

New River College Secondary

Lough Road, London N7 8RH

Inspection dates

7–8 November 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders at all levels, including members of the management committee, have high aspirations for every pupil. Their key aims are to re-engage pupils in their education so that they can contribute positively to society.
- Leaders have raised staff's expectations for what each pupil can achieve. There is now a collective drive to make sure that pupils realise their full potential, academically and personally.
- Additional leadership positions at senior and middle levels have strengthened the school's ability to secure rapid improvements in all areas of the school's work.
- The curriculum provides a personalised pathway for each pupil to achieve their best, aligned to their interests and needs.
- Teaching is good because leaders make sure that teachers are given effective training and support. Most teachers are highly receptive to the guidance they receive from leaders and act on this decisively.
- Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress because assessments are used effectively to pitch work at the right level of challenge.
- Pupils receive intensive assistance from staff in lessons. However, there are occasions when pupils could work on their own.
- Pupils begin to make good progress as soon as they start school because of the thorough induction period. Assessments are used to set challenging targets for pupils academically and personally.
- Greater consistency in the quality of teaching results in less variable rates of progress for all pupils, irrespective of which site they attend. However, there remain some pockets of weaker progress in science and mathematics.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Regular and meticulous discussions on how well pupils are achieving secures the right support for their complex social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils grow in confidence and acquire a renewed sense of well-being. Attendance rates have risen dramatically because pupils enjoy their education and appreciate the care they receive.
- Pupils are usually ready to learn. They conduct themselves appropriately in lessons and around the school. There is consistency across the two sites in how staff manage pupils' behaviour.
- Safeguarding is given the highest priority. Staff are vigilant and alert to any potential concerns. The school works closely with a range of agencies to secure pupils' safety and promote their well-being.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistently outstanding teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - pupils' scientific skills and understanding are developed through investigative and practical activities when appropriate
 - pupils, including the most able, have more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and relevant contexts.
 - pupils are encouraged at every opportunity to work independently when they can do so.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders across both sites work cohesively together and have secured the support of almost all staff in sharing their high aspirations for pupils. There is a whole-school commitment to providing the very best education and support for pupils in their personal growth.
- The appointment of additional senior and middle leaders has boosted the school's capacity to secure improvements at a fast rate. Key leaders work across the two sites, eliminating previous inequalities in the quality of teaching and the management of pupils' behaviour.
- Closer monitoring means that leaders know what is working well and what needs further attention. Leaders focus on the right priorities to secure further improvements in all key areas of the school's performance. Both leaders and staff are all held fully to account for their work.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is given the highest priority. Leaders have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching. Senior leaders are strong role models for middle leaders and all staff. They identify the staff's strengths and provide detailed information for staff to work on next to improve their performance.
- Almost all staff willingly accept this feedback and apply it successfully in their practice. Professional development addresses individual and school priorities very effectively. Senior and middle leaders implement a robust appraisal cycle. Weak teaching is no longer tolerated and is addressed robustly. As a result, the profile of teaching continues to improve, securing good and sometimes outstanding progress for all learners.
- Leaders are outward-looking and engage in partnerships with similar settings and with the local teaching alliance. Both teachers and leaders share good or better practice, thus strengthening the school's ability to continue to improve.
- Expertise within the school is used to provide valuable support for mainstream schools through outreach programmes, reducing permanent exclusions and improving reintegration rates across the local authority.
- A recent review of the curriculum means that a wider choice of academic and vocational subjects, with relevant qualifications, are offered to pupils. As a result, pupils follow a more personalised curriculum pathway. Pupils learn about subjects which interest them, and which are more suited to their needs and abilities. Learning is now clearly at the centre of the schools' work. Pupils enjoy their work and want to come to school. As a result, attendance rates are much improved.
- Achievement has risen notably over the last two years. This is particularly so in literacy. The school recognises the vital role pupils' reading, writing and communication skills have. Pupils are better able to access the wider curriculum and are more prepared for life after leaving the school. Both key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils study a range of academic subjects, including English, mathematics and science, as well as vocational activities. Extra-curricular activities, including trips and visitors, enrich pupils' learning well.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), as well as effective careers guidance. Pupils learn to respect and tolerate differences. They know about democracy through studying the work of Parliament and discussing issues in the debating club. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered through a range of activities, including visits to different places of worship.
- Leaders have implemented sharper assessment procedures, including initial checks which pinpoint pupils' strengths and next steps academically and personally. This information forms an integral part of a very thorough induction process. The school's provision is tailored suitably to meet pupils' needs, informing which curriculum pathway pupils will follow.
- Aspirational targets are set and measured against national benchmarks. As a result, leaders know accurately whether pupils are achieving their full potential. Interventions are put in place to prevent any pupil falling behind.
- The pupil premium funding is used to enrich pupils' educational experiences well, including promoting pupils' literacy skills and increasing attendance rates. Recent strategies include personalised mentoring, and a greater analysis of attendance figures with subsequent targeted interventions and positive reinforcement. The sports premium has secured additional training for staff, including play leaders, who arrange structured activities at lunchtime.
- Those parents and carers who spoke to inspectors were highly appreciative of the school's work. They say that the school 'quickly turns their children around' and is very successful in reintegrating their children back into mainstream schools. Parents and carers were particularly grateful for the social and emotional support the school provides for their children.

Governance of the school

- Members of the management committee are a committed group who share the leaders' drive to improve pupils' life chances.
- A restructuring of the committee means that members have greater clarity about their roles and responsibilities. Members gather their own information on the school's work, through regular visits and reports from leaders. There is more transparency and professional dialogue with senior leaders. As a result, members of the management committee are exceptionally well informed about the school's performance. Members understand the complex challenges the school faces and are mindful of providing leaders with support and challenge in equal measures.
- Members have a clear vision for the school's future and ensure that all the statutory requirements are met in full.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding culture is clear, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders make sure that all policies and procedures relating to safeguarding pupils are

up to date and reflect all the latest statutory guidance.

- Staff and governors receive appropriate training in all aspects of safeguarding. Regular safeguarding updates and daily debriefing meetings enable staff to explore issues that may have arisen during the day. This secures a rapid response to individual concerns, with suitable support put in place using both internal and external expertise from a range of agencies.
- The school has a good understanding of local risks and provides pupils with guidance on how to protect themselves from all potential dangers, including radicalisation, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, peer-on-peer bullying, knife and gang crime. The school works closely with external agencies, including the police safer schools team, to protect pupils effectively.
- All the required checks to make sure staff are suitable to work with children are undertaken rigorously.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Clear behavioural expectations are evident in all lessons. Pupils usually have positive attitudes to their learning. Lessons usually proceed in a calm, purposeful and positive manner.
- The very small adult-to-pupil ratio means that staff know pupils' strengths and next steps precisely. Learning is tailored to meet the wide range of academic abilities and pupils' emotional and social needs.
- Teachers and learning assistants work seamlessly together to make sure that pupils stay on task. Nonetheless, there are times when staff do not stand back to enable those pupils who are confident and capable enough to complete tasks on their own.
- Teachers make good use of ongoing assessments and provide pupils with effective feedback about their progress. This is particularly strong in English, where pupils are given time to respond to guidance and practise their skills further.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and impart this effectively and clearly to pupils. Teachers highlight technical vocabulary to reinforce key concepts.
- Learning is exceptionally strong when teachers provide pupils with concrete and practical equipment for them to explore independently, particularly in mathematics. They constantly explain and revisit ideas to secure pupils' understanding. These teachers continually assess pupils' understanding and use pupils' misconceptions such as the differences between area and volume, to clarify ideas thoroughly. This is especially so for younger pupils.
- There are some occasions when pupils, particularly the most-able older pupils, are not always provided with activities which makes them think hard and to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and relevant activities.
- Pupils' literacy skills are promoted very effectively in all lessons. They are given time to read and to talk about their ideas and thoughts. Pupils read aloud in lessons with confidence and clarity.
- Learning is less strong in science when pupils are not given the opportunity to practise

key scientific enquiry skills in practical situations. Activities that younger pupils undertake when planning and performing tests, which promote higher-order skills such as predicting and evaluating, are not always built on well enough in key stage 4.

- Younger pupils, particularly those who have complex needs, sometimes make strong and sustained progress because staff provide excellent support and guidance to address their needs precisely. The work of therapists has a considerable impact on improving pupils' emotional and mental health, enabling these pupils to concentrate on their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff reintroduce pupils to education in a nurturing environment exceptionally well. There are regular checks on pupils' welfare. These include daily updates and multi-agency meetings, involving school staff and a range of external professionals. Any concerns are flagged up immediately so that tailored support packages are put in place to help pupils and their parents and carers if required.
- Those pupils who have past or current trauma in their lives are mentored effectively to promote their mental resilience and personal independence. Staff look out for any potential talent or interests' pupils may have. This fosters pupils' enjoyment and mental well-being. Learning to play the drums or teaching rugby to younger pupils at the local primary school raises pupils' self-esteem and fosters key life skills. Pupils begin to believe in their own capabilities, growing in confidence and self-worth.
- Staff who work at the Elthorne site work closely with a wide range of professionals. The child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) works on-site at both settings and provides much needed mentoring and counselling for both staff and pupils.
- Staff have infinite patience with pupils and obviously care greatly about their mental and physical welfare. They form very strong relationships with pupils, either as a key worker or as part of a very unified team. There is a culture of mutual respect and trust which promotes pupils' self-awareness and sense of belonging.
- Pupils learn about healthy diets and build up their stamina and fitness by taking part in sporting activities, including coaching at Arsenal Football Club.
- A real strength of the school is the flexible approach to making sure pupils do not miss out on their education. Those pupils who are not able to come to the centre at Elthorne receive home tutoring, which is monitored closely by staff.
- A comprehensive programme for pupils' careers guidance and advice prepares pupils well for their next steps when they leave school. Visits to universities raise pupils' aspirations for their future. In 2018, every pupil went on to appropriate placements, including further education, employment or training and/or apprenticeships.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe within the community and online. Pupils learn about the consequences of knife and gun crime, how to deal with 'stop and search', the effects of misuse of drugs and what constitute effective relationships.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school.

- Pupils understand all types of bullying and say that there is very little bullying in school. Records confirm this to be accurate.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- After a short settling in period, pupils make good progress in improving their behaviour for learning. Pupils are proud of their school and recently requested a school uniform.
- Leaders track and monitor behaviour effectively and set targets for pupils to work towards. Leaders have made sure staff across both sites use positive behaviour management strategies to promote positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils know that if they disrupt the learning of others they will be removed from the lesson. Any inappropriate behaviour is quickly challenged and dealt with effectively. This is reducing the amount of low-level disruption. Staff are trained to pre-empt potentially disruptive behaviour and de-escalate this successfully. Staff have received training for physical intervention, which is only used as a last option.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are recorded and analysed to identify triggers and to evaluate which interventions have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions is declining. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years.
- Those pupils who sometimes exhibit challenging behaviours are helped to develop self-control, resilience and greater independence.
- Leaders follow up absences with rigour, including home visits and contacting the police if necessary. This, together with an improved curriculum and better teaching, has had a major impact on pupils' attitudes to their education and attendance rates. Most pupils attend school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils have skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. This is the result of poor or non-attendance at mainstream schools, creating major gaps in pupils' learning.
- Improved initial assessments when pupils enter the school are used well to prioritise pupils' learning so that work builds steadily on what pupils know and can do. Over time, pupils catch up and make the progress they are capable of in English, mathematics and science, as well as in a wide range of other subjects.
- There are very few differences in the progress that different groups make. This applies to those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils, pupils with social, emotional, mental health, and behavioural difficulties, the most-able pupils, or girls and boys. Indeed, disadvantaged pupils make as much and sometimes more progress than other pupils because of targeted teaching and intervention programmes.
- Pupils' reading development has been a recent focus for improvement. Pupils are

regularly taught how to read unfamiliar words using their phonic knowledge. An online programme enables teachers to assess pupils' reading comprehension and provide them with books that are pitched at the right level of challenge. Pupils are beginning to reconnect with books and other reading materials. This engenders a love of reading, a growing ability to access the wider curriculum and prepares pupils for life after school.

- There has been a clear upward trend in standards over the last few years. In 2018, all Year 11 pupils achieved nationally recognised qualifications. Almost every pupil gained a GCSE with a quarter of pupils achieving national expectations or higher. English results were especially strong with over a third of pupils achieving the nationally expected grade or above.
- Pupils achieved well in art in 2018, when 100% of pupils achieved or exceeded their aspirational target grade. Those pupils who find learning difficult achieved well in a range of vocational and functional subjects. There was a significant improvement in the number of pupils gaining functional skills Level 1 and 2 in mathematics and English.
- Leaders ensure that those pupils who attend alternative provision make equally good progress. Their progress is checked carefully to ensure that potential underachievement is eliminated.
- The school's own information demonstrates strong progress, including in the core subjects. Inspection evidence confirms this to be the case. However, work in pupils' books demonstrates that some variability remains, across the key stages, in science and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	100391
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10054347

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	Management committee
Chair	Rachel Tyndall
Executive headteacher	Nigel Smith
Telephone number	020 7607 6500
Website	www.newrivercollege.co.uk
Email address	nigel.smith@nrc.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2016

Information about this school

- New River College Secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is one of three PRUs which make up New River College. It is funded to take a maximum of 70 pupils. There are two main sites. The New River Secondary site is located at Lough Road. It has a satellite centre for pupils with social, emotional, mental health, and behavioural difficulties at Elthorne Road. The Primary PRU is located at Cloudsley Square. The Medical PRU offers provision at the Whittington Hospital and Elthorne Road and provides home schooling where necessary. All consortium PRUs have individual unique reference numbers (URNs).
- The executive headteacher is responsible for all PRUs in the consortium.
- Since the last full inspection, there have been several staffing changes, including at the leadership level. There is a new head of centre at the Lough Road site. A deputy headteacher for teaching and learning, and four heads of departments have been recruited. Special educational needs and behaviour leads have also been appointed.

Most of the appointments are internal promotions.

- The school caters for pupils from across Islington. All pupils have SEND. Approximately a quarter of pupils are supported by an education, health and care plan for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Most of these pupils attend the satellite centre at Elthorne Road. This site caters specifically for pupils with social, emotional, mental health and behavioural difficulties.
- An increasing number of pupils who attend the main site at Lough Road also have complex social, emotional and mental health needs, and additional learning difficulties. Almost a fifth of pupils are dual-registered.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- There are more boys than girls on roll.
- The school uses alternative provision for some pupils. The providers are: Westminster Kingsway College, The Boxing Academy and Academy 21 (online learning).
- The school does not receive Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited lessons in a range of subjects across both the primary and secondary campuses. School leaders accompanied inspectors to all the visits to classrooms. Inspectors also scrutinised a wide range of books, including looking at work with senior leaders, to evaluate the quality of pupils' learning over time.
- The inspection team held a range of meetings with senior and middle leaders to evaluate the impact of their work. Inspectors also held meetings with members of the management committee, including the chair, and a group of pupils. The lead inspector met with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated views about the school from meetings and telephone calls with several parents.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's surveys of pupils', parents' and staff views. There were no replies to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents or to the pupil survey. Inspectors evaluated 34 replies to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation provided by leaders, including: internal assessment information for pupils in all year groups; leaders' self-evaluation; the improvement plan; minutes of management committee meetings; attendance and behaviour information; a variety of school policies; the single central record of recruitment checks; resources and teaching materials for pupils on how to stay safe; and a wide range of other information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jason Hughes

Ofsted Inspector

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