

Inspection of Northampton School for Girls

Spinney Hill Road, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 6DG

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

Previous inspection grade

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This highly popular school serves a diverse community. Relationships are positive. The school is welcoming and inclusive. Pupils are happy at school. They say that they feel safe.

The curriculum is broad. There is a wide range of subjects for pupils to study at key stage 4 and in the sixth form, including vocational subjects. Expectations are high. Pupils achieve well. Staff are determined to help pupils achieve their best in most subjects, particularly performing arts and humanities subjects. Staff provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language.

The majority of pupils uphold the school's values of 'respect for self, for others and for learning'. The large majority behave well. The environment is calm and orderly, including when pupils move between the site's various buildings. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any occurrence of bullying.

The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is a strong feature. Levels of participation in these activities are very high. Activities include sports, school productions such as Billy Elliot, and debating. Many older pupils complete the National Citizenship award. Sixth-form students value the opportunity to lead projects, including talking to younger girls about important issues that affect them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors have an ambitious vision. They know the school well. Their vision is complemented by detailed plans to further enhance the school's provision. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. Governors listen to staff and are effective in holding leaders to account.

The curriculum is ambitious. It at least meets the aims of the national curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Leaders have ensured that the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate are at the heart of the curriculum. The proportion of pupils opting for these subjects is rising. Pupils achieve well. Achievement has improved for disadvantaged pupils and sixth-form students.

Subject leaders are refining their curriculum plans across all key stages. Their plans identify the knowledge pupils require and when they need to learn it. They have considered how their subjects support the social and cultural learning of pupils. In art, for example, pupils discover how portraits reflect human diversity. Leaders have devised effective systems for checking pupils' knowledge and understanding. Staff access a wide range of opportunities to develop their professional practice. Leaders make checks to ensure that this training is having the intended impact.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. In most subjects, teachers use their expertise well to check pupils' understanding. Despite high levels of achievement, however, this is not always consistent. In some subjects, teachers move learning on to the next stage before ensuring that all pupils are secure in their understanding.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Through a recent review, leaders have ensured that pupils with SEND receive the support they need to be able to access the full curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils are well cared for. Many staff contribute towards the extra support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. There is an effective programme to promote reading for all pupils. Pupils who struggle to read receive the extra help they need.

The behaviour of most pupils is very good. They are polite and courteous. Students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form are exemplary. Attitudes are positive in most subjects. However, some pupils' attitudes are not as consistent as they should be. In a few subjects, including modern foreign languages and science, some pupils engage in off-task chat which distracts them and others from their learning. Some staff do not always challenge this strongly enough.

On occasions, some pupils are not as respectful to others as they should be. Leaders act swiftly when this is reported.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is strong. It has been designed to build pupils' character. Pupils have many opportunities to discuss and debate issues, including equality, protected characteristics and emotional well-being. Most understand what makes people similar and different. Leaders have introduced a new 'unity charter' to help ensure that pupils value the importance of developing respectful relationships between everyone. Pupils value forums such as the diversity 'Q' group and 'Heart' club, for example. The curriculum for relationships and sex education is equally strong. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps at the end of Years 11 and 13. They receive high-quality guidance about future options.

The school promotes an excellent range of extra-curricular activities to further develop pupils' character. Leaders record the high number of pupils who take part. Pupils strongly value them. Parents agree. One parent, typical of many, said: 'the extra-curricular activities offered are fantastic, the opportunities are amazing'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are forensic in their analysis of risks in the local area. They know what the priorities are, including online safety and child criminal exploitation. Staff are vigilant. They receive thorough training. Pupils learn about personal safety. They know who they can talk to about their worries.

Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that the school's most vulnerable pupils receive the help and support they need. They take swift and appropriate action to protect

pupils. Leaders work well with external agencies, including social care, the health services and the police. Leaders' record-keeping is thorough. The oversight of pupils in the care of local authority is strong.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, including science and modern foreign languages, teachers do not always check that pupils have understood the knowledge they need to be able to complete tasks or contribute towards discussions. When this is the case, pupils sometimes do not participate as fully as they might. Sometimes, pupils leave tasks incomplete. Teachers should ensure that pupils' understanding of concepts taught is secure before setting tasks or moving learning on, so that pupils can apply more of the knowledge they have learned.
- There are pockets of low-level disruption to learning in some subject areas. This is typically presented by off-task chat between pupils. It disrupts the flow of learning. A small minority of pupils can engage in behaviour which is disrespectful to others. Leaders need to ensure that staff are consistent in their application of the school's behaviour management policies and that all pupils understand the importance of upholding the school's values in all that they do, including in how they interact with others.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	140510
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10199282
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1757
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Clare Bottle
Headteacher	Cristina Taboada-Naya
Website	www.nsg.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 September 2006

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. They also held meetings with the designated leader for safeguarding, the director of the sixth form and the school's coordinator for the provision of pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with the school's tutor with oversight of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Inspectors spoke with several teachers who are at an early point in their teaching careers.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally around the school site and across all key stages.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including policies, plans and record-keeping for safeguarding, behaviour management, attendance, careers education, advice and guidance, and relationships, sex and health education.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in art, history, mathematics, science and physical education. In each subject, inspectors visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils in all key stages. Inspectors also visited several tutor time sessions and two assemblies.
- The lead inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Farhan Adam	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Asker	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Fitzwilliam	Ofsted Inspector

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