

Inspection of Northstar New School

c/o Gascoigne Primary Annex, The Shaftesburys, Barking IG11 7JA

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like coming to this exceptional school. They feel safe and they work hard in their lessons. Pupils start the morning being greeted by friendly and positive staff. The school environment is calm, organised and inviting. Teachers make exceedingly good use of the excellent learning environment and the high-quality resources. Teachers make lessons interesting, and pupils appreciate the extra help and support they get in order to do their best. Pupils behave very well. If a pupil needs extra help to manage their emotions, staff provide this in a calm and supportive way so that there is very little disruption to lessons.

Pupils say that bullying is not a problem. Sometimes, there might be disagreements or clashes of personality, but staff sort this out quickly. As they progress through the school, pupils learn strategies to do this for themselves.

Leaders have built a positive and expert staff team. Staff spend time finding out about the specific needs of each pupil and adapting their approach accordingly. The school's positive vision and values are threaded clearly through the everyday work of the school.

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

Leaders have embedded an ambitious curriculum of exceptional quality. Pupils make excellent progress academically, socially and emotionally. Leaders set the pace and expectation for curriculum thinking, which is highly developed. Teachers and support staff then deliver the curriculum in a consistent and coordinated way so that pupils gain knowledge and skills in a sequenced and meaningful way, fine-tuning the curriculum at every step so that it meets the unique needs of each pupil.

Leaders and teachers track each pupil's journey through the curriculum meticulously. This means that everyone knows exactly where pupils are up to in their learning. Staff identify any gaps in pupils' understanding and map out clear next steps. This leads to pupils gaining knowledge and skills in a logical and sequenced way, with each step building on the one before. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge, including in early reading. Pupils who are still learning to decode text are supported in a systematic way with lessons and activities adapted to their individual needs. Pupils who can read more fluently continue to develop their skills. Reading is prioritised so that pupils can access the rest of the curriculum.

The curriculum at Northstar goes beyond the academic. Leaders have ensured that the development of pupils' personal, social and emotional skills threads through the curriculum. Pupils learn important skills and knowledge to prepare them for adult life in modern Britain, including in respect of tolerance and respect for other people, relationships and sex education, democracy and the rule of law. Over time, they

become increasingly independent in managing their own emotions and in resolving conflict. Leaders have put strategies in place to support pupils' mental health and well-being.

Pupils placed at the school have very complex needs. They need expert care and insight to help them feel safe and valued. Leaders and the school staff do this exceptionally well. As a result, over time, pupils respond to the calm and consistent approach of staff. They form positive attachments and begin to believe in themselves and what they can achieve. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. When pupils join the school, they respond quickly to the positive role models they see around them.

Many pupils take up opportunities provided by the school for wider involvement in activities. Pupils have an active school life. The excellent sporting and play facilities are used often and well. The curriculum for physical education uses pupils' interest in sports to teach important themes, such as respect and sporting behaviour. Younger pupils who are at earlier stages of social and emotional development have opportunities to learn and develop through structured and unstructured play, using engaging and high-quality resources that invite exploration and the development of essential communication skills.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality. Leaders provide a very wide range of meaningful trips and visits that enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils visit the Houses of Parliament, London Zoo and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, as well as swimming at a local leisure centre.

Staff like working at the school. They feel well supported by leaders and say that leaders consider their mental health and well-being as well as their workload. The proprietor is the full-time headteacher. Staff say that he is 'visible' and 'hands-on'.

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards. They maintain the premises to a high standard. Their accessibility plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. They have systems in place to share important information about pupils with relevant agencies. Staff are well trained and vigilant. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and have a deep understanding of why pupils at the school may be even more vulnerable because of their complex needs.

Leaders work closely with safeguarding partners and they take swift action if a pupil needs extra help.

Systems for checking the suitability of staff at the school are thorough and consistent. The school's safeguarding policy, which is published on its website, complies with the latest statutory guidance.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	142334
DfE registration number	301/6007
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	10254675
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Euan Macdonald
Headteacher	Euan Macdonald
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,500 to £69,010
Telephone number	0208 724 8862
Website	www.northstarnewschool.org
Email address	euan.macdonald@northstarnewschool.org
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 November 2018

Information about this school

- The school's most recent standard inspection was in November 2018.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan that identifies social, emotional and mental health difficulties as the pupil's primary area of need. Some pupils also have additional communication and interaction needs.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including physical education and science.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors had discussions with leaders, scrutinised the school's safeguarding policy, and checked safeguarding records and systems. Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke to the local authority designated officer.
- As part of their work to check that leaders had ensured that the independent school standards were met, inspectors carried out a tour of the school site. They also met with leaders and checked the school's policies, records and other evidence of compliance.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Amanda Carter-Fraser

His Majesty's Inspector

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