

Northern House School (Wokingham) Special Academy

Gipsy Lane, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 2HR

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is not effective. Pupils are at risk of harm because of very unsafe behaviour, low attendance and insufficient supervision.
- The multi-academy trust and governing body have not acted to identify or address extensive weaknesses in the school. All aspects of the school's work are inadequate.
- The governors and the multi-academy trust do not work well together. They have not held senior leaders to account or agreed on priorities to tackle failings.
- Over time, leaders have failed to support staff to address pupils' very challenging behaviours. This places pupils and staff at risk.
- Until recently, leaders had not checked pupils' learning, and as a result had not identified that the curriculum for older pupils had a negative impact on their achievement.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Many teachers do not demonstrate the skills to promote learning and manage challenging behaviour. As a result, pupils' achievement is poor.
- Staff do not demonstrate high expectations for pupils' behaviour or learning. This impacts negatively on their personal development and outcomes.
- Teachers do not use assessment well. They do not notice or intervene quickly enough when tasks are either too easy or too hard for pupils.
- Tasks are often uninteresting for pupils. This causes them to opt out of learning.
- Teaching assistants do not play an active part in supporting pupils' learning. Extra support for pupils is often lacking because these staff are dealing with challenging behaviour instead.
- Rates of exclusion are very high. Pupils miss too much school due to exclusion.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is firmly focused on securing the best outcomes for pupils. She has made essential changes quickly to improve the school.
- Staff care about pupils. They show that they want to help them.

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?

- Take immediate action to safeguard pupils by ensuring that:
 - staff are equipped to address pupils' unsafe and challenging behaviours effectively
 - pupils are adequately supervised at all times
 - all pupils attend school often.
- Improve pupils' behaviour so that it is good by ensuring that:
 - the behaviour policy is fit for purpose, sets out high expectations and clear sanctions, and is applied consistently across the school
 - rates of exclusion reduce so that they are reasonable and proportionate.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the multi-academy trust and governors hold senior leaders to account rigorously
 - leaders, governors and the multi-academy trust share clear priorities and take effective action to improve the school without delay
 - leaders monitor pupils' achievement across the school effectively to address underachievement
 - leaders implement and monitor the impact of planned changes to the curriculum and timetable.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' outcomes are good by ensuring that:
 - staff have consistently high expectations for pupils' achievement and attitudes to learning
 - tasks are suitably demanding and interesting for pupils
 - teaching assistants support pupils' learning effectively
 - teachers make use of effective questions and checks on pupils' learning during lessons to adjust and increase the impact of their teaching.

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

- The multi-academy trust has been too distant and has not acted quickly enough to identify or address significant safeguarding concerns and other weaknesses in the school. The relationship between the multi-academy trust and the local governing body is ineffective. Roles and responsibilities are not established. Therefore, neither the local governing body nor the trust has held senior leaders to account over time, and provision is inadequate as a result.
- The capacity for school self-improvement is limited. The newly appointed headteacher has made numerous essential changes to key aspects of the school's work in the six weeks since she took up post. However, governors and the multi-academy trust cannot demonstrate well enough that they share the same aims as the headteacher.
- For too long, leaders have failed to address effectively some pupils' very challenging behaviours. This has placed pupils and staff at risk and disrupted the learning of other pupils significantly. As a result, pupils do not feel safe, and their achievement is inadequate.
- Until recently, there has been insufficient emphasis on securing pupils' learning. Ineffective teaching was accepted and unchallenged. Teachers have not received vital training to equip them to meet pupils' significant learning and behavioural needs.
- Derogatory and discriminatory language is common among pupils. Not all staff challenge pupils or ensure that they respect others appropriately. Equal opportunities are not well promoted. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is impaired, and they are ill prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium has not been spent effectively. It is not clear how this money has been used. Pupils make inadequate progress in key stage 3.
- Last year, the pupil premium was not used well. Leaders are not able to demonstrate the impact that this spending had on disadvantaged pupils' achievement. The new leadership team has made appropriate plans to spend the funding appropriately this year, to address the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face in their learning.
- The curriculum makes provision for pupils to learn a broad range of subjects across the school. However, until this September, pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 did not have access to regular lessons in all subjects, including personal, social, health and economic education. This has had a negative impact on their achievement and personal development.
- Leaders have recognised the need to make changes to the timetable and curriculum in order to increase pupils' learning and progress. They have also established a system to assess pupils' learning. Some of these changes have not yet been fully implemented.
- Pupils in key stage 2 have access to a broad curriculum, learning through engaging topics such as 'bottoms, bile and burps'. The deputy headteacher who leads key stage 2 has rightly added extra opportunities for pupils to learn science this year, as they did

not achieve well in this subject last year.

- The new headteacher is developing relationships with the local authorities that place children at the school, to ensure that the school meets a range of pupils' needs. This has led to an improvement in the admissions process and is enabling leaders to reflect on the quality of the provision. It is too early to see the impact of this work.
- The new headteacher has started to establish a culture that is firmly focused on securing the best outcomes for all pupils. She is sharing leadership more widely across the school. Some staff spoke with enthusiasm about this renewed approach and demonstrate a clear commitment to achieving her aims.
- The physical education and sport premium has been spent well. Pupils in key stage 2 benefit from the extra opportunities that they have been given to learn new sports, such as trampolining, as well as receiving regular football coaching.
- It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governance is weak. The multi-academy trust and the local governing body have not had sufficient oversight of the school. In the absence of the chief executive officer last year, governors and trustees were too reliant on ambiguous reports from external advisers. This has meant that inadequate provision has been left unchecked for too long.
- The multi-academy trust and the local governing body do not work well together. For example, the governors have refused to agree to participate in joint working parties. The trust has not exercised sufficient authority to establish clear expectations and effective working relationships.
- Minutes from the local governing body show that it has not challenged senior leaders well enough. Over time, the governors have not asked for enough information about the school's performance.
- Very recently, the governors received a detailed and accurate report from the new headteacher. However, they are not able to demonstrate that they understand or share the aims of the new headteacher. The chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and the headteacher also have some differing expectations. Currently, leaders and governors are not clear about the direction of the school's development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Pupils demonstrate some extremely unsafe behaviour around the school. Staff are not able to stop pupils from engaging in activities that could cause them harm, such as climbing on fences, buildings and high furniture.
- The effective supervision of pupils is often compromised by some pupils' extremely poor behaviour demanding the undue attention of many staff.
- An extremely high proportion of pupils, over half of the pupils on the roll, do not attend

school regularly. These pupils are at risk when they are not at school.

- Arrangements for child protection are effective. Leaders and staff have received appropriate training and demonstrate that they take the right action to keep pupils safe. Records document clearly the action taken and show that leaders challenge external agencies with rigour to secure help for pupils.
- The safeguarding governor has provided effective supervision of the designated safeguarding leaders. For example, she has ensured that the record of checks on staff suitability meets current requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Many teachers do not demonstrate the skills and abilities necessary to promote pupils' learning and manage their challenging behaviours. As a result, pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 are underachieving.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with suitably interesting and demanding tasks. This means that pupils lose interest quickly and learn very little.
- Teachers do not monitor pupils' learning during lessons well enough. This means that, when pupils find work too hard or too easy, the teachers do not realise soon enough, and do not, therefore, adjust their teaching accordingly. As a result, pupils' progress is limited.
- A significant number of pupils demonstrate poor attitudes to learning. Pupils who do want to learn are often disrupted by those who do not want to participate. Teachers do not challenge pupils' poor behaviour in lessons effectively. Too often, when pupils do participate, teachers accept low-quality work.
- Teaching assistants do not play an active role in supporting pupils' learning. They are too often called away from lessons to deal with pupils who have challenging behaviour. Consequently, pupils do not receive as much additional support for learning as they should.
- Not enough teachers show high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Lessons do not build on what pupils already know, and so pupils do not extend their learning appropriately. Pupils' exercise books show that they often undertake work that is well below the standards expected for their age.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge, high expectations of pupils, and use assessment well to increase pupils' learning. For example, in a key stage 2 music lesson, pupils completed a drumming performance that showed very well the skills and knowledge that they had acquired.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils often use offensive language and discriminate against others who are different to them. They do not show that they respect others. Consequently, the school is hostile and unwelcoming.
- Some pupils do not feel safe at the school because of the way others behave. Younger pupils say that they are scared of some older pupils. Verbal threats are common. Some parents and carers say that their children have experienced bullying and that this has not been addressed.
- Pupils do not show that they know how to keep themselves safe. Until recently, there was no curriculum in place to help them to develop this understanding.
- Staff care about pupils. In their morning briefings and afternoon debriefings, it is clear that pupils are at the heart of their work. However, over time, leaders have not equipped staff with the skills and knowledge to enable them to provide pupils with consistent, effective, and holistic personal development.
- This year, leaders are monitoring effectively the behaviour, achievement and attendance of pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders have established clear aims for pupils' personal development and have also developed valuable relationships with providers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are frequent and numerous, both in classrooms and around the school. Leaders and staff have not been able to tackle this behaviour over time. Consequently, pupils' education and well-being have suffered.
- Rates of exclusion are too high. As a result, pupils have missed too many school days.
- A majority of pupils do not attend school regularly. There has not been enough action to tackle high rates of pupil absence. Pupils are at risk when they do not attend school and their whereabouts are unknown.
- The school's reward points system is effective in enabling pupils to think and receive feedback about their actions more frequently. Parents also welcome the feedback that they receive from the school about their children's behaviour. One parent said that this helps at home.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Across key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils currently in the school are not making sufficient progress over time, across the range of subjects. This is due to the disruption caused by poor behaviour, a disjointed curriculum, and teaching that has not met pupils' needs.
- There is no information collected to demonstrate how well pupils progress in key stage 3 or key stage 4. Pupils' work shows that achievement is particularly weak in the humanities in both key stages, and in Year 7 mathematics and English.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make good progress. They experience the same teaching as other pupils.
- Last year, pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 achieved some qualifications. These included some BTEC National Diploma level 1 qualifications in sport and food, City and Guilds diplomas, GCSEs, and entry-level qualifications in English, mathematics and science. Leaders acknowledge that pupils did not make as much progress as they should.
- Key stage 2 pupils make better progress than the older pupils. This is because the deputy headteacher for the primary school checks pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science and makes valuable changes to the curriculum to help pupils improve their outcomes.

School details

Unique reference number	143862
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10061130
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Marengo
Headteacher	Beverley Gates
Telephone number	01189 771 293
Website	www.northernhouse.org.uk
Email address	admin-wok@northernhouse.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Northern House School (Wokingham) Special Academy is one of four schools in the Northern House School Academy Trust. The school is a sponsored academy and became part of the multi-academy trust in January 2017. The multi-academy trust delegates some responsibilities to the local governing body.
- The school provides up to 69 places for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All of the pupils on the roll have education, health and care plans.
- Some secondary pupils attend one of eight alternative providers. Five pupils attend Reading Football Club and Heroes for all, or part of, their education. Another 12 pupils attend JAC, Readipop, Pitstop at Haybrook College, Autoskills, Upper Lodge Farm and The Community Furniture Project for part of their education.
- Leaders from the school work closely with other schools in the multi-academy trust.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. This group represents around half of the pupils in the school.
- Most of the pupils in the school are White British. Almost all of the pupils are boys.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place without notice to the school. It was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and was deemed a section 5 inspection on the first day.
- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether leadership and management are effective, whether pupils are safe at the school, and whether pupils' well-being is promoted well.
- Inspectors visited all year groups, spoke to pupils and looked at work in their exercise books.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, a group of pupils, three members of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the academy trust.
- The lead inspector spoke to two representatives of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors spoke to five parents on the telephone. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- A range of documents was looked at, including the school's information about pupils' achievement, minutes of governors' meetings and records concerning pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clive Close

Her Majesty's 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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