

Inspection of a good school: Mapledown School

Claremont Road, Cricklewood, London NW2 1TR

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this welcoming and friendly school. They feel safe and they like their lessons. The school expects all pupils to do their best and to work hard. At times, pupils need extra help and support to stay focused and achieve their best. Adults provide this support in a calm and nurturing way, allowing pupils time and space to be as independent as possible, and to concentrate on their work.

The school's top priority is developing pupils' communication. This is threaded through the curriculum at every stage. Leaders and staff have put in place a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. It is highly personalised because every pupil has unique learning needs. Parents and carers have a say in what their child will focus on in school, and they appreciate this. As well as academic learning, pupils learn how to develop their social and emotional skills and to do things for themselves.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to communicate their feelings, including if they are unhappy or worried about anything. Pupils said that the school creates a culture where kindness is the norm, and bullying is not tolerated. School staff are expert in noticing if a pupil needs extra help, and leaders follow any concerns up quickly.

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

The school has put in place a carefully thought out and ambitious curriculum, from Year 7 all the way through to the sixth form. It lays out, in detail, the specific knowledge and skills that pupils should learn and remember in a broad range of subjects. All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and the curriculum pays particular attention to the vital communication skills that pupils will need throughout their life. The curriculum is highly specialised, and the school makes sure that staff have comprehensive training and support to understand and deliver the curriculum well. The

work of the school is strengthened by specialist input from therapists and nurses. Staff and specialists work in a planned and joined-up way to ensure that all aspects of pupils' learning are supported very well.

Most of the time, lessons take place without interruption. Some pupils need extra help to access learning and to stay calm and behave well. This additional support is provided expertly, both through the curriculum and through a skilled staff team. The curriculum develops pupils' social and emotional skills. This includes teaching pupils how to manage their behaviour and to find positive ways to communicate what they want and need. Staff know pupils' needs very well, and they quickly spot any signs that a pupil might need extra help. Relationships between pupils and adults are warm and positive. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and they attend school regularly.

Pupils learn to read in a planned way, which is tailored to the specific stage at which pupils are working. Some pupils are at the very early stages of literacy development, and the school adapts work for these pupils using an appropriate and well-thought-out approach.

Pupils are taught important knowledge and skills, such as the physical and emotional changes that occur as pupils develop into adults, through the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The curriculum also covers other topics, such as how to behave in public places, going shopping and cooking meals. Pupils learn about the world of work and how to keep safe in the community. These topics help pupils to be ready for the next stage of their lives and to be as independent as possible. Through the PSHE curriculum, pupils are also taught about the importance of tolerance and respect and about the different ways that people live their lives. Pupils learn about safe and healthy relationships.

The school has established a rich programme of activities to support pupils' social and cultural development, including in the sixth form. This includes trips to museums and country parks and visits to the local community, such as to sports events with other schools. Various groups and individuals visit the school to enrich pupils' school experience, including a Paralympian, ballet companies and regular visits from dance and drama companies.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel that leaders consider their well-being and that they have the training and support they need to do their job well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2013.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	101397
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10293217
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sue O'Halloran
Headteacher	Sandra Chaaya
Website	www.mapledownschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has two additional sites based at local mainstream secondary schools. One at Whitefield School, Claremont Road, London NW2 1TR, and one at Copthall School, Pursley Road, London NW7 2EP.
- All pupils who attend the school have SEND. All pupils have an education, health and care plan, which identifies cognition and learning needs as the main area of need. Some pupils have other needs as well, including communication and interaction needs or autism.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and the deputy headteachers. Inspectors also met with some other leaders and the school office manager.
- Inspectors met with the chair of governors, who is also the safeguarding governor, some other governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: PSHE, communication and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey and the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Barney Geen

Ofsted Inspector

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