

Inspection of Northgate High School

Cemetery Road, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 2EU

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Northgate High School are polite and courteous. This is demonstrated through their conduct on site and their consideration of pupils taking examinations. Pupils move quickly to lessons and follow instructions well. Sixth-form students act with maturity and confidence.

Teachers have high expectations. Most pupils respond to this by acting responsibly during social times and lessons. This enables them to form good friendships and learn well. Many pupils speak positively about lessons. However, some pupils do not always behave well and this can frustrate their peers. Most pupils respect the school site and take responsibility for ensuring that it is kept tidy.

Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils comment on their participation in charity events throughout the school year. There are also opportunities to be involved in pupil leadership, such as the eco group, school council and sixth-form senate.

Many pupils comment that bullying is infrequent. They state that if they are bullied, it would be taken seriously and that action would be taken. While some pupils say that a minority of pupils are not always tolerant of differences, pupils trust the school's pastoral team. This means that most pupils' concerns do not build up. As a result, pupils feel safe.

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

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve well. This is a result of the ambition of leaders for all pupils to succeed, and of effective provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) at all key stages. Leaders are also working to increase the number of pupils currently following the English Baccalaureate pathway. This will further broaden the curriculum.

Teachers closely monitor what pupils know and can do. However, in some subjects, this information is not always used to address misconceptions or gaps in knowledge effectively.

Leaders ensure a sharp focus on the weakest readers. There is a clear programme for the early identification of reading ability in Year 7 and ongoing support by effectively trained staff.

Many pupils behave well in lessons. Lessons are typically calm, with little low-level disruption. This enables pupils to work uninterrupted. However, some pupils comment that behaviour is not always good in lessons. In the main, teachers ensure that pupils follow the school's behaviour system. Pupils know what will happen if poor behaviour occurs.

There is a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education. There are a variety of opportunities outside the classroom. Members of the 'eco group' are proud of their achievements and want to share their pride in their wildlife garden and orchard. The school council and sixth-form senate are responsible for planning a range of events, including those to raise funds for nominated charities. Pupils and leaders also describe their annual participation in Armistice Day commemorations. The school's links to the local armed services make this an important event for the community.

Students comment very positively on their sixth-form experience. The work of the pastoral team and range of enrichment activities available both contribute to students' personal development. For example, the school's offer for 16 to 18 provision includes an extended BTEC Level 3 qualification at the Dereham Education Soccer Academy (DESA). Progression routes from DESA include scholarships overseas, as well as apprenticeships and higher education. Careers education is prioritised at all key stages. The school provides comprehensive support for all pupils. This includes access to independent advice and guidance. Students are well prepared for adult life.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders at all levels engage with staff to ensure that workload is not excessive. This also supports their well-being. Trustees are ambitious for the school. Staff training is a priority and there are a range of opportunities available for staff to progress their career.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe. Leaders ensure pupils are taught the knowledge they need to keep themselves safe. Where it is necessary to refer concerns to external agencies, safeguarding leaders do so in a timely manner. Leaders maintain accurate safeguarding records. There are effective systems in place for pupils and adults to report welfare concerns. These systems are clearly communicated across the school community. Leaders complete, and accurately record, rigorous pre-employment checks. There is frequent and effective internal and external review of safeguarding practice.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment information is not always used effectively. As a result, some pupils do not always know more and remember more. Leaders need to ensure that best practice seen in the strongest subjects is replicated across all subjects to enable pupils to use knowledge fluently.

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	141268
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10241948
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,114
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	335
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Jones
Headteachers	Zoe Galley & Dr Duncan Hone
Website	www.northgate.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Unity Education Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The number of students in the school sixth form with an education and health care plan is well above average.

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. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteachers, senior leaders, staff and representatives from the trust board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, religious education and philosophy, art and design, and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspection team spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed safeguarding records. The inspector also reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks made on staff and reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- The inspection team met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school. Inspectors also reviewed 269 responses to Ofsted’s online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school improvement plan, curriculum documentation and school policies.
- Inspectors considered 104 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included 77 comments from parents and carers in the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the 74 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Steven Hogan	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Trott	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector
Glenn Russell	Ofsted Inspector

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