

Nene Gate

Park Lane, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE1 5GZ

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have worked tirelessly to drive improvements. Staff work well together to help pupils socially and academically.
- Leaders' close monitoring gives them a clear view of the school's effectiveness. The development plan identifies accurately where further improvements are required.
- Pupils arrive with a history of disrupted education. Leaders have created a calm, caring and nurturing environment that helps pupils to learn more successfully.
- Teachers have a very good rapport with their pupils. They plan work to meet their individual needs well. Pupils make good progress over time.
- Pupils like the 'Respect Receives Rewards' system. Alongside a range of well-planned welfare interventions, it helps pupils to manage their own behaviour more successfully.
- Safeguarding processes are highly effective. The culture that exists within the school helps to keep pupils safe. Pupils say that they feel safe.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. Staff know pupils well and check their well-being continually. The highly effective work they do with other agencies ensure that pupils stay safe.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. The additional support that staff provide to help pupils who fall behind is highly effective.
- Pupils achieve a range of qualifications and develop their social skills, helping them to be successful when they leave Nene Gate.
- Typically, pupils arrive with poor records of attendance. The school's actions help many to attend far more regularly. However, this remains a focus area for leaders.
- Leaders, including governors, spend additional funding well to improve the outcomes for pupils. However, evaluations of the impact of their actions are not as sharp as they could be.
- Leaders track pupils' progress closely and effectively. Their current systems do not routinely allow them to demonstrate quickly the academic advances that pupils make.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors can quickly measure the impact that additional funding has on pupils' progress
 - leaders can quickly and efficiently demonstrate the good progress that pupils make.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and welfare by continuing to embed the measures taken to improve pupils' attendance so that pupils can benefit more often from the high-quality provision on offer.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The calm and highly effective headteacher, ably supported by her leadership team, has worked tirelessly to provide a service that meets pupils' needs extremely well. The cohesive staff provide effective learning experiences for all children. As one parent said, 'It's a big happy family where staff do everything they can and it's no trouble.'
- Leaders view the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. Inspectors agreed with their evaluation of the school's effectiveness. The development plan highlights appropriate areas for improvement. For example, leaders know that as the proportion of pupils who have mental health needs increases, their provision must change.
- As an endorsement of the expertise of staff, the local authority has asked the school to become a behaviour hub. The service will provide in-reach and outreach services for primary-aged children who need additional help to access education.
- Staff use good humour and patience to help young people who have highly complex needs develop a more positive outlook on life. The school's philosophy that 'Respect Receives Rewards' underpins their work, while epitomising British values. The growing 'student voice' has had a significant impact on the new behaviour policy and demonstrates democracy in action.
- Leaders have created an environment that helps pupils learn. High-quality displays mirror the high expectations of staff, and portray the breadth of experiences that pupils receive. Leaders promote learning for all by supporting staff to advance academically alongside pupils. Currently, staff are studying for additional qualifications, up to Master's level.
- Leaders use performance management effectively to drive improvement. Their close monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment helps to identify any specific training needs. Staff value the training they receive and say that it equips them well to meet the demands of the pupils they work with.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven carefully throughout the curriculum. Leaders provide extensive opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community. For example, a group of pupils develop their social, empathetic and communication skills by working with pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils have made tea for some residents at a care home for elderly people.
- Leaders have rightly established a curriculum that focuses on developing pupils' core skill in English, mathematics, science and humanities. Alongside this, they provide a range of other practical skills and qualifications that meet pupils' particular needs and develop their social and team-working skills well. Bespoke programmes that include extended work placements complement these. Some of these have led to pupils gaining apprenticeships when they leave the school.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They enjoy and spoke positively about the activities they can access using their reward points. The residential trips to Kingswood and Alton Towers expand their outlook and help them build on their already productive relationships with staff. Events such as sports day and the

Macmillan coffee morning help to develop a greater sense of community.

- Parents and carers receive regular updates to let them know how their children are doing. Parents are full of praise for the work the school does to keep them informed. Regular contact at pick-up points, daily phone calls and always being able to speak to a member of staff give parents confidence in the school. Termly reports and consultation meetings ensure that parents know about, and are involved in, their child's academic progress. One parent summarised this nicely when saying, 'It's amazing. My child is happy, he is learning and he is now willing to go to school.'
- All of the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff were highly positive. Many staff were working at the school at the time of the previous inspection; all considered that the school has improved. All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they are well supported and well led, and are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders' extensive monitoring systems highlight the progress pupils make both academically and socially. However, they are aware that a more simplified system would help them to demonstrate pupils' academic progress more easily at times.
- Leaders and governors spend additional funding well. Year 7 catch-up funding is used to fund interventions that improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. The physical education and sport premium is helping to teach pupils how to swim. Funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is helping them to accelerate their progress. All of the actions taken are leading to improved outcomes, but leaders know that their measuring of the impact of specific interventions could be sharper.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is becoming a more stable group. Owing to recruitment issues, there has been a significant number of changes. However, more recently, governors, especially the chair of governors, visit the school more often and work closely with senior leaders. This provides them with the information they need to provide effective challenge and support.
- Governors have received training from the school improvement adviser. Minutes of meetings and documents show that governors are asking more questions to challenge the school to maintain its high standards.
- The governing body has an accurate view of the school's strengths. Governors are rightly proud of the school's caring and nurturing environment and its many achievements. Governors are strategically planning for the future development of the school. They support the headteacher in her efforts to develop the school further, through the extended behaviour hub and plans to adapt to a more specialist provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders carry out all the necessary pre-employment checks to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. At the start of the inspection, there were some minor administrative errors in the single central record of the checks made on staff working in the school. Her

Majesty's Inspector was able to confirm that the school had made all the required checks, and the record was updated correctly by the end of the inspection.

- Leaders carry out detailed risk assessments on all aspects of school life, including dynamic risk assessments for each pupil. This ensures that staff are fully aware of the potential risks that each pupil currently faces. Staff receive regular updates about the latest statutory guidance, and know what to do and whom to speak to should they have concerns.
- The highly effective safeguarding lead ensures that the school has a comprehensive picture of pupils' circumstances. Child protection files show highly detailed records, with concerns reported appropriately and without delay to the designated person and appropriate agencies. This helps to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders have successfully woven safeguarding elements into the curriculum. Pupils say that they feel safe. Parents and staff unequivocally say that children are safe, and are made aware of how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils often come to the school with a history of disrupted education, repeated exclusions and gaps in their knowledge. All pupils either have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Staff work highly effectively to support pupils to re-engage in learning.
- The strong relationships that staff have forged with pupils are a real strength of the school. The calm, sensitive and consistent approach used by staff helps pupils develop the strategies and resilience to learn more effectively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide useful support to help pupils learn. Staff use questioning well to direct pupils to find answers, rather than just giving them the information. This helps pupils develop well socially and academically. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and the positive learning environment means that they enjoy studying and learn successfully. Inspectors noted that the longer pupils attend the school, the more progress they make.
- Teachers continually assess pupils to identify any gaps in their learning. They plan lessons effectively to help pupils overcome their misconceptions. When pupils need extra help, staff provide a comprehensive programme of interventions that includes phonics, handwriting, reading and mathematics. Teachers incorporate interventions into their planning and adapt activities so that pupils can catch up and make good progress.
- Teachers know pupils' needs well. They plan and structure their lessons carefully, with a focus on strong visual and practical activities that capture pupils' interests. For example, inspectors saw pupils baking Halloween cakes, carving out pumpkins, analysing videos and taking a computer apart. All of these help pupils to develop their social skills, concentrate harder and maintain their focus. As a result, pupils do well and their books and folders show how much they have learned.
- Where practice is most effective, the most able pupils make good progress because teachers set them work that challenges them. However, teachers provide useful support so that pupils can overcome their difficulties. Leaders are aware that this good

practice needs to be shared so that there is greater consistency across all subject areas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils were keen to tell inspectors how well the school supports them. One said, 'My behaviour has improved. It is now quite good. I am not swearing and fighting all the time.' Another pupil said, 'The school offers a lot more than any other school – it is far more supportive and we have very close relationships with teachers.'
- The care, thought and effort that go into helping pupils settle and adjust are remarkable. From the 'meet and greet' to the continual welfare monitoring and interventions, the school helps pupils feel safe, happy and willing to learn.
- The school provides a fair, consistent and caring environment that helps pupils who have complex needs to re-engage with learning. It helps pupils to make progress in all aspects of their lives.
- The school teaches pupils how to keep safe well. Pupils say that they feel safe and name the people they would speak to if they have concerns about anything.
- A very small number of pupils complete courses at Peterborough City College or complete extended work placements at local employers. Staff track their attendance closely, as well as their progress. Pupils' attendance is good and they are developing their knowledge, skills and understanding well.
- The friendly and calming feel of the school is evident. Staff have instilled a real sense of belonging in pupils, where they develop a far greater understanding and acceptance of the behaviours of other. Some pupils, often those who have not been at the school long, are still in the process of developing these skills.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The effective systems used to monitor pupils' social development ensure that pupils' holistic needs are at the forefront of staff's work. Pupil learning passports and 'flight paths' help pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Timely welfare interventions provide extra support for pupils who need more help. The close-knit staff meet regularly and work well together. Frequent communication, including the daily discussions with parents, helps to sustain the improvements pupils make in their behaviours.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. For some, this is a first. Staff help pupils to grow in confidence, build their self-esteem and learn more successfully. Pupils adopt attitudes that are more positive and manage their behaviour better. This prepares them well for when they leave the school.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and proud of their school. The relationships that exist

between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. The sensitive way that staff help pupils to improve their behaviour and stay on task is very positive. A very few pupils still display their frustrations, but even these occasions are becoming less frequent.

- Staff know when pupils are starting to feel anxious. They can spot the trigger points and are increasingly using effective de-escalation strategies. This helps to alleviate pupils' worries, minimise disruption to learning and successfully promote positive behaviour.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance very closely and have introduced rigorous systems to challenge pupils' absence. While the overall attendance rate is below the national average, there is evidence of significant improvements for most pupils from their starting points. There are a few cases where, due to a variety of needs, pupils' attendance at school is below average. Leaders are aware of this and are resolute in driving further improvements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Staff work highly effectively to support pupils to re-engage in learning. Pupils often arrive with a history of repeated exclusions and highly negative experiences of education. As one parent said, 'At his previous school, his behaviour went downhill and he was frequently excluded. Now, his reading is better, his handwriting has improved, and he enjoys coming to school.'
- Leaders are highly proactive in their work to extend links with other providers and the wider community. Pupils have many opportunities to sample experiences that prepare them for life after Nene Gate. Some have gained apprenticeships with employers with whom they completed successful work-experience placements.
- Pupils receive independent and relevant careers advice. All pupils progress to either employment, education or training and have done so for the last two years. Staff work closely with the staff from the local authority team to ensure that all current pupils have plans in place for when they leave.
- Teachers and teaching assistants employ a range of different strategies to help pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils' rates of progress have to be seen fully in the context of their individual needs. Inspectors looked at how their individual education plans cross-referenced the targets in their education, health and care plans. Inspection evidence shows that the vast majority of pupils show good levels of improvement from their various starting points.
- Pupils make good progress in English. In a book scrutiny, inspectors noted that initially, pupils produce very little unaided writing. As pupils' skills develop, assisted by the effective interventions, pupils are able to write more extensively, using paragraphs and punctuation more confidently. In the longer term, the most able pupils learn to employ the use of tense effectively in their writing.
- Some pupils arrive at the school unable to complete the four basic mathematical operations. Over shorter periods, pupils can show that their calculation skills are becoming far more precise. Over time, the most able pupils are able to carry out more complex mathematical operations.
- Pupils achieve a range of qualifications, including GCSEs, functional skills, entry-level

certificates and qualifications from the Royal Horticultural Society and The Prince's Trust. Pupils also complete Duke of Edinburgh Awards and learn practical skills that develop their social skills, helping them to move on to the next stage of their learning or employment.

- The school's own information shows the good progress that current pupils make over a broad range of subjects. This includes pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils. Those pupils that make less than expected progress are often those whose attendance is lower than expected. Leaders are maintaining their continued focus on this key group.

School details

Unique reference number	135386
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10036251

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	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Blundell
Headteacher	Ruth O'Sullivan
Telephone number	01733349438
Website	www.nenegate.peterborough.sch.uk
Email address	sangeeta.ravalia@nenegate.peterborough.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a special school for students with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have SEN and/or disabilities and either have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). The special educational needs coordinator works closely with the local authority to ensure that pupils who still have statements are having these converted to EHC plans.
- Most students are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high.
- Some pupils in key stage 4 attend courses at Peterborough City College or complete extended work placements at local employers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors studied records of current pupils and those who had attended the school previously. This included folders, class books, intervention books, learning passports, displays, examination awards, records of attendance and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed learning in lessons across all subject areas, often jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, the educational psychologist, the safeguarding lead, the attendance lead, and teachers with responsibility posts.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, on which to report. The inspector took account of the 26 questionnaires completed by staff, and the 12 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors met two groups of pupils separately to gain their views on the effectiveness of the provision. They also spoke informally to staff and pupils during the day.
- An inspector held conversations with parents at drop-off points, and held telephone conversations with staff from the children's services departments at local authorities.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Walker

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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