

Inspection of a good school: The Netherhall School

Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB1 8NN

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

Outcome

The Netherhall School continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Chris Tooley. This school is part of Anglian Learning, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jonathan Culpin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Pain.

What is it like to attend this school?

At The Netherhall School, pupils learn how to lead happy, successful, and fulfilling lives. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Leaders set high standards for all. Pupils and students in the sixth form step up to this challenge. They consistently achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the programmes implemented specifically to meet their needs.

The house system underpins the strong pastoral care available to pupils. Pupils trust adults and feel safe. There are high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Most pupils behave well but attendance is not always sufficiently high. A small number of pupils do not always show sufficient respect for others. Pupils welcome the many leadership responsibilities that they can take on.

Pupils' personal development is a cornerstone of life at the school. Pupils have an influential voice, for example, through the Netherhall anti-bullying committee and through their involvement in the redesign of toilet facilities. Leaders understand the barriers that might stop some pupils from accessing after-school clubs. They work to address these effectively. The most disadvantaged pupils consistently benefit from the wide range of opportunities provided by the school.

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

Leaders' high expectations are reflected in the school's ambitious curriculum. This sets out the key concepts that pupils should learn and the order in which they should be taught. A small number of curriculum plans require greater precision so that staff understand what key knowledge they need to prioritise and when to teach this. Teachers use their strong

subject knowledge to present new concepts well. They use assessment thoughtfully to identify which pupils need additional help and provide them with extra support. They check learning in lessons and address misconceptions as they arise.

Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 study a broad range of qualifications. The school has introduced innovative programmes of study for those pupils who need an adapted curriculum. Pupils make strong progress and achieve the grades they require to follow their chosen pathway. Most students in the sixth form proceed into university education.

The school identifies well the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers receive the training and information they need to adapt teaching effectively for these pupils. Pupils accessing specially resourced provision are particularly well catered for.

Leaders are suitably ambitious in their plans to prioritise the love of reading. Their well-planned interventions provide the right support for pupils who need extra help with their reading.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken effective action to address inappropriate behaviour. Pupils behave well on the whole. They trust adults to keep them safe. The number of pupils who receive a suspension has been significantly reduced. This is because leaders now implement appropriate strategies when pupils make mistakes. This helps pupils to avoid repeated poor behaviour sanctions. The school has secured a recent improvement in rates of attendance. However, school leaders and the trust recognise they need to do more. The attendance of some pupils is still too low. These pupils do not benefit routinely from the school's strong academic and pastoral support. As a consequence, they do not always meet the school's high expectations for behaviour.

Students in the sixth form have respectful and trusting relationships with staff. They value their education and the personalised support they receive. Leaders prepare them well for a deeper, more independent way of learning.

The wider curriculum and pupils' personal development are strengths. Leaders have encouraged an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. The many sports clubs are complemented by creative and performing arts opportunities. The annual arts festival is one highlight. Pupils participate enthusiastically in Netherhall experiential week.

In their 'citcom' lessons, pupils learn about respecting people from all walks of life, healthy lifestyles, finance and staying safe. The relationships and sex education curriculum enables pupils, and students in the sixth form, to make age-appropriate personal choices. Careers education is effective. Regular opportunities to meet employers, apprenticeship providers, colleges and universities mean pupils can make well-informed decisions about their future.

Leaders take care to secure positive relationships within the school community. Staff receive the high-quality training they need and are proud to work at the school. The innovative 'Integrate' programme is well attended by parents, who receive informative guidance on how to support their children.

The school is well led at all levels. The trust has been highly effective in helping the school to secure key improvements. Trustees and local governors know the school well, and provide leaders with expert scrutiny, support, and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some curriculum plans are not precise enough. This means that teachers do not always know which precise concepts or knowledge they should prioritise in lessons. As a result, pupils do not always have a clear understanding of the key concepts they need to learn in some subjects. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans set out more clearly the knowledge pupils are expected to learn over time.
- The attendance of some pupils is too low. These pupils do not routinely benefit from the strong academic and pastoral support the school provides. When they are in school, they do not always meet the school's expectations for behaviour. With trust support, school leaders should continue to prioritise and implement their planned actions to improve attendance for all pupils.

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 October 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' 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	142035
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10318631
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1234
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	258
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Pain
Principal	Chris Tooley
Website	www.netherhall.org
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this 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 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 principal, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. The lead inspector met with two trustees, the CEO and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, physical education and art. 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, 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 considered the views of parents through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector reviewed an email from a parent. Inspectors considered the views of pupils through their responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and through meetings held with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through meetings and informal discussions, as well as through their responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Peter Whear, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Creswick	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Gammons	Ofsted Inspector

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