

Northgate School

Edgware Community Hospital, Edgware, HA8 0AD

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The innovative, determined and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher, combined with the commitment and unstinting support from all staff, has created a truly inspirational school where every student really does matter.
- Consistently outstanding teaching enables all students to make rapid progress in their learning.
- Students, such as those who have missed some years of schooling, re-engage with education most successfully and achieve well; some progress to university.
- Progress in English and mathematics is rapid because of the strong focus placed on improving students' reading, writing and numeracy.
- Students' behaviour is of an exceptionally high standard. Attendance is high. Relationships between students and with staff are trusting and respectful.
- This is a most happy and harmonious school. Students are safe and secure, and feel valued. Parental satisfaction is very high.
- Students are provided with many and varied opportunities to be creative, especially through poetry, artwork and video production. These activities enliven students' educational and social experiences, and ensure outstanding promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The outstanding quality of the school's partnership work with outside agencies ensures that all students receive an excellent education and outstanding support for their medical and therapeutic needs.
- Excellent and appropriately challenging support from the management committee ensures that exemplary standards are maintained and that this outstanding school continues to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector undertook four formal classroom observations of teaching featuring four different teachers. Other evidence relating to teaching and learning was scrutinised including looking at students' books, other sources of written and art work, and videos produced by students.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the local authority and the chair of the management committee. Informal meetings were held with students and a meeting was held with a health professional.
- The inspector was unable to analyse the responses made to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as there were too few submissions. The inspector took account of the school's own parental surveys, met separately with two parents, had telephone conversations with two ex-students and considered the views of seven staff who responded to the staff inspection questionnaire.
- Various documents were evaluated, including information on students' current progress, the school's own evaluation of its strengths and areas for development, school improvement plans and records about safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector evaluated the impact of additional funding made available through the pupil premium.

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Northgate School provides education for students aged 11–19 who are experiencing serious mental health issues.
- The school is located on the site of the Edgware Community Hospital.
- Students stay in the school for periods of time ranging from two or three weeks, to periods exceeding six months. Some students attending the school are hospital inpatients.
- Most students are dual-registered with their 'home' school.
- Turnover of students throughout the year is high. The school has capacity for 24 students, but during the course of an academic year, it will provide for between 120 and 140 students.
- Most students are of White British heritage and girls tend to outnumber boys.
- All students have disabilities and/or special educational needs, though only a few have a statement of their special educational needs.
- Most students have experienced considerable disruption to their education prior to attending Northgate. Some students will not have attended school for a year or more.
- The proportion of students funded through the pupil premium (government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children in the care of local authority is below the national average.
- The school works in partnership with many organisations, including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- The school has recently been designated as a teaching school. It is the first school of this type in the country to receive this designation.
- There is a long-established teaching partnership with the University of Connecticut.
- At the time of the inspection, most students were in Key Stage 4, or the sixth form. One student was in Year 9.
- The school offers AS/A-level tuition, but at the time of the inspection, those students of sixth-form age were studying for further GCSE examinations.
- Usually students are not entered early for public examinations. Occasionally, however, some students are entered early to gain examination practice.
- The school does not use any off-site alternative learning providers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Involve students in the design of the school's new website to develop further their computing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students make outstanding progress from their different starting points. Many have experienced huge disruption to their learning, with some who have missed two years or more of their secondary education.
- In Key Stage 3 and 4, students who are working on key skills programmes make exceptional progress in their literacy and numeracy. More-able students who study for GCSE examinations frequently gain grades that are higher than those suggested by their starting points. Outcomes in both GCSE English language and mathematics are close to national average figures.
- At the time of the inspection, no students were studying for AS or A level examinations. In past years, the school has successfully helped such able students to gain admission to university. Given the acute problems faced by all students attending the school, the outcomes gained at all levels are outstanding.
- Every student has equal opportunity to succeed. Any gaps in progress or attainment between different student groups, such as those eligible for additional funding, are identified quickly and close rapidly.
- Checks on work and progress are regular, detailed and accurate, and help to ensure that all groups of students, including those with special educational needs, make outstanding progress. At present, there are no gaps between the achievement of any groups of students.
- All students have their own personal programme of study. The programmes include detailed education provision as well as providing for individual social and health needs. Leaders make sure that pupils are challenged well and leaders measure their progress against students' personal programme of study. Thorough progress reviews are regular, and sometimes daily.
- All students are making impressive progress. Not only are they reaching high academic standards, they are also making exceptional progress in their personal development. For example, the school's attendance rate now stands at 98%. Some students, whose attendance records at mainstream schools was very low are now recording 100% attendance.
- The success of the careful and detailed nurturing of students is proven in the quality of the outcomes. Many students return to mainstream education with greater confidence and higher self-esteem, and successfully progress through the mainstream school system. Others transfer to further education colleges and follow a variety of academic and vocational courses.
- A minority of students stay at the school and enter the sixth form to gain additional GCSE qualifications or to study AS and A levels. The school has a proud record of encouraging students to enter university, or to progress to apprenticeships. The school's mantra is for every student to 'follow their dream'. For example, during the inspection, one student was being interviewed for a place as a trainee patissier at a major London hotel.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently outstanding over time. The rapid progress students make across many subjects, including English and mathematics, is due to the very high quality of teaching.
- There is an excellent partnership between teachers and additional adults in managing students' learning. For example, outstanding learning was witnessed in a dance class. The tutor successfully encouraged students of various ages, and with differing levels of mobility, to perform an eight-part dance routine. The skills involved were complex, and promoted balance and dexterity well. The outstanding learning of all students was fostered by the quality of teaching and by the role played by the teaching assistants. They demonstrated movements and encouraged the students to succeed.
- Outstanding learning is evident in a number of subjects such as ethics and food technology. In food technology, students followed individual recipes. Teaching assistants were on hand to help,

but all students made rapid progress by reading and following the recipes for themselves, including accurately measuring the ingredients. The finished dishes, comprising foods such as Cornish pasties, meatballs in tomato sauce and chocolate truffles, were of a very high standard and presented very well.

- The school uses writing, artwork and video production to support its therapy work. Standards in writing are high and many of the poems students write are both moving and original. The same comments can be made about students' artwork.
- Students are encouraged to produce their own videos to express their hopes, feelings, desires and their concerns and worries. The quality of the work seen was exceptional. Highly sensitive but challenging teaching has enabled students to produce their own individual videos. Each video has been produced to an exceptionally high standard that has involved detailed literacy work and high-quality information and communication technology (ICT) skills.
- The teaching of creative skills is outstanding. The knowledge and skills gained in video production and food preparation are easily of a commercial standard. As well as significantly boosting students' confidence, the emphasis placed on reading, writing and communication results in rapidly raising standards.
- Students are totally engrossed in their work. Life skills such as teamwork, negotiation and co-operative working are to the fore. Students also show considerable pride in their work. Exercise books are well presented and graffiti-free. Work, including poetry, and other forms of writing and artwork, is beautifully displayed around the school.
- Leaders work tirelessly to ensure that the quality of teaching, which was outstanding in the previous inspection, continues to improve. Northgate has many gifted teachers who are thoroughly committed to changing the life-chances of the students they teach.
- Effective procedures are in place to ensure teaching standards remain high. The school is the only one of its type in the country to have Teaching School status conferred; a proud and worthy tribute to the school's outstanding work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Behaviour policies are all in place, but it is very rare for staff to have to enact any penalties because they foster good relationships so well. This is such a happy and harmonious school because students, who have all faced significant issues in their young lives, can work and socialise in a totally safe and highly stimulating environment. The number of happy, smiling faces reflects the school's outstanding work.
- Staff adopt many interesting approaches to encouraging and rewarding outstanding behaviour. The school has two pet rabbits adored by the students and they are used to help individuals to calm down when anxiety levels are rising.
- In an ethics class, for example, a student's anxiety levels stabilised when she was allowed to have one of the rabbits sit on her desk. She became calmer, more attentive and then contributed purposefully to the class discussion.
- Many other thoughtful strategies are used to help students remain calm and focused on their work. The school garden, officially named 'Ponderland' by the students, provides a peaceful and tranquil retreat, as well as offering an outlet for creativity. Students are justifiably proud of this garden which they created and maintain.
- Students show great respect for one another. This was especially apparent at lunchtime when staff and students enjoyed a game of basketball together. All were thoroughly involved, and it was rewarding to see how much the students were helping and encouraging each other.
- Strong and mutually respectful relationships are a positive feature of all aspects of the school's work. Behaviour management by staff is of a very high quality and students report that incidents of bullying or anti-social behaviour rarely, if ever, occur.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Procedures for risk assessment are detailed and thorough. Students feel safe at school because of the care that has been taken and the quality of the working and social environment that has been created.

- Students know how to keep themselves safe. They understand about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and they know what to do if they have concerns.
- A most impressive aspect of behaviour is students' very high attendance. Many of them had poor records of attendance in mainstream education. Some simply refused to attend school, with prolonged periods of absence which affected their progress. The school's current attendance rate is very high and fully supports the outstanding progress that students now make.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- This unique school succeeds in changing the lives of students who have faced many severe and complex difficulties. Many factors contribute to these life-changing experiences, but paramount is the contribution of the headteacher's excellent leadership skills. Her vision, commitment, passion and sheer determination ensure that every student is nurtured and supported to the highest possible level and has every opportunity to 'follow their dream'.
- In her quest, the headteacher is given unrelenting support by every member of her outstanding and dedicated staff and by her management committee. As one member of staff commented: 'Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life. I always relate this quote to working at Northgate School.'
- Every student's individual programme of study ensures that they follow a range of subjects that most suits their needs. Such attention to detail is integral to raising standards. Students also have many and varied opportunities to seek and exercise responsibility, through membership of the school council for example.
- The school only receives a small amount of additional funding. This is because most students who are eligible for it are dual-registered, so most of the funding remains with the 'home' school. Funds that are made available are used effectively and innovatively, helping to ensure outstanding progress.
- The school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance are detailed, thorough and effective. Plans are of good quality and ensure that improvements are continuous.
- The leadership of teaching and its impact on learning are outstanding. Leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and the provision for staff training is integral to ensuring that standards keep rising. Staff at all levels continually endeavour to ensure that parents, carers and other partners are kept fully informed about school life. They acknowledge, however, that the school's website needs updating and information about the use of additional funding needs to be more evaluative. Improving the website will ensure partners are far better informed. It also offers an opportunity for even more student involvement and a chance for them to develop and use their ICT skills in a practical setting.
- Considerable thought is given to the range of subjects and experiences provided, and to ensure the successful promotion of equal opportunities for all. The variety of experiences offered makes a significant contribution to developing students' interest in learning and raising their confidence. They also boost students' essential, basic skills, especially in reading, writing, communication and numeracy.
- Students' progress towards their academic and personal targets is tracked closely by regular checking, and swift and sensitive intervention when necessary.
- Post-16 students are provided for well, including excellent arrangements for careers guidance. This ensures that students' planning for higher education or employment is thorough and relevant.
- The local authority accurately judges the school to be outstanding. The support it offers the school is 'light touch', but the working relationship between the two parties is strong, further helping the rapid and sustained progress made by the students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school's continual improvement owes much to the quality of its management committee and the quality of support its members provide. The management committee is totally supportive of the headteacher and her staff, and all the outstanding work they undertake. The

management committee analyses outcomes thoroughly and its understanding of data on students' attainment and progress enables it to provide challenge, rigour and advice to leaders.

- Members of the management committee ensure that additional funding is used well and enables eligible students to achieve more. They know what the quality of teaching is and are proud that standards continue to rise. They are fully involved in the headteacher's and staff appraisals. They ensure that when a member of staff moves up the pay scale, their additional reward is linked to how well their students have achieved. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet all statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113749
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	439653

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Athy Demetriades
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 June 2011
Telephone number	020 8732 6309
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