

Inspection of a good school: The Nobel School

Mobbsbury Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 0HS

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

The Nobel School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be 'Nobelians'. They know they must strive to achieve their best, build their characters and care for their community. They like receiving rewards and being given additional responsibilities for demonstrating these qualities. Pupils treat each other with respect and kindness. They enjoy a happy, safe environment.

Teachers ensure that pupils work hard, and they have high expectations of what pupils can learn and remember. Pupils appreciate that every lesson has familiar elements, which helps them to meet these expectations. They get lots of opportunities to practise new skills and use and recall content from previous learning.

Pupils attend well and move calmly and promptly to their lessons. Pupils know they can learn in lessons because they are rarely distracted by poor behaviour. If the normal high standards of behaviour slip, teachers address it quickly and effectively. On the rare occasions when bullying occurs, pupils know who they can talk to so that it is dealt with.

Pupils love the wonderful range of high-quality clubs and societies that are available. They can take part in activities as diverse as anime, karaoke, Lego, and dog care. Lunchtimes have been made longer so that pupils can spend more time pursuing these interests.

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

The curriculum is well planned across all key stages. Subject leaders think carefully about the order in which knowledge is taught. They ensure that key ideas, skills and content are revisited. This helps to ensure that new learning always builds upon what pupils have learned before.

Teachers ensure that the curriculum is delivered through interesting and engaging lessons. They ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers use a range of activities to help pupils remember the most important information. They always

attempt to check pupils' understanding during a lesson. However, they do not always notice if a small minority of pupils have not kept up with their peers. This leads to some pupils developing gaps in their understanding.

Leaders have ensured that there is a broad curriculum in place across all key stages. They have successfully increased the number of pupils who follow the strong academic foundation of the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4.

The behaviour policy is consistently applied. It promotes calm and respectful relationships between all members of the school community. Staff model these expectations well when they talk with pupils. As a result, relationships between teachers and pupils are largely positive.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Teachers know the most effective strategies to support pupils to access the curriculum successfully. 'The Bridge' is a central base where pupils can receive extra help and support from expert staff. This ensures that pupils can continue their learning productively outside the classroom. In some lessons, teachers and teaching assistants do not share information well enough. This slows the learning of some pupils with SEND.

Leaders carefully identify which pupils are behind with their reading, and why. Teachers then use a range of well-judged strategies to help pupils catch up. Teachers check whether these approaches are having a helpful impact. Pupils read regularly in tutor periods and subject lessons. This contributes to a positive culture of reading in the school, including the sixth form.

Leaders provide a variety of leadership opportunities for pupils. Every teaching group has a class ambassador. They greet any visitor to the classroom to explain what they are learning. They do this confidently. These positions are rotated regularly, so they are shared widely among pupils. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for the rest of the school. They chair the school council and act as reading and mathematics mentors for younger pupils.

Leaders have made a large number of changes since the previous inspection in order to strengthen pupils' achievement through the challenging curriculum. The positive impact of these changes is supported in the results of national examinations. The majority of staff feel that these changes have been made with appropriate consideration of the impact they will have on their workload and well-being.

Leaders prepare pupils well for the next stage of their lives. Pupils follow a well-planned careers programme. This provides clear information and guidance about future options to ensure they are successful in their choice of work or study after school. Leaders have very high expectations about the destinations to which young people should aspire. For example, a large number of sixth-form students go on to attend high-status universities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and vigilant at keeping pupils safe. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks pupils may encounter, both online and offline. If staff have a concern, they are quick to report it. Leaders act swiftly to ensure that pupils and their families get the support they need, including when required from outside agencies.

Clear record-keeping enables staff to take shared responsibility for keeping all vulnerable pupils safe. Staff within the safeguarding team work tenaciously to ensure that all pupils get timely help when required.

Pupils learn through the curriculum how to make safe choices, inside and outside school, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers have not received enough training to help them check how far every pupil has understood key learning. As a result, they do not always identify when some pupils have not understood important elements of this learning. Consequently, these pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders need to ensure that staff are sufficiently trained to monitor the understanding of all pupils effectively during lessons.
- Leaders have not established consistent routines for teachers and teaching assistants to communicate effectively. As a result, teaching assistants do not always know the best way to support the learning of pupils with SEND. Leaders need to ensure that teachers and teaching assistants share information effectively so pupils with SEND develop good levels of understanding in all areas of the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 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

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| Unique reference number | 117530 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10268960 |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Foundation |
| 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 | 1,469 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 280 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Kelly Hagland |
| Headteacher | Martyn Henson |
| Website | www.nobel.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 20 and 21 February 2018 |

Information about this school

- The Nobel School is a foundation school.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and four assistant headteachers.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the local governing body and six other members of the local governing body.
- Deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject 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 spoke to the special educational needs coordinator and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors evaluated the information available on the school's website, including school policies, curriculum plans and information available for parents.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements in place to safeguard all members of the school community. The checks leaders make on the suitability of staff before they begin working in the school were scrutinised.
- Inspectors reviewed records of behaviour, including incidents of bullying. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspectors reviewed 152 responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also reviewed the 100 free-text comments parents submitted during the inspection. The inspectors considered 113 responses to the staff survey and 566 responses to the pupil survey. Additionally, inspectors met with members of staff and spoke with pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

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|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Paul Lawrence, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Steven Hogan | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jennifer Brassington | Ofsted Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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