

Northeast Manor School

Rodmell, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 3EY

Inspection dates

6–8 March 2018

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
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Under the calm, measured and encouraging leadership of the headteacher, the school is moving securely in the right direction. The headteacher is extremely well supported by an excellent deputy, and effective senior- and middle-leadership teams.
- There has been a significant and positive shift in the school's culture and ethos. A shared determination to successfully meet each pupil's particular individual needs is starting to reap considerable rewards.
- Very effective use of training, including working in close partnership with the therapy team, is supporting improvements well.
- Pupils benefit from competent teaching. Consequently, their outcomes are strong across a broad range of subjects. Leaders know precisely where any variability in this quality remains and take effective action accordingly.
- Pupils are typically highly engaged and often enthused by their work. Extensive and diverse enrichment activities help promote their personal development well.
- The behaviour of pupils is often truly impressive, and is outstanding overall. Almost all are unfailingly polite and courteous. Pupils are great ambassadors for the school.
- Impartial careers guidance for pupils introduces them to a variety of possible future pathways. However, overall, pupils do not feel involved in making choices about relevant courses, or are unsure about what the best choices might be and where their decisions may lead.
- Most students achieve well in the sixth form. However, the quality assurance and oversight of the sixth form, compared with the rest of the school, is less rigorous and incisive.
- Stronger governance than in the past is playing a key role in the strategic direction of the school. However, the governing body does not bring equal rigour and challenge to all of the important aspects of its work.
- All of the independent school standards are met, but the systems for checking that this is always the case are less reliable than they should be.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality assurance of the sixth form to make sure that the broad range of intended outcomes for students are the best they can possibly be.
- Further strengthen governance to bring the same rigour to the oversight of, and accountability for, the quality of education and independent school standards currently exercised in other aspects of governance.
- Make careers guidance and advice more explicit for pupils so that they are more involved in, and mindful of, the choices that will affect their future lives.
- Sustain and adapt, as necessary, the current drive to secure consistently high-quality teaching and outcomes across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- There have been significant changes in leadership at all levels since the previous inspection. The new headteacher has rightfully earned the confidence of the school's community. The positive tone, culture and ethos that exists under her stewardship is particularly valued by most staff, pupils and parents. She has galvanised other leaders and staff in making marked improvements to the school for the benefit of pupils. Many staff commented how they feel listened to and valued.
- Recognising, nurturing and utilising the talents of others, the headteacher has ensured that the growing leadership capacity throughout the school is supporting the school's improvement journey well. Combining their vision and clear strategic thinking, the powerful partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher is a considerable asset.
- The cohesive leadership team gives consistent messages about the school's evolving approach, priorities and strategies for securing improvement. Most staff agree. There is a clear sense of moral purpose. The overriding perception from most staff is that leaders' expectations are high but the culture is supportive.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's current effectiveness. They draw on a wide range of relevant information to determine and define appropriate priorities for further improvement. Leaders make varied timely checks that the actions they take have the desired effect. They wisely exercise due caution that improvements are fully embedded before reducing the focus on key priorities.
- Leaders' honesty and candour when reviewing the school's work combines powerfully with their aspirations for the school and its pupils. As a result, they do not sit back satisfied with what they have achieved, but constantly strive for further improvement. Although it has strengths, leadership of the sixth form does not have the same degree of rigour and crisp clarity as much of the leadership in the rest of the school.
- Pupils' individual needs are becoming firmly entrenched at the heart of all that the school does. A joined-up approach between the very effective special educational needs (SEN) coordinator, therapists and staff means that effective approaches to meet pupils' particular SEN and/or disabilities are applied increasingly consistently in lessons.
- Regular staff training and other professional development opportunities play an important role in the school's increasing success. Leaders ensure that staff increasingly capitalise on therapists' expertise. The sharp focus on making and embedding effective changes to practice following training means it is making a difference where it matters. Staff appraisal procedures interlink well with the overall school improvement strategy.
- Faculty leaders have a clear understanding of their role. They are alert to some of the finer nuances of both working with their staff teams, and supporting senior leaders to secure improvements. They play an increasing part in the shared drive to check that key learning from staff training becomes routine practice in terms of what actually happens in the classroom.
- The curriculum is designed, adapted and expanded well to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders keep an eye to both individual needs and the changing profile of cohorts of pupils

over time. The strong promotion of pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics has suitable prominence at all key stages.

- The high profile of frequent enrichment opportunities, and a varied, topical and engaging citizenship curriculum, promote pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are taught, in depth, to appreciate, reflect on and debate varied issues consistent with fundamental British values and respect for the protected characteristics of the Equality Act. As a result, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Successful recruitment of trustees with the necessary and desirable skills and experience has strengthened the work of the governing body markedly in key areas. For example, governors have a sharp strategic focus on the sustainability of the school, with real rigour to the challenge and debate around financial matters.
- When recruiting a new headteacher, governors' pragmatic, but also ambitious, thorough and searching recruitment processes were highly successful. Together, the dedicated chair of governors and headteacher have fostered a productive, professional relationship in the shared drive to improve the school for its pupils.
- The chair of governors has a clear, reasonable and realistic vision of how to further develop the effectiveness of the governing body. Governors rightfully have confidence in the school's senior leaders. However, the chair knows that governors have not brought the same sharp focus and appropriate challenge to school leaders about the quality of education and pupils' progress as they have regarding other matters.
- The governance, leadership and oversight of safeguarding and pupils' welfare has strengthened considerably. However, systems for checking that all of the independent school standards are continuously met, as they were by the end of this inspection, are not as robust as they should be.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding pupils is clearly a rightful top priority. Systems for ensuring that pupils are safe and protected are rigorous and effective. Adults' responsibilities at different levels are clearly established. Useful information for adults and pupils about how and where to get help are readily available throughout the school.
- The school's policies and practices take specific account of the potential additional vulnerability of pupils due to their specific SEN and/or disabilities. The comprehensive and well-organised safeguarding policy makes important information on a wide range of safeguarding matters easy to find. The content takes careful account of a range of recent and relevant statutory guidance, including advice from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The policy is readily available on the school's website.
- Staff know what to look out for to help keep pupils safe and protected, including potential risks of extremism, radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. If they identify any concerns about pupils, they use the school's effective systems to pass these on promptly

to the relevant people.

- The designated safeguarding leader is extremely dedicated and tenacious in working in the best interests of pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders are notably alert in using any safeguarding incidents to adapt and improve what pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe.
- Child protection and safeguarding record-keeping is of high quality. Staff work closely with parents and carers and draw effectively on strong links with other professionals and agencies. Other professionals have total confidence in the response that they will get from the school's safeguarding leaders when appropriately sharing concerns about individual pupils.
- Systematic checks of the suitability of staff and other adults are reliably recorded on the single central register.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Strong and fruitful relationships between staff and pupils support pupils to feel secure and learn well. Teachers' high expectations mean that pupils are frequently not just busy, but intellectually engaged and sometimes engrossed in purposeful activities.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge which they impart well to pupils. Teachers' explanations are clear, typically using language precisely to avoid creating confusion. Teachers take time and care to check that pupils understand. This close attention paid to pupils' grasp of key learning points, timely feedback and tackling of misconceptions helps pupils to make strong progress.
- Teachers' skilful and varied questioning supports pupils well to acquire and recall knowledge, as well as to develop and deepen their understanding. Pupils, including the most able, are routinely challenged by regular more-demanding questions that require more thought or a longer answer, for example to reason, explain or justify their opinions.
- Reading is taught well. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to access a wide range of reading material across different subjects. Pupils read aloud with confidence, unafraid to use their phonics skills where necessary to tackle unfamiliar words in front of their peers. Teachers capitalise on the fact that many pupils' verbal abilities surpass their current writing skills, designing tasks accordingly that will still suitably stretch their thinking.
- Adults typically employ their well-developed knowledge and understanding of pupils' particular needs with notable success. At times, teachers use pupils' individual 'therapy passports' very well to secure a consistent approach between therapy and daily lessons. However, not all teachers are equally adept at this. That said, adults are mostly alert to some of the potential barriers to learning that may exist for individual pupils. For example, they respond swiftly, proactively and often very effectively to alleviate any indications of anxiety.
- In the main, the individual targeted study support for sixth-form students that supplements their college courses is helpful. However, where there is a lack of staff expertise in particular subjects at more advanced levels of study, this is less effective.
- Leaders know where teaching could be further improved, and continue their work to

ensure that it is typically of the highest quality.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- As well as typically being very pleased with their child's academic progress, numerous parents particularly emphasised how their children are thriving personally, emotionally and socially.
- Most comments submitted by parents to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive. A strong theme that emerged was the major difference that Northease Manor makes to pupils' confidence, well-being and self-esteem. In describing these and similar aspects of the school's work, parents repeatedly used words such as 'amazing', 'exceptional', 'thriving' and 'transformed'. One parent summed up the sentiment of many by writing simply: 'The school changed my child's life and gave us hope.'
- Pupils speak extremely fondly about the school and are overwhelmingly positive about what it provides. As tour guides, both official and unofficial, most are excellent ambassadors for the school. They are notably polite, respectful and friendly. For some, this positive social interaction is a strong marker of the strides they have taken in terms of their personal development.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to engage in lessons. They are rightly proud of their work and achievements. Most pupils wear their uniforms smartly and take good care to preserve the school's environment and displays. Pupils also demonstrate high levels of respect for each other's property, indicative of their strong moral development.
- Bullying is rare and dealt with well. Alleged or actual incidents and concerns are taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. Staff work in close partnership with pupils and parents to support all pupils involved.
- Pupils feel safe. The curriculum includes careful coverage of the broad range of knowledge and understanding pupils need to protect and keep themselves safe in different situations. Warm but respectful relationships at all levels, between and among pupils and staff, create the school's well-established 'community' or 'family' feel. Vulnerable pupils are provided with effective emotional and mental-health support where necessary.
- The leader responsible for careers guidance is highly ambitious for pupils. The programme of activities and advice is impartial and reflects a variety of options that may be open for pupils to consider, including in the sixth form. However, although pupils emphasise how well supported they are generally, they are often vague about the careers advice or guidance they receive. A number of pupils spoken to were unsure how closely involved they were in making their options choices. Often pupils are unclear about what the most appropriate choices might be, what qualifications they may need to realise their ambitions, or where their decisions may lead them in the future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The conduct and behaviour of the very large majority of pupils is exemplary. Pupils move

calmly and sensibly around the site. They demonstrate considerable maturity and social grace, stopping to greet adults and visitors they pass and demonstrating impeccable manners, for example at doorways.

- The school's highly effective behaviour policies and approaches reflect entirely the drive to successfully meet the particular needs of individuals. A very constructive and productive approach to tackling any undesirable behaviour helps pupils to understand and learn from their experiences. Carefully planned strategies and questions to support pupils in seeing the link between specific behaviours and choices, and a resulting consequence, are implemented extremely well by staff and leaders.
- As the evolving positive culture and ethos has started to establish deeper roots, exclusions figures have dropped dramatically in the current academic year. The absence of repeated exclusions, a frequent problem in the past, is particularly noteworthy.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Any absence is rigorously followed up and patterns monitored. Overall attendance rates are impressive, especially when taking into account contextual factors and some extremely challenging individual cases.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' strong personal development, coupled with the school's success in fostering positive attitudes and engagement, reaps rewards for pupils academically too. For many pupils, these initial steps and subsequent strides represent a significant shift from previously negative experiences of education.
- Pupils make strong progress across a broad range of subjects. Although pupils' progress remains strongest in English, as at the time of the previous inspection, outcomes in mathematics have shown an improving trend in recent years. This uplift is being sustained for current pupils.
- Systems for checking that pupils make enough progress academically across key stages 2 to 4 are well established and used effectively. Indicative of the high aspiration for pupils, there is a deliberate focus, when they join the school, on getting a reliable sense of pupils' potential capabilities, not just their current attainment. For many pupils, their current levels are likely to have been significantly dampened by previously disrupted experiences of education or through missing periods of schooling altogether.
- Further evidence of the school's ambitious approach is the desire that pupils should make at least the same progress as pupils elsewhere who do not have SEN and/or disabilities. It is against this trajectory that pupils are carefully tracked. Currently, most pupils are at least on track to realise this achievement, and sometimes exceeding it.
- Most-able pupils achieve well across a range of subjects, including some of the highest possible standards attained in recent GCSE English results. Their writing develops in confidence, accuracy and style over time, as they are increasingly able to sustain their ideas and write in more accurate sentences. Pupils are also justifiably proud of their high-quality work in subjects such as art and textiles. They engage well in purposeful and focused learning activities in practical subjects such as physical education and horticulture.
- Pupils are typically well prepared for their next stages of their education or training post-16, whether transferring to the school's sixth form or other providers. Following transition,

most sustain their placements, giving them the best chance of future success.

- Although there is some variation between subjects, the school's own assessment information shows that pupils make positive gains in most. Leaders continue to take determined action to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils across all aspects of the school's work.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The very small sixth form provides effective support to enable most students to sustain the good progress that pupils make across the rest of the school. Through flexible, bespoke packages, the continued aim is to meet students' particular individual needs.
- Although there is some variability which leaders are addressing, students typically build well on their prior achievements across a variety of vocational or academic courses. Gaining or improving English and mathematics qualification or accreditation is suitably prioritised through sessions in school and courses at college.
- Leaders strive to foster positive relationships with colleges. These positive links assist them in getting detailed and helpful information about how well each student is doing personally and academically. Leaders and staff make meaningful use of the information that they request and receive to make changes and adaptations, where necessary, particularly if students are struggling. Effective communication between sixth-form leaders and external colleges usually results in any concerns being dealt with promptly.
- Students' relationships with staff are highly positive. As a result, students progress well overall in supported coursework activities needed as part of their learning programme. With a clear desire to encourage students to be increasingly independent in their study, staff also recognise and respond to the need to provide more structured prompting and support for some students. Pupils learning at higher levels are sometimes less well supported due to limitations in suitable staff expertise in particular subjects.
- Students use other aspects of their learning well, such as interview training, to increase their skills and use in real-life events such as college interviews. Work experience is carefully planned to consider the individual needs of pupils, including their well-being. Local links are used well to provide effective work-experience opportunities. Similarly, creative use of work-related learning opportunities within the school provides meaningful and valuable experiences for some. As for younger pupils, careers guidance is not as strong as it could be.
- Leaders have developed and sustained an effective sixth form overall for the small number of students on roll. However, the quality assurance of the sixth-form offer, internally and externally, is not as rigorous as it could be to yield the same significant improvements evident elsewhere in the school.

School details

Unique reference number	114645
DfE registration number	845/6028
Inspection number	10039154

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Proprietor	Northeast Manor School Limited
Chair	Julie Toben
Headteacher	Claire Farmer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,817–29,817
Telephone number	01273 472915
Website	www.northeast.co.uk
Email address	office@northeast.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–20 November 2014

Information about this school

- Northeast Manor is an independent day and weekly boarding special school. It provides for potentially more- and most-able pupils with specific and additional learning difficulties. The range of SEN includes dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit disorder and other social and communication difficulties. Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has been subject to several short inspections since its previous standard inspection, 18–20 November 2014. Two progress monitoring inspections were conducted,

the first on 2 February 2016, and the second on 16 November 2016. In between these two monitoring inspections, there was an emergency inspection of the school and residential provision which took place from 10 to 11 May 2016.

- There have been significant changes to the leadership and governance of the school since the previous standard inspection. The headteacher took up her post in January 2017. The board of governors comprises the trustees of the limited company that is the school's proprietor.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. However, the sixth-form students are usually dual registered and also attend courses at Plumpton College, Sussex Downs College or Brighton Metropolitan College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed during 17 lessons for varying lengths of time. They also toured the school and classrooms at different points during the inspection while lessons were taking place. Almost all of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- To help find out what it is like to be a Northease pupil on a typical day, inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, therapists, leaders and trustees. They also sampled a wide range of the school's documentation, and records relevant to the quality of education and compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspection team analysed 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 44 confidential questionnaires returned by staff. They took account of all of the written comments that were added to these, and a letter from a parent, alongside other inspection evidence.
- This inspection took place at the same time as a social care inspection of the residential provision. Both inspection teams liaised closely during the inspection to share relevant emerging findings. The outcomes of the residential inspection are published in a separate report.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo McSherrie

Ofsted Inspector

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