

# The Netherhall School

Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB1 8NN

## Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- School leaders, managers and governors have aspirations of excellence for their school and the pupils. They have focused sharply on improving teaching since the school became an academy. As a result, pupils learn well and are making good progress.
- Teaching is good because teachers have strong subject knowledge, question well and plan interesting and enjoyable lessons. Teaching is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science.
- By the end of Year 11, attainment in English and mathematics is above the national average.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language acquire the language rapidly through the excellent support they receive.
- The achievement of most pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good. Effective support from additional staff has ensured that these pupils make good progress. Where this is not the case, it is due to low attendance.
- The disadvantaged pupils who attend school regularly make good progress in their studies. This is not the case for the many who are persistently absent. Not all parents and carers fully support the school in encouraging regular attendance.
- Recent changes to the curriculum mean that it now serves the needs of pupils well. Careers guidance and the vast array of extra-curricular clubs and activities are particular strengths of the provision.
- The house system is integral to the school. Mixing older and younger pupils in form groups helps pupils to forge bonds across the year groups. This also benefits pupils' personal, social and moral development.
- Pupils are cared for well. Despite the large size of the school, the well-organised approaches to providing care mean that staff know pupils and their needs.
- Most of the time, pupils' behaviour is considerate. They work hard and concentrate in lessons. Where this is not the case, it is due to a few pupils with complex behavioural needs. Some teachers are better equipped than others in ensuring that these pupils get back on track with their learning.
- The school is safe and secure. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils work well and reflect the additional challenges which exist in parts of the school's locality.
- The sixth form is good. Students are well taught, follow courses tailored to their abilities and receive good advice about the next stages of their education and employment.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise standards further through increased attendance by:
  - persevering with the successful actions already in place
  - particularly focusing on reducing the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistent absentees
  - helping parents of persistent absentees to support the school's work.
- Improve the behaviour of those with complex behavioural needs by:
  - building on the programme of ongoing staff development so that behaviour management expertise is widely shared
  - consistently checking that all staff are adept at responding to the needs of these pupils, supporting and encouraging the pupils to achieve their full potential.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The principal and the leadership team have been relentless in their efforts to improve the school. The principal is passionate about wanting the very best outcomes for all pupils. As the principal described, there has been 'root and branch change' since his appointment. About half of the teaching staff have been replaced and the school is on a better financial footing.
- Leaders at all levels have heightened their expectations. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and holding staff to account, have been tightened up. Regular, challenging meetings between senior and middle leaders ensure that leaders are not allowed to become complacent. At the same time, middle leaders say that they are listened to and feel more valued.
- Senior leaders have established a culture of professional development that is highly regarded by teachers. Leaders have a secure understanding of what effective teaching and learning look like. They ensure that they monitor the quality of teaching closely and so they know individual teachers' strengths and areas for development well. They use this information to ensure that training is effective and sharply focused on school priorities. This has led to improved outcomes in many subjects.
- Leaders have undertaken a range of actions to improve behaviour, for example introducing a restorative meeting system and altering the running of lunchtime. They have begun to share best classroom practice. Systems for monitoring behaviour now focus upon not only recording the number of incidents that occur but also understanding the reasons for the behaviour. In this way, leaders are able to address particular needs well. The impact of these initiatives is seen in the calm and orderly day-to-day running of the school. Leaders know that there is further work to do with the small group of pupils who persistently disrupt lessons.
- Staff have responded well to the increased rigour asked of them. Those spoken to were very positive about the school and are keen to take an active part in its improvement journey. New teachers, both to the school and to the profession, told inspectors how much they value the support they receive and the welcoming and cohesive atmosphere that pervades the school. One member new to the profession was most proud that early on in the term she was asked to deliver training for her department.
- Leaders have recently reviewed and altered the curriculum so that pupils benefit from a broad choice of qualifications, both academic and vocational. They have also discarded courses that are not benefiting pupils' future career aspirations.
- Opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development run through the curriculum. In addition to this, pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils spoke animatedly about the rugby and hockey tournaments, as well as the school's productions of 'Little Shop of Horrors' and 'Bugsy Malone'.
- Leaders regularly analyse pupils' progress in each subject and accurately identify those who need extra support. For example, they have used additional funding for

disadvantaged pupils successfully, as evidenced by the improvement in this group's rate of progress. The same is true of funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils are making solid progress from their starting points. However, leaders have yet to solve the problem of these pupils' poor attendance.

- The school is well supported by the trust. Leaders benefit from rigorous quality assurance processes which challenge and support improvement. There is also an array of opportunities to share best practice across schools, via subject network meetings, working groups, and senior leadership and governor forums.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are a strong and cohesive team who share the principal's ambitious aims and vision for the school. The chair of the governing body ensures that the governing body has a suitable range of specific skills and that governors attend up-to-date training. For example, governors recently watched another governing body at work to check that their questioning was equally challenging and rigorous.
- Governors have adopted specific responsibilities for key aspects of the school's work. Consequently, governors have the capacity to offer increasingly robust and systematic challenge to all aspects of the school's work. From their visits, from discussions with staff and pupils and from their scrutiny of leaders' reports, they ask key pertinent questions. Governors successfully challenge leaders about their work. For example, governors rigorously question leaders about pupils' progress, including that of the most able disadvantaged pupils. In this way, they check that funding for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have SEN and/or disabilities is spent well.
- Governors will also ask leaders to present information in a different format if it does not aid their understanding. For example, they know that it would be more helpful for their monitoring to be given national comparators for the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties. For example, they ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding has a high priority and is integral to the culture of the school. All appropriate checks are carried out assiduously and record-keeping is thorough and methodical.
- There are strong systems in place to protect pupils from harm. Staff know their pupils well, and the efficiently run pastoral system enables issues to be identified and dealt with swiftly. Pupils are confident to seek help when they experience difficulties. Leaders carry out extensive follow-up work, often with external agencies, to make sure that pupils and families get the help that they need.
- Staff and governors undertake regular training to ensure that they are constantly up to date with safeguarding information. Pupils and parents have confidence in the school's ability to keep pupils safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils learn well as a result of good teaching. For the past two years, leaders have focused relentlessly on improving teaching and supporting staff to be the best teachers they can be. Changes in staffing since the school became an academy have also contributed to more effective teaching. Consequently, outcomes have risen in a range of subjects.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use questioning effectively to check the level of pupils' understanding. Most teachers extend learning through probing questions in lessons. This provides pupils with opportunities to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Teachers are also adept at managing exploratory debate, which helps to challenge pupils' thinking. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils were discussing sensitively how urban development may led to inequality for the poor.
- Sometimes, in key stage 4 lessons, the quality of discussion does not match the quality of content in the books. This was particularly the case with the boys' work. While boys' verbal contribution may be extensive, showing good subject knowledge, this occasionally is not reflected in their exercise books.
- In the most effective examples of learning, teachers plan work which meets pupils' individual needs well, and they have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. Where learning is less successful, the work may be too easy or hard, or the teacher has not been clear as to why tasks should be completed or what is expected. When this occurs, learning slows and pupils lose focus, leading to disruptive behaviour. Some teachers are better than others at re-engaging pupils and getting them back on task.
- Most-able pupils are challenged in lessons through a variety of strategies. Some teachers set different tasks or questions and some set independent research work. Teachers encourage pupils to follow their interests and passions. For example, in a Year 10 French lesson, a pupil had completed several exercises from the textbook without the agreement of the teacher as she was really interested in the topic. The teacher responded by giving her more challenging material to work with that she might also be interested in.
- Support for pupils from additional adults, including group and one-to-one support, is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language. Teaching assistants are well trained and knowledgeable.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that formal assessment of pupils is regular and that the information collected is used to check that pupils are doing as well as they should. In key stage 4 classes, there is often a focus on the knowledge and approaches which will eventually help pupils do the best they can in GCSE examinations. Inspectors saw teachers following up recent assessments to ensure that pupils' learning was secure before they moved on to the next topic.

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils typically demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They want to do well, particularly so in the older year groups where they are focused on the next stage of education or employment. Many pupils show high levels of resilience and self-confidence.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online and when using social media. Through tutor time and assemblies, and in some subjects, teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the risks and potential dangers in wider society.
- While about a quarter of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, have the perception that there is bullying at the school and disagree that it is managed well, evidence does not support this view. School records show that the number of bullying incidents has significantly reduced. The incidents of bullying that do occur are perpetrated by a few individuals. Inspectors spoke to a large number of pupils, formally and informally, the consensus being that bullying is rare. When bullying occurs, most pupils are confident that teachers deal with it effectively. Leaders' procedures for dealing with bullying are thorough, involving parents and support and guidance for both parties, the bully and the victim.
- Leaders have also set up the Netherhall anti-bullying crew. These pupils give presentations to their fellow pupils on bullying and analyse the incidents alongside leaders to ensure that they do not occur again.
- Pupils are given a variety of opportunities to practise leadership skills. These include sports leaders, members of the 'year forum' and mentors, to name but a few.
- Pupils appreciate the house system and the sense of belonging to an identified entity. They particularly like being together with pupils from other year groups. For example, a group of Year 7 pupils said that they had made a lot of friends in older years. Pupils particularly value the support they receive from their school achievement leaders and the fact that they are known as individuals in a large school. School leaders are conscientious in monitoring the welfare of particularly vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils who find mainstream lessons challenging attend alternative provision. They receive good support to improve their behaviour, develop the personal skills they need for their futures, and cope with any issues they have.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most of the time, pupils' conduct in lessons is good. Pupils say that most teachers have high expectations of behaviour and that most pupils meet these expectations. However, on occasion, learning is interrupted by a few individuals who have complex behavioural needs. This is particularly the case in Year 8. Pupils who want to learn become frustrated by the distraction from learning.

- Pupils behave well around the school and at informal times, such as breaktimes and lunchtimes. They socialise sensibly in mixed groups, mainly sitting and chatting, or queuing sensibly to buy food and drink. In between lessons, most pupils are eager to get to lessons and arrive on time.
- There has been a 'spike' in fixed-term exclusions due to leaders' zero tolerance of specific behaviours linked to the new behaviour policy. Recently, there are fewer fixed-term exclusions as the new restorative meetings, where pupils apologise and make amends for their behaviour, are having greater impact.
- Pupils value their education and understand the importance of attending school regularly. Overall attendance is now broadly in line with the national average. Leaders have successfully supported individuals to improve their attendance so that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has significantly reduced. However, persistent absenteeism is still above that in most secondary schools nationally. Approximately a third of the proportion of disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- The proportion of pupils who attain GCSE grade 4+ and 5+ in English and mathematics is above other schools nationally. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of learning found that most pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. This is because they routinely experience appropriate levels of challenge from most teachers.
- School leaders have an accurate picture of where pupils achieve well and where actions are needed to improve outcomes further. They use this information effectively to improve progress for pupils. For example, outcomes in drama and music were a cause for concern in 2017. Leaders have taken action to resolve issues that led to some pupils underachieving. In 2018, the number of pupils attaining GCSE grade 4+ in these subjects has substantially increased. Recruitment issues in design technology led to some pupils underachieving and this has also been addressed.
- During the inspection, inspectors saw evidence of good work in current pupils' books in science. Provision is particularly strong for the most able pupils. Consequently, pupils demonstrate strong subject knowledge. For example, in Year 7, a most able pupil had written confidently and at length, using accurate scientific vocabulary, to explain the different functions of organs in the body.
- Typically, most-able pupils achieve well across their subjects. Where this does not occur in a few classes, it is due to some variability in teachers' expectations of their pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have their individual requirements identified and met well. Outcomes for this group of pupils have risen substantially over the past year. The progress of pupils is generally good across a broad range of subjects and they move on to further education or training successfully. Leaders ensure that funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is targeted effectively.
- Some pupils arrive at the school speaking little or no English, sometimes partway through the school year. They learn quickly because of effective targeted support. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress and achieve well.

- Disadvantaged pupils are now making much better progress. A number of disadvantaged pupils arrive at the school partway through their schooling, and some have not sat the key stage 2 tests. Inspectors' scrutiny of the school's performance information and disadvantaged pupils' current work shows that when disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly, they make good progress across the range of subjects. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent well to provide extra support for targeted pupils. However, leaders know that there is more work to do with those disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site provision. They follow a programme tailored to their needs and are making steady progress with their studies. School staff have regular contact with their counterparts in the off-site institution to check up on pupils' attendance, safety and progress.
- Careers education, guidance and support are strengths of the school. All pupils, throughout the school, receive input through their personal, social and health education (PSHE) sessions, supplemented by careers advisers and visits to universities and local businesses. Pupils in Year 11 receive strong support to make the decisions on their next steps. As a result, very few leave the school without entering employment, education or training.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective and leaders share the same high aspirations for students as seen elsewhere in the school.
- In recent years, published outcomes information shows that students make progress in the sixth form in line with national averages, in both academic and vocational courses. This includes students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders recognise the programme's strengths and weaknesses, and are addressing the weaker areas. Consequently, current students are making good progress in the academic and vocational courses that the school offers.
- Teaching is typically strong in the sixth form. Teachers know what students are capable of achieving and plan suitably demanding learning activities that develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills well. One sixth former said that teachers are good at judging when to take a step back if needed, so that students can explore independently. Students respond well to the many opportunities teachers provide for them to reflect upon and improve their work.
- Inspectors saw a number of lessons, such as in sociology, English and history, where probing questioning, careful planning, well-managed discussions and high expectations enabled students to make rapid gains in their learning. Students respond well to mutually respectful relationships.
- Students like the small class sizes, as teachers are able to tailor content closely to their needs. They also appreciate the one-to-one conversations they have with their tutors, as they feel supported to get the work-life balance right.
- The pastoral support, care and advice on offer is rated highly by students. The newly introduced health programme with the focus on mindfulness is particularly appreciated. Students say that staff are there to guide and support them whatever their background.



or personal issues.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum offered in the sixth form includes an appropriate mix of academic and vocational courses that meet the students' needs well. Particularly striking is also the range of opportunities to enrich students' experiences. For example, one student spoke of how she had benefited from learning Makaton sign language. This helped to inform her choice of university to learn speech and language therapy.
- The proportion of students who proceed to education, employment or training after learning is above average. This is testament to the success of all the sixth-form staff's and students' hard work. It also reflects the above-average success rate for students who retake GCSEs in English or mathematics. Almost all students secure their first-choice university after leaving the sixth form.

## School details

Unique reference number	142035
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10056466

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,100
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	196
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Shelley Monk
Principal	Christopher Tooley
Telephone number	01223 242931
Website	<a href="http://www.netherhall.org">www.netherhall.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@netherhallschool.org">office@netherhallschool.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school became a sponsored academy in February 2016 within the Bottisham multi-academy trust. This has expanded and includes, besides The Netherhall School, six other schools to form the Anglian Learning Trust. The school has a local governing body.
- The current principal was appointed to his post in March 2016.
- The Netherhall School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with other schools nationally.
- A significant number of pupils join the school at times other than the usual entry points.
- The school uses Cambridge AP Academy for alternative provision where required.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 48 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were jointly observed with either the principal or a member of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons to observe behaviour. They also observed an assembly and several tutor periods.
- Inspectors looked carefully at pupils' books during lessons.
- Inspectors heard six Year 7 pupils read, and discussed with them how they were supported in their development of literacy.
- Meetings were held with the principal, other leaders and members of staff, and spoke to three groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke to parents who requested to speak to the inspectors during the inspection.
- Inspectors met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, the safeguarding governor and the chief executive and deputy chief executive of the trust.
- Inspectors spoke to the provider of alternative provision, Cambridge AP Academy.
- Inspectors took account of 95 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including those relating to the school's self-evaluation, as well as governing body minutes, improvement plans and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, and policies and procedures relating to SEN, pupil premium funding, the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, safeguarding and child protection.

## Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Randall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Gee	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Hutton	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018