

Inspection of North West Kent Alternative Provision Service

Richmond Drive, Gravesend DA12 4DJ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive a positive new start when they join this school. Their individual needs are carefully identified by staff that take the time to get to know them well. Because of this, relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. Pupils develop confidence to overcome barriers to learning. An extensive programme of support helps pupils to learn how to manage their social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils use these strategies to become increasingly resilient when faced with new challenges. The school is typically calm and orderly. Pupils report that bullying is very rare because they see themselves as 'one big family'.

Staff provide pupils with tailored support to improve their skills in reading and writing. An extensive range of vocational courses such as sports science encourage pupils to consider these routes as possible career paths in the future. Leaders shape the curriculum to help pupils work towards achieving personal learning targets. This includes exciting opportunities to practise collaborative teamwork and communication. For example, pupils visit 'panic rooms' to work together to solve tasks and puzzles under pressure.

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

All pupils at the school have a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The knowledgeable SEND team quickly identifies pupils' specific needs to develop a personalised programme of support. These programmes include research-informed interventions such as talking therapies or team building. Leaders carefully monitor pupils' progress to check that the support is effective. Where needed, leaders apply for education, health and care plans. This helps pupils to continue to access the support they need when they reintegrate back to their original schools.

Pupils study subjects that are broadly in line with the national curriculum. This ensures they have the education they needed to support a successful transition back into mainstream education. Many pupils require specific support with their reading and mathematical skills. The curriculum sharply focuses on addressing this. For example, in English, pupils recap and practise punctuation, spelling and ambitious vocabulary. For those that do not yet have the phonics knowledge to read confidently, pupils receive specialist reading support. Pupils access a wide range of books which are age appropriate but accessible to their various reading stages.

Typically, teachers do check what pupils understand before they move onto new learning. However, sometimes teachers do not provide the right support to ensure pupils understand key concepts within the curriculum. In addition, teachers do not always adapt learning to meet the different needs of pupils. As a result, pupils have gaps in their subject knowledge, meaning they find it more difficult to understand new topics and ideas.

Strategies designed to help pupils improve and manage their behaviour are effective. In lessons, learning is rarely disrupted as staff deal with it well. Many pupils have struggled to attend school previously. Leaders work with parents and referring schools to encourage attendance. For many pupils, there have been some improvements in how regularly they attend school. This has supported their re-engagement with education.

Leaders prepare pupils exceptionally well to reintegrate back into mainstream school or the next stages of education. After leaving the school, the vast majority of pupils continue in post-16 education, training or employment. Lessons on finance and life skills prepare pupils for adulthood. Pupils learn to respectfully debate societal dilemmas such as the age restrictions on social media platforms. Pupils learn to take care of their mental and physical health. This includes learning about sex and relationships in an age-appropriate way. The extensive careers programme provides pupils with unbiased information about possible career paths. Visitors from colleges, universities and local industries inspire pupils to strive ambitiously for prosperous futures.

Governors have oversight to ensure leaders make decisions that are in the very best interests of pupils. They maintain a clear view to help leaders ensure their actions are effective. Staff value the wealth of training that helps them to fulfil their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders provide effective training to ensure staff can identify the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They tenaciously seek out professional support for pupils who need it. Staff are well informed of the risks that pupils may face by working closely with referring schools, parents and carers. Meticulous records clearly indicate the steps that leaders take to resolve any reported concerns about the welfare of pupils.

Pupils have regular talks from external providers to inform them of how to stay safe outside of school. This has included how to avoid the dangers of knife crime.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not always ensure that the teaching choices they make help pupils learn the intended curriculum. Consequently, pupils have some gaps in their knowledge meaning they can find exploring new ideas and concepts more difficult. Leaders must ensure that staff have the skills and expertise needed to effectively implement the school's curriculum.

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	148144
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10267814
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sam Guy
Headteacher	Abigail Woodhouse (Head of school)
Website	www.nwkaps.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- There have been recent changes to the leadership of the school. The head of school is supported by the previous headteacher, who is now the executive headteacher of two schools within the trust.
- The school is part of the Alternative Learning Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the head of school and the executive headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and leaders responsible for SEND.

- Inspectors also met with teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors and trustees and members of the trust executive board. They also spoke to the leaders of a school that has pupils who attend North West Kent Alternative Provision Service.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English; mathematics; personal, social and health education; and vocational subjects. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke to teachers. They looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work. They met with pupils to discuss their learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding arrangements, including the school's central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke to a variety of staff to check how well safeguarding referrals and systems work.
- Inspectors observed pupils around the school site during lunchtimes and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and groups of staff to hear their views. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff informally around the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils and Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the five free-text comments from the parent survey.

Inspection team

Michelle Lower, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Neave

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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