

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Garden School

Wordsworth Road, London N16 8BZ

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

All staff work to ensure that pupils are happy and safe in this nurturing school. Leaders ensure that pupils and their families have access to a range of knowledgeable and caring professional support.

Leaders have high expectations for the development of pupils' life skills, which is a significant part of their preparation for adulthood and life beyond school. Leaders ensure that life skills are taught and encouraged throughout the school day, both during and outside of lessons. However, the time available for the subject curriculum is more limited throughout the week. Teachers do not focus as much on making subject-content knowledge explicit to pupils because their main focus is on developing pupils' life skills.

Teachers follow consistent approaches to lesson structure and behaviour management. This is in part due to the extensive professional development that leaders provide for staff during their induction and throughout the year.

Teachers encourage pupils to make choices that build pupils' confidence to express their views and their ability to understand and manage their emotions and behaviour. Leaders have put effective strategies in place to measure and support pupils' behaviour. They work with families to encourage consistency in approach between home and school.

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

Leaders have planned and teachers deliver a sequenced and well thought-through curriculum. Staff are ambitious for all pupils to become as independent as possible. For example, leaders have established a consistent approach to developing pupils' communication that threads throughout the school and enables pupils to build up their

skills step by step towards independence. Work to develop pupils' communication is a strength of the school.

However, the balance between developing pupils' life skills and communication, and developing their subject knowledge, is not as well thought through. Curriculum documentation is not routinely clear and focuses more on skills than on essential subject knowledge. In the new Year 12 and 13 classes, leaders have started to plan work-related learning opportunities and related accreditation, but this is not fully established.

Phonics teaching, for those pupils who are able to access it, is at early stages of development. Early-reading skills for older pupils are not embedded in the curriculum. Planning does not clarify how knowledge learning should be sequenced and built up over time. This means that teachers from the Reception Year to Year 9 are not typically aware of what pupils need to know in order to be ready for learning in Years 10 to 13. Teachers in Years 10 to 13 are not clear about pupils' prior learning and what pupils know already.

Leaders have started to embed a process to check and record pupils' learning that links targets set by teachers, therapists and pupils' individual education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Since the opening of the new provision for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students in the sixth form at The Pavilion, leaders and teaching staff have worked hard to extend the school's curriculum to match the needs of older pupils. Pupils have opportunities to practise their life skills in life-like situations. These include learning domestic skills in the school's simulation 'flat' and experiencing a range of workplace skills in the café catering for staff, parents, carers and visitors.

Leaders are at an early stage of introducing phonics to all pupils who are able to benefit. The rollout of phonics is planned for the near future.

Leaders ensure that pupils' behaviour is consistently managed. They provide clear guidance for class staff on how to support pupils effectively and to understand their behaviour. All staff are trained to use strategies that support pupils' behaviour in a coherent and consistent way.

Leaders ensure that pupils have a wide range of social and cultural of experiences through the curriculum, assemblies and community visits. Leaders and teachers have developed pupils' personal development and the school's relationships and sex education curriculum to ensure that these complement pupils' developmental stages and their understanding. Parents are consulted and work closely with the school's leaders to make sure that key messages are consistent between home and school.

The school team assesses the pupils' needs effectively and develops strategies to support pupils' learning and development. These are shared to ensure consistency between different professionals and families.

Leaders provide extensive professional development for staff during their induction and throughout the year. The school has recently appointed a number of new leaders and

together they are working on improving communication with staff and with families. Governors and leaders are aware that a small but significant number of staff are concerned about their workload and well-being. They have plans to address this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff are well trained and know to recognise possible signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They are aware of the specific issues that may make pupils with SEND particularly vulnerable. Staff take swift action to report any concerns and leaders with responsibility for safeguarding follow up any issues and work in close partnership with outside agencies, where needed.

Pupils are encouraged to keep themselves safe including when working online. They are taught the importance of personal safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading in its widest sense and phonics are in their early stages of development. Therefore, pupils who would benefit are not making the gains that they could. Leaders need to prioritise their implementation and monitoring of reading and phonics across school.
- The new key stage 5 provision is in the early stages of development and leaders have not carefully identified the appropriate accreditation for all students who could access them. This limits the gains that the oldest students make. Leaders must ensure that they identify appropriate accreditation for students in Years 12 and 13 as soon as possible.

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 January 2018.

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	100311
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10268786
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	David Lowry
Headteacher	KT Khan
Website	www.the-garden.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with complex needs including autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has opened new provision The Pavilion, at Ickborough Road, London E5 8AD, for some pupils in Years 10 and 11, and for students in Years 12 and 13.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and communication, mathematics, and personal, social and health education with emotional regulation. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to teachers and staff. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding and supporting pupils' health and safety, as well as their welfare and well-being. This included looking at case studies and reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and held a separate meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents and staff, and met with some parents informally.

Inspection team

Lorraine Slee, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Aliki Constantopoulou

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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