

Inspection of an outstanding school: North Ridge High School

Alworth Road, Blackley, Manchester M9 0RP

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 March 2024

Outcome

North Ridge High School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

North Ridge is a nurturing and caring place where pupils thrive. The school places pupils' communication and well-being at the heart of its work. It has very high expectations for pupils' achievement. All pupils have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy their learning. They achieve extremely well from their different starting points.

Staff know pupils very well. They form positive and trusting relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to feel safe. Over time, pupils learn the skills that they need to manage their own feelings and emotions. This is shown in the exemplary behaviour of older pupils and students. Pupils are respectful and considerate to staff and towards each other. They have very positive attitudes to their learning.

Pupils are prepared exceptionally well to be confident, independent and ready for adulthood. For example, visits to local supermarkets help pupils to learn about road safety. Students in the sixth form make food and serve customers in the 'Cup and Cake Café'. They also value the opportunity to wash and iron donated items of clothing, before selling these in the '2nd Hand Made Shop'. These activities enable pupils to gain valuable life skills, such as communication, job roles and how to manage money.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils follow a broad range of subjects in each key stage. The school has an acute understanding of pupils' individual and complex needs. Staff use this information to design a curriculum that is tailored to what pupils should learn and remember. Subject curriculums contain carefully ordered steps in learning so that pupils are well supported to build up their knowledge.

Teachers use their expert subject knowledge skilfully to deliver the curriculum with unique modifications for pupils. They carefully explain new learning and revisit key concepts regularly to deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers check pupils' small steps in learning effectively. This helps them to address any gaps or misconceptions that pupils may have. Pupils gain a rich body of knowledge and skills as they move through the school.

Communication and language development are woven throughout all aspects of school life. Staff ably use a wide range of resources, such as objects of reference, signs, symbols and technology. This helps pupils to communicate their wishes and to make choices. The school fosters a strong culture of reading. Staff ensure that reading materials, such as books, symbols and recipes, are well matched to pupils' reading levels. Pupils enjoy reading regularly. Trained staff help pupils to gain the phonics knowledge that they need to become fluent and confident readers.

Pupils receive a carefully thought-out package of sensory and therapeutic support. This successfully enables them to overcome their individual barriers. Pupils follow well-structured routines. They respond well to praise, rewards and movement breaks. The school is a calm place during lessons, changeovers and breaktimes. The school keeps in regular contact with families and provides effective support for pupils who need to increase their levels of attendance, including for pupils with medical needs.

The school's careers programme is of a high quality. Visits from local employers and colleges allow pupils to make informed choices about their next steps. They develop useful employability skills through work experience and supported internships, such as in a local hospital. Pupils are well prepared for adulthood. All go onto education, employment or social care.

The school provides pupils with valuable, age-appropriate information on relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils respect and celebrate the many differences between others. They know that their ideas and opinions matter in school, such as through participation in the school council. Visits to art galleries and museums contribute to pupils' cultural development. Pupils benefit from a wealth of clubs and sports, including gym, dance and swimming, that help them to develop their co-ordination skills and support their mental health.

Governors are deeply committed to the school. They provide high levels of support and challenge. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's work. Staff, including those who are new to teaching, enjoy working here. They told inspectors that the school considers their workload and well-being thoroughly, for example when changes are being introduced and implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in April 2014.

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	132905
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10290134
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	202
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tom Eccles
Headteacher	Jennifer Cryer
Website	www.northridge.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with severe to profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. Some pupils have additional sensory and physical disabilities and complex behavioural needs. Some pupils also have medical conditions.
- The school operates at two sites. The main site is co-located with another school at Higher Blackley Education Village, Alworth Road, Blackley, Manchester M9 0RP. The main site houses pupils from Years 7 to 11 and some students in the sixth form who require specialist provision. Most students in key stage 5 are based at the sixth-form hub, at the Abraham Moss Campus, at 142 Crescent Road, Manchester M8 5UF.
- In addition, a small number of Year 14 students have supported internships for some of their time at North Manchester General Hospital, Delaunays Road, Crumpsall, Manchester M8 5RB.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2023.

- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of 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

- 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 spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, other leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector conducted visits to all of the school's sites, including the main site and the sixth-form hub. He also visited North Manchester Hospital and spoke with students who were undertaking supported internships.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences in school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 carried out deep dives in English, including communication and reading, mathematics and personal and social development. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector observed some pupils read to familiar staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders to review other subjects in the curriculum.
- There were not enough responses to Ofsted Parent View for inspectors to consider, including the free-text comments. The lead inspector spoke with some parents before the end of the school day to gather their views.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sheldon Logue

Ofsted Inspector

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