Inspection of North West London Independent Special School

85 Old Oak Common Lane, East Acton, Ealing, London, Middlesex W3 7DD

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 February 2025

Overall effectiveness	**Outstanding**
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Sixth-form provision	**Outstanding**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's expectations for pupils' social, personal and academic achievements are sky high. In catering for pupils' needs, the school lives up to its motto of, `we never give up, we never exclude.' Leaders, teaching, therapeutic and pastoral staff work seamlessly together to ensure the very best outcomes for each pupil. They do their utmost to enable each pupil to navigate their personal journey successfully. As a result, over time, pupils thrive in all aspects. From typically feeling socially isolated on arrival, pupils leave the school as confident, independent young adults. They are extremely well equipped for their future lives.

From the start, staff and pupils develop strong trusting relationships. When pupils' behaviours deteriorate, staff work with them sensitively to unpick and address the underlying causes. They help pupils to understand the undesirable impact of unwise choices on themselves and others. Pupils thus develop strategies to improve their social skills. They gain a strong sense of self-esteem and understand the value of education. This leads to a calm and purposeful learning ambience, respect and new friendships. These approaches also result in marked improvements in pupils' attendance. They feel happy and enjoy the positive recognition that they receive for their efforts and accomplishments.

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

The school has crafted a logically ordered, rich and ambitious curriculum. All pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans. They arrive with poor prior experiences of and attitudes to education. The school prioritises providing pupils with extensive therapeutic and pastoral support when they join the school. This gets them into the right place emotionally to engage positively with learning.

Staff regularly review how well pupils are achieving their social and academic targets. They use the information to identify needs and inform bespoke next steps in learning and therapeutic provision. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and expertise in teaching the curriculum. Support staff are also well trained and skilled in supporting pupils' learning. Staff ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to review and remember important knowledge. As a result, pupils make very strong progression through the curriculum.

In the sixth form, the school produces a bespoke timetable matched to the needs of each student. The school makes sure that students can study subjects that interest and prepare them for their desired future careers. The school threads its `LIFE' programme throughout the curriculum. This programme's goal is to prepare pupils for leadership, independence, future options and employment. This aim is realised very well. By the end of the sixth form, students achieve various GCSE, A level, functional skills and/or vocational accreditations. They are extremely well prepared for their next stages of education, training or employment.

The school's specialist therapy provision uses a range of highly effective tools to address any pupils' communication difficulties. Most pupils who join the school can read with confidence and fluency. The school puts in place extra support for those who need some additional help with their reading. In different subjects, staff give pupils many opportunities to practise reading. They also help them to acquire new subject-specific vocabulary. As a result, pupils develop their reading fluency, range of vocabulary and comprehension skills very well.

The school has a very effective approach to helping pupils to develop highly positive behaviours and attitudes. It helps pupils to appreciate their own self-worth and that of others. Over time, pupils' behaviours and their attitude to others and to education markedly improve. Pupils are supported to share their views. For example, during the weekly `group process' sessions, pupils and staff discuss controversial topical issues, such as, `Should some social media platforms be banned by law?'. Pupils speak with confidence. They listen attentively and respectfully to each other's views. The school has devised a rigorous and effective strategy to tackle pupil absence. Consequently, over time, pupils improve their attendance significantly.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is exceptional. The school teaches pupils about how to form healthy relationships and about consent. They consider issues like resilience and empowerment. During 'culture week', pupils learn about the cultures, food, music and art of different countries and regions. Pupils enjoy the enrichment trips out of school, and meeting with visitors who run workshops for them. These opportunities develop pupils' cultural knowledge. They also support their understanding of how to stay safe and of fundamental British values. Pupils are given several leadership opportunities. These include the school council and the elected student president. Recently, a group of pupils attended an accredited peer mentorship course to help others in the school. All these experiences support pupils to feel confident to succeed in their future lives.

The school's careers guidance programme is of very high quality. All Year 11 pupils complete work experience in the school. Sixth-form students have supported work experiences in the community. These include in the sporting, construction and hospitality sectors. In the sixth form, as part of their cooking qualification course, students run a café business. It is open to the public each week. Individual pupils and students have successfully pitched business ideas to the proprietor. These took place in the company boardroom, where pupils sought funding for their enterprise. The proprietor then arranged access to an external expert to help them create a business plan. These opportunities play a key role in preparing pupils for the world of work.

The proprietor ensures that the school works collaboratively with other schools. Staff share expertise, best practice and policies. The appointed governors also bring a wealth of expertise and oversight to the school's work. Staff benefit from the wide range of professional development opportunities available to them. They appreciate all that leaders do to support their well-being and ensure that they have a reasonable workload.

The proprietor ensures that the school meets the independent school standards consistently. There are frequent checks on the health, safety and welfare of pupils. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	135794
DfE registration number	307/6401
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	10342956
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Proprietor	Thomas Keaney
Headteacher	Steven Speck
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,000
Telephone number	020 8749 5403
Website	www.tces.org.uk
Email address	nwlis.admin@tces.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 to 17 March 2022

Information about this school

- North West London Independent Special School is a school within the TCES Group of schools.
- All pupils have an EHC plan related to neurodiversity and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- At the time of this inspection, pupils on roll were aged between 11 and 19.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2024.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision for some students in the sixth form.
- The proprietor uses additional premises at 55 Old Oak Common Lane, East Acton, Ealing, London, Middlesex W3 7DD. It is used by some pupils for part of some school days.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education, and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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. They also considered other subjects as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, chair of the governing body, headteacher and other senior staff. They also had formal meetings with groups of staff and spoke with pupils.
- 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.
- To check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors carried out a range of activities including meeting with leaders, a site

walk to check the premises, a check of the content on the school's website and scrutinised the school's records and documentation.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted surveys for parents and carers, and staff. They also spoke with some parents on the telephone.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Noeman Anwar	His Majesty's Inspector

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