

# Inspection of Northgate School Academy Trust

Queen's Park Parade, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 6LR

---

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Inspection dates:         | 17 and 18 June 2025  |
| The quality of education  | <b>Good</b>  |
| Behaviour and attitudes   | <b>Good</b>  |
| Personal development      | <b>Good</b>  |
| Leadership and management | <b>Good</b>  |
| Sixth-form provision      | <b>Outstanding</b>   |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

The headteacher of this school is Sheralee Webb. This school is part of The Northgate School Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mike Kendall.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Students feel safe, supported and valued at this school. Staff are kind and ready to help when someone struggles. Clear routines help everyone know what is expected, creating a calm and respectful environment.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Many achieve well, especially in subjects like English and mathematics. Sixth-form students at 'The Bee Hive' gain skills that prepare them extremely well for independence, work and adult life. Some areas of the curriculum like the 'STEPS' programme are still developing to ensure that all pupils get the same quality experience.

Behaviour is positive. Pupils treat each other with respect and respond well to praise. When needed, they are supported to manage their emotions, including taking a short break with a 'lap card'.

The school takes personal development seriously. Pupils learn how to stay healthy and to keep themselves safe. Over time, their confidence builds. They explore future careers through lessons and work experience and take part in community projects. Pupils are proud of who they are and learn how to explain their needs to others.

Enrichment activities are developing again after the pandemic. Pupils particularly enjoy their involvement with the local theatre and attending the annual pantomime, as well as joining in with live performances.

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

The school is committed to providing pupils with a high-quality education. It creates a positive, inclusive culture, where most pupils engage well and achieve success. In many subjects, the curriculum is sequenced thoughtfully and allows pupils to build knowledge and skills over time. Subject leaders have identified essential content and key learning goals. Teachers know what to teach and when. Pupils benefit from clear explanations, structured tasks and frequent opportunities to revisit key ideas. Pupils who require additional help with reading enjoy targeted phonics practise, delivered by expert staff. Daily reading sessions are used to celebrate books and ensure that all pupils develop their confidence and fluency.

Staff establish clear routines and communicate high expectations. They offer pupils timely encouragement and maintain a calm, well-organised learning environment. Learning tasks are often purposeful and matched well to pupils' needs. This helps pupils to achieve recognised qualifications and prepare for their next steps. Where curriculum intent and delivery are strongest, pupils gain a sense of achievement and pride in their work. However, the quality of curriculum design and delivery varies. In some areas, the curriculum content is not sequenced carefully enough, expectations are too low, or pupils' learning is not checked effectively. When this happens, it reduces the impact of the curriculum and limits how well some pupils achieve.

Staff invest time in understanding pupils' complex and varied needs. Transitions into and out of school are smooth and managed carefully. However, individual targets derived from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are not broken down consistently into specific, measurable steps. This means that learning activities are sometimes not well suited to some pupils or do not link closely to pupils' intended outcomes.

Pupils behave well. Staff use consistent language and proven strategies to help pupils manage their emotions. Well-established routines facilitate a calm learning environment. With the help of staff, pupils stay focused and are keen to do their best.

The personal development curriculum has been designed to provide pupils with a broad understanding of themselves and the wider world. The school has prioritised topics that reflect pupils' lived experiences and specific needs. Through well-planned personal, social, health and economic and relationship and sex education sessions, pupils learn to manage healthy relationships and understand difference. Careers education is a key priority, with pupils accessing meaningful work experience and gaining relevant accreditations. An increasing range of enrichment opportunities offer pupils a variety of experiences, including visits to a local fun park.

The sixth form is an exceptional provision. At 'The Bee Hive', the school delivers a curriculum that blends practical vocational learning with essential life skills and academic content. Students gain real-life experience through the café, shop and horticulture areas. There are also plenty of opportunities for them to develop their character and learn about the positive difference they can make to society. This builds the confidence and independence that they need to move successfully into adulthood.

Leaders are ambitious and work hard to keep improving the school. Governors know the school well and share leaders' commitment to enhance outcomes for pupils. Staff feel supported and value the emphasis on their well-being and training. However, leaders' oversight of the impact of their actions to improve the school is not sufficiently robust. This makes it difficult for them to identify what is working well or how to use resources effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school keeps pupils safe. Regular training and updates have resulted in a positive safeguarding culture. Leaders are open and transparent, sharing information with others and actively seeking expert advice when required. However, in some cases, details of the actions and decisions that the school takes are not recorded well enough. This means that the school is less able to reflect on the impact of its work to keep pupils safe over time.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of the curriculum design and delivery varies in some areas of the school. Sometimes, the sequence of learning lacks clarity or ambition. Assessment is sometimes not used effectively to check pupils' learning. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that the curriculum in each area is sequenced coherently, ambitious and assessed appropriately so that all pupils achieve well.
- Targets on each pupil's EHC plan are sometimes not used well enough to inform the teaching and provision that these pupils receive. Some pupils are not supported well enough to be as successful as they could be. The school should ensure that clear approaches are in place to provide meaningful, small-steps guidance, so that teachers can match learning activities and resources carefully to the individual needs of each pupil.
- The school does not monitor or evaluate the effectiveness of its actions consistently across key areas. As a result, leaders are not able to identify clearly which actions are having the intended impact. The school should adopt a systematic and thorough approach to evaluation, so that resources and improvement work are targeted well.
- The school takes appropriate action to keep pupils safe. However, the quality of pupils' safeguarding records lack rigour. This sometimes makes it difficult for the school to track its work to support pupils and make sure that it is having the desired impact. The school should ensure that all staff follow the school's safeguarding systems and procedures to record and track its actions to support pupils.

## 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

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 137354   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | West Northamptonshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10324134   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Special  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy special converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 277  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 81   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Mike Kendall   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Sheralee Webb (Executive headteacher)  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.northgateacademy.org.uk">www.northgateacademy.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>               | 10 and 11 May 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005                |

## Information about this school

- Northgate School is part of the Northgate School Academy Trust, which is a single academy trust.
- The school is a specialist school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have EHC plans.
- Most pupils study one of three curriculum pathways. A small group of pupils follow the school's 'STEPS' programme.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club managed by the school.
- 'The Bee Hive' provision for sixth-form students is located on two separate sites nearby.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors also met with representatives from the board of trustees and representatives from the local governing body, including the chair.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and humanities. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. On day two of the inspection, inspectors also looked at other aspects of the school's curriculum, visited additional lessons and looked at further samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- 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 reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governors' meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.

## Inspection team

Nyree Parker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christine Watkins

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Tordoff

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2025