures that attendance is high and that staff cater well for students' personal, social and emotional needs. Help is always available and students value this highly – feeling nurtured and cared for. Architect plans are in place to build a new sixth form centre with further facilities.
- Leaders know that they need to do more to improve progress still further in some subjects. This is particularly the case for GCSE mathematics re-sits and in some science and mathematics A-level courses. Changes to students' timetables, enabling them to have discrete GCSE mathematics lessons at the end of the day, are already proving beneficial. Equally, better guidance for students at the start of courses has increased retention.

School details

Unique reference number	100452
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10012450

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,221
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maggie Elliott
Headteacher	Tom Sherrington
Telephone number	020 7288 8900
Website	http://www.highburygrove.islington.sch.uk/
Email address	tserrington@highburygrove.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 May 2010

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Highbury Grove School is a larger than average 11–19 secondary school.
- Two thirds of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is above average. This government funding is used to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.

- 77.9% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are from 'any other White' background, 'any other mixed' background, Black Caribbean, Black African and Bangladeshi.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of students who receive special educational needs support is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan is just above the national average.
- A number of pupils attend alternative provision, including Footsteps, Building Crafts, Kingsway, Boxing Academy, Barnet and Southgate college and WAC Arts.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment across a range of year groups and subjects. They visited 32 parts of lessons, 13 of which were observed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also visited registration time, PSHE lessons and two assemblies, and listened to a range of pupils reading.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chair of the governing body, a parent governor, the headteacher, the three deputy headteachers, middle leaders, a range of staff, including newly qualified teachers, and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 104 responses to Parent View, a staff survey, parent surveys conducted by the school and the views of current pupils.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: records relating to pupil behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings, information on the progress made by pupils, the school's self-evaluation and the school's assessment system.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, policies and procedures, including incident logs.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Boyle	Ofsted Inspector
Kirstie Fulthorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Strong	Ofsted Inspector
Diane Khanna	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Hamill	Ofsted Inspector
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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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