

Inspection of a good school: Northgate High School

Sidegate Lane West, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 3DL

Inspection dates:

13–14 November 2019

Outcome

Northgate High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They described their school as welcoming, because it feels like 'home'. Staff are very proud to work at this school. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond by working hard and behaving well. Consequently, pupils achieve well in GCSE and A-level examinations. Leaders know where improvements are still needed.

Pupils are considerate of each other, for example when moving round the school. Pupils say they feel safe at the school and have an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns. They told us that, if bullying does happen, staff, and particularly their pastoral officers, act quickly to resolve it.

Pupils are grateful for the many opportunities the school offers beyond the classroom. They spoke about sports clubs and trips to the theatre and universities. Mock elections have been organised to enhance pupils' understanding of democracy. One pupil said, 'there is something for everyone'.

The sixth form is a vibrant learning community, where every student is valued as an individual. Students are offered a range of opportunities including leadership roles and work experience. This ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders are proud of the wide, ambitious curriculum that they offer to pupils. The curriculum leads to qualifications that pupils need for the future. Pupils stated that they are well supported to make their subject choices. Parents and carers are very positive about the school.

Teachers make sure that they teach subjects in a logical order. They identify the most important subject knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn. Teachers use questioning well to help pupils remember what they have studied.

In mathematics, pupils use online resources to check their learning. This helps pupils to deepen their understanding and use their knowledge of mathematics.

In English and design technology, lessons are well sequenced. This means that pupils build on their prior knowledge and skills effectively. Pupils enjoy these lessons.

In languages, curriculum planning is well underway. This ensures that, for example, pupils learn vocabulary in the right order. Yet, pupils' work in languages does not always match the high standard we saw in other subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to good effect to plan learning activities. In sixth-form lessons, for example, teachers plan stimulating and challenging learning opportunities. These help students to make strong progress.

Staff appreciate the opportunities for their training and professional development, which they say are excellent. They told us that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They say their learning is rarely affected by poor behaviour. Pupils respond well to teachers' requests. This helps learning to flow smoothly.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) experience an ambitious curriculum. They are well supported in lessons by their teachers. For example, the physical education department offers adapted activities. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Some pupils with SEND attend an alternative provision. The school checks on their attendance and progress regularly. The special educational needs coordinator works well with outside agencies. This supports pupils' well-being.

Disadvantaged pupils are keen learners in lessons. They produce work of a good quality. Leaders provide a breakfast club which allows for a positive start to the day. However, leaders do not check whether all pupils take full advantage of the wider opportunities provided by the school.

Pupils develop an appreciation of different cultures and religions. They also learn how to keep themselves safe when not in the school, deal with mental health issues and live healthy lives.

Governors are committed to the school. They play an active role in the life of the school. For example, they meet with subject leaders regularly to check what leaders are doing in their departments with pupils. Governors are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All of the necessary checks are carried out on adults who work at the school. Staff are appropriately trained and know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of pupils who need help. The designated safeguarding leads work well with external agencies. This ensures that pupils get extra support when they need it.

Leaders and governors understand the specific risks that are present in the local area. Pupils are supported to resist 'peer group' pressure and know how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Outcomes in modern foreign languages improved considerably last year. However, there is evident capacity for further improvement. Leaders have been working on the languages curriculum to ensure it is better structured to help pupils to learn and remember more. Leaders should consider what other support the teachers of languages might need in order to implement the curriculum as well as they can.
- The school makes good-quality extra-curricular opportunities available to all groups of pupils. However, leaders do not check whether there are any groups that are not accessing these opportunities and missing chances to develop their personal interests. Leaders should consider which pupils might need extra support and encouragement to benefit from this work.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Northgate High School to be good on 15 December 2015.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	124840
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10088724
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	1683
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	452
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jane Sheat
Headteacher	Rowena Mackie
Website	http://www.northgate.suffolk.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	15 December 2015

Information about this school

- Three pupils receive their education from the medical team organised by the local authority.
- Currently, the school uses full- and part-time alternative education provision for pupils at Alderwood Pupil Referral Unit, The Lindbergh Centre, Olive AP Academy, Thrive@The Mix, CF Education, Montgomery Road, Westbridge Pupil Referral Unit, The New Skills Centre and Parkside Pupil Referral Unit.
- Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a new headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and other members of staff. We looked at a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, development plans and

pupils' attendance and behaviour records. An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority on the phone.

- We met with governors, including the chair of governors.
- We observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at break and lunchtimes. We also spoke to three groups of pupils and spoke to pupils when visiting lessons to gather their views about the school.
- An inspector checked the school's single central record and the procedures for the recruitment of staff. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and checked pupils' records. We spoke to staff and pupils to find out how pupils are kept safe. An inspector spoke to alternative education providers used by the school on the telephone.
- We met with staff to ask about their well-being and workload. 122 responses to the staff survey were considered, along with 220 responses to the pupil survey.
- We took account of 237 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent view, along with 237 free-text responses. We also took account of an email sent directly to Ofsted.
- We looked in detail at English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and design technology. We spoke with subject leaders, teachers and pupils about their work and other aspects of school life.

Inspection team

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