

Inspection of an outstanding school: Northgate School

Edgware Community Hospital, Burnt Oak Broadway, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 0AD

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 February 2023

Outcome

Northgate School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Northgate School is a happy, caring and inclusive school where staff are ambitious for every pupil. Consequently, even the most vulnerable pupils have a positive attitude to their education, and behaviour rarely affects others' learning. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens, and they are confident that staff will help them if they need it.

The excellent enrichment programme provides all pupils with opportunities to participate in activities that they would otherwise not experience. This helps build pupils' confidence and resilience.

Pupils describe a sense of belonging because they contribute to the school environment and culture of the school. Whether this be planting greenery in the outside space, or raising everyone's awareness of gender identity. Pupils also participate in activities within the wider community. For example, fundraising to provide Christmas packs for local homeless people. Consequently, pupils become informed and responsible citizens.

Leaders understand the mental health needs of the pupils. However, they ensure that their focus is on education. The school is a safe, nurturing and non-judgmental environment where pupils can learn without distraction.

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

Leaders aim to help pupils overcome their difficulties so that they can achieve well across all subjects. Most pupils who start at the school have previously experienced significant disruption to their education. When pupils join the school, staff assess their well-being needs and academic knowledge. Pupils' specific needs and circumstances are accurately understood.

The school's curriculum has been designed with a great deal consideration of pupils' individual needs, strengths and aspirations. Teaching is successfully adapted to meet

pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Even the most vulnerable or resistant pupils cannot help being swept along by the sheer enthusiasm and joy found in lessons.

Sometimes pupils join the school without being able to read with fluency. Because reading is prioritised pupils are prevented from falling further behind. They are soon able to access an ambitious, age-appropriate curriculum. Pupils quickly learn to read fluently and enjoy reading books for pleasure.

Leaders have thought about what they want pupils to know and remember across different subjects. They plan for pupils to learn knowledge in small chunks in a well-ordered way. This approach enables pupils to build on what they have learned before. It also helps pupils to make links to other subjects. For example, when pupils learn about graphs in mathematics they then use these skills to analyse crime figures in sociology. Consequently, pupils are able to recall essential knowledge and skills and apply these to new contexts as they arise. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to discuss and develop their ideas as well as learn new vocabulary.

Staff, pupils and parents and carers agree that pupils are, as one parent put it, 'pushed to be their best'. Staff notice even the smallest achievements, and these are recognised during the weekly celebration.

Pupils in the sixth form are well equipped for the next stage of their education. Leaders creatively adapt the curriculum to enable pupils to continue their previous studies. This is so that pupils stay on track to study higher-level qualifications when they leave this school.

Pupils at the school typically have complex social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff promote pupils' well-being, and this is prioritised in lessons as well as through additional support. This support is highly individualised and focuses on what each pupil needs to succeed. Many pupils are supported by external professionals, including those from health and children's services. Leaders coordinate this support very well. They ensure it is tailored to pupils' specific needs and circumstances.

Pupils conduct themselves extremely well both during lessons and around school. Staff know pupils exceptionally well and are able to pick up on even the smallest clues to help avoid problems even before they happen.

During weekly school community meetings, staff and pupils raise concerns and share what is going well. This enhances the provision and benefits everyone in the school.

Staff feel that workload is manageable and that systems are not burdensome. This allows them to focus on personalising learning, and to be innovative with the activities and support provided.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff vetting and checking systems are completed thoroughly. Staff training is comprehensive and responds well to local risks and individual pupil need. The daily briefing meeting ensures that everyone is fully informed and prepared for the day.

Staff know pupils and their families well. They are well trained so are able to identify signs that might mean a pupil is at risk. They are vigilant and report all concerns to the safeguarding leaders in a timely fashion. Leaders have close links with a wide range of agencies. They get professional help for pupils and their families who may be at risk and who need help to support their welfare.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that pupils are safe when using the internet.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in May 2014.

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.

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	133749
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10255547
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of trust	Brian Salinger
Headteacher	Angela Moore
Website	www.northgateschool.net
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school also provides education for pupils at Beacon Centre, an adolescent inpatient unit.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The number of pupils on the school roll changes frequently, as some only stay at the school for a short time.

Information about this inspection

- 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 of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and personal development. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with teachers. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection, including art, science, and personal, social, health and economic education.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks on staff.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, and they observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff about safeguarding, behaviour and their workload. Inspectors also looked at the responses from pupils, staff and parents to Ofsted's surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Francis Gonzalez, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nell Nicholson

Ofsted Inspector

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