

North Ridge High School

Higher Blackley Education Village, Alworth Road, Blackley, Manchester, M9 0RP

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- North Ridge offers an exceptional quality of education and care to its students. As a result of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and highly skilled teaching and support, students achieve outstandingly well.
- Teachers set ambitious targets for their students and plan work which is well-matched to their needs so that they all make at least expected progress. A high proportion of students make more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in other subjects.
- Behaviour is excellent across the school day. Students enjoy their lessons and attend extremely well. Behaviour is managed very skilfully with great respect for the needs of the students so that incidents rarely disrupt learning.
- Students feel very safe and secure. They enjoy strong supportive relationships with staff and develop friendships with other students which help them to feel settled and contribute particularly well to their learning.
- The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support to its students. Work with parents and other professionals to support individuals in school, at home and in other settings is of an exceptionally high quality.
- The sixth-form provision is outstanding. Students make outstanding progress in becoming independent and in life skills in school and in the community. They are as well prepared as they can be for their future lives.
- Due to its outstanding reputation, the school has plans in place to increase the sixth-form provision to meet demand for places and improve the provision further.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors and middle leaders, ensure the very best for students through outstanding teamwork. They have taken highly effective action to appoint and develop the skills of the exceptionally committed staff so that the quality of teaching, support and achievement is constantly improving.
- Schools in the surrounding district are extremely appreciative of the very high-quality support, guidance and training in special educational needs which the school provides.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 14 different teachers. Four of the observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- One of the inspectors visited the alternative satellite provision at North Manchester General Hospital.
- A meeting was held with a group of students as well as informal discussions with students during observations and at break times.
- Meetings were also held with senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and an officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses on Parent View, the online questionnaire, as well as evaluations by visitors to the school, including parents and other professionals. They also looked at the 50 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school across the school day and looked at a range of documentation. This included documents relating to the tracking of students' progress, accreditation, performance management, outreach, alternative provision at the hospital and community settings, curriculum development, school self-evaluation and development planning.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Halford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All students have a statement of special educational needs for moderate to severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some students have additional complex learning, sensory or physical needs; there is a growing number of students with high dependency medical needs or autism spectrum conditions.
- About a third of students are in the sixth form and this is a growing area of the provision with an agreement with the local authority to take an additional 30 students.
- Although the majority of students join the school at Year 7, they can be admitted at any time in their secondary education, sometimes after periods out of school, due to the breakdown of previous placements.
- An extremely high proportion of students are supported by the pupil premium, which provides extra funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is also high, at more than twice the national average.
- Some of the most able students in the sixth form are based at a satellite provision in North Manchester General Hospital. Students at Key Stage 4 attend courses at Hopwood Hall College. Students attend work-experience placements with a range of providers in the community.
- The school is commissioned by the local authority to offer outreach support, guidance and training to mainstream schools in the north district of Manchester.
- The school has achieved Rights Respecting Schools Awards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the sixth-form provision by:
 - further developing enterprise opportunities in the local community
 - ensuring that existing plans for a new build to provide better resources to develop students' independence and life skills in preparation for adult life are fully realised.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' achievement has improved from the previous inspection and is now outstanding. From usually very low starting points, students make rapid developments in all areas of their learning. Communication is well-matched to individual needs through the use of sign, symbols, objects of reference and technical aids, so that students are given a voice in their learning. They grow in confidence and are never afraid to contribute their views in lessons, answering questions willingly.
- Work in books show very clearly that students make outstanding progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. The school took action to improve progress in reading by introducing a scheme to help students recognise letters and the sounds they make. This has been extremely effective with considerably improved progress in students' reading achievements. By regular practice they begin to build words and find them in the classroom and around school.
- The most able students learn to read stories and use their reading and mathematical skills in other subjects, for example by independently reading recipes and weighing ingredients in food technology or reading and writing French words for transport and families in order to plan a holiday to Paris. In all subjects the most able students are encouraged to write in sentences and reach a good standard of writing for different purposes, such as writing up experiments or recording their news.
- Those students with more profound and multiple learning difficulties also make good and outstanding progress, albeit in very small steps. This is because teachers plan work for them which builds very gradually on what they can already do and promotes their independence as much as possible.
- The large majority of students entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, do just as well as other students because planning and provision is focussed on meeting the needs of each individual student so well. Ensuring every student has an equal opportunity to succeed is at the heart of all that the school does.
- When students enter the sixth form they continue to develop their basic skills and make great strides in their personal development. They access high-quality, work-related learning both on and off-site. They work out, for example, how much profit they will make when buying and selling items, or learn about the rules of different religions and write their own rules for life. Those students who are based in the alternative provision at North Manchester General Hospital make exceptional progress, using their reading skills to follow signs in the hospital or counting out tablets in the dispensary.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form is already outstanding but the school has plans in place to further develop the environment and resources to extend students' independence and life skills and prepare them for the world of work as much as possible.
- By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4 and the end of sixth form, all students have gained recognised awards which match their abilities and celebrate their successes. Teachers skilfully adapt the curriculum for each stage and for each learning need to ensure their students make these achievements and reach their goals.
- The strong links the school has made in the community enables all students who are able to do so to attend college courses, be involved in mini-enterprise opportunities and enjoy work-experience placements. These placements make an excellent contribution to the development of students' employability skills, sometimes leading to job opportunities or to continuing education placements. Students are exceptionally well prepared for life after school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Since the previous inspection, leaders' actions to improve teaching have resulted in it now being consistently outstanding. Throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants work as highly effective teams to plan lessons, check on students' learning and adjust and adapt lessons to challenge students to make the best possible progress they can, whatever their ability.
- Teachers are highly imaginative in their planning to ensure that activities are at the right level and tasks are neither too difficult nor too easy for each student. In a lesson about homes, students with autism spectrum conditions made wormeries, with the most able finding out what was needed to go in the containers, while those of lower ability enjoyed feeling and smelling the 'ingredients'. All students in the group enjoyed digging up worms with varying degrees of support from staff, and the first-hand experience enabled them all to learn to the best of their ability.
- Resources are extremely well chosen and often provide students with sensory and practical experiences to support their learning. Students' mathematics books gave examples of making clock faces, sequencing their individual daily routines and making shapes out of straws to better understand some basic principles of time and shape for instance.
- Staff use signs, symbols, objects of reference and real objects as appropriate to each student to support their learning. Consistent routines and use of these communication methods help students with autism to settle into the routines of the day and reduce their anxieties so that they are able to learn highly effectively.
- The pace of learning is always well suited to the differing needs of the students. The most able are provided with opportunities to work at a fast pace while others are given time to continue practising and revising skills before moving on to new learning. Teams work together to plan activities and tasks which build gradually or quickly on what students already know and can do but challenge each student to achieve successfully. Staff have high expectations for what students can achieve and appropriately challenge them when they complete work by having next-step 'Now you've done that, try this.' tasks available.
- Teachers and teaching assistants help students to know and understand their targets and students are keen to reach them, being encouraged, for example, to evaluate their own learning in each lesson and helped to understand what to do next by the excellent marking seen in books or through the use of technology.
- Teachers use their class teams highly effectively to help individuals and groups to learn. Teaching assistants make a hugely significant contribution to students' learning. The strong relationships they enjoy with their students and the skills they have developed through training and experience mean they are able to respond exceptionally well to the needs of their students throughout the day. Teaching assistants are skilful educators and provide students with the best possible support and care.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.
- Comments from parents, professionals and other visitors to the school, consistently comment on the warm, caring and calm atmosphere, for example, with one stating, 'I am always extremely impressed by the welcoming, celebratory atmosphere of the school and the pupils and staff within it. There is a tangible shared approach to communication and rapport.'
- Behaviour in lessons is excellent. The school has worked hard on developing good attitudes to learning by ensuring that students are interested and engaged in their work and this has been a highly successful development.
- Any incidents arising from a student's special educational needs or autism is managed extremely well so that it rarely disrupts the learning of other students. The supportive and mutually respectful relationships between students and adults help students to learn to manage their own behaviour better and to return to work quickly.

- Students are also very supportive of each other. They listen to each other's responses in lessons and celebrate each other's successes in reward assemblies or through the school's radio station.
- Students are given plenty of trips and placements in the community and learn appropriate behaviour in different situations, for example, by running a community café on one day a week, by taking part in the Youth Disability Parliament or working towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award. They are given opportunities to take on responsibilities by being elected to the school council or becoming sports leaders. The school council designed the bins in the playground and have obtained students' views on proposals for a new sixth-form building. Students enjoy a huge range of lunchtime clubs and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural interests exceptionally well.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students spoken to had a very good understanding of all forms of bullying and were clear that this was not something which concerned them in school. The school's personal, social and health programmes give students a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including the use of technology. In a Key Stage 3 lesson, students explored the dangers of various situations such as crossing the road, in a swimming pool or at a bonfire. The school provides workshops for parents to help them understand and manage the behaviour of their children safely at home.
- The school ensures other settings such as college, the hospital or other schools and work placements are well-prepared to meet students' needs and keep them safe.
- Attendance has improved over the last few years and is above the average for similar schools because students are so keen to attend.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and her team are totally committed to providing every student with the best possible education and care. The shared drive for improvement has been relentless and has ensured North Ridge is an outstanding school.
- Changes are always planned as a whole-school team and parents and students are consulted as far as possible. This can be seen through the headteacher's blog on the school's excellent website where she has asked parents to comment on what they would like to see in a new multi-sensory room, directing them to a provider link so that they can have a look at possible equipment. All stakeholders, including governors and parents, are invited to the annual 'Big Tea Party' where everyone is given an opportunity to contribute to a review of the school's provision and to plan its future development.
- Leaders have a very accurate view of the school's effectiveness and leaders are their own sharpest critics, as a result of which the school has an excellent capacity to continue to grow and improve. Checks on students' progress are detailed. They inform plans for training and any changes to the curriculum needed to ensure all students are able to progress as well as they possibly can.
- Checks on the quality of teaching through observations of lessons, reviews of students' work, checks on lesson planning and assessment are frequent and undertaken by the strong leadership of both senior and middle leaders. There is a clear focus on 'It would be even better if...' messages as well as identifying best practice, which is then shared across the school. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved so that there is very little which is less than outstanding.
- Staff speak warmly of the professional and personal support they receive from senior and middle leaders and it is clear that North Ridge is a very happy school.
- Leaders are committed to planning for further development of the sixth form to meet increased demand for places and to create an even better quality of education to prepare students for their futures.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met. The school has excellent working relationships with other mainstream and special schools and with other agencies to safeguard students.

- Outreach and inclusion work is aimed at building knowledge, understanding and strategies in other schools to manage behaviour and to adapt work to meet the needs of their students with disabilities and special educational needs. This work is extremely highly regarded by the local authority and by the partner schools, a typical comment being, 'The outreach support we have received has been exceptional.'
- Parents are very happy that their children are safe, happy and making the best possible progress they can. A recent request for more information about what their children are learning has resulted in topic work being posted on the school's website.
- Pupil premium funding is used highly appropriately, including ensuring equal access to trips, after-school activities and the holiday clubs run by the school, to provide additional support for learning and specialist support such as occupational therapy.
- The curriculum is highly creative and well adapted to meet each student's differing interests, talents and abilities and promotes their academic and personal development exceptionally well. Wherever possible, students' views on what they want to learn are taken into account.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have had recent training and have a very good understanding of current requirements on their roles and responsibilities. They visit the school regularly and have specific links to lead members of staff so that they can ask searching questions and provide challenge. Governors are well-informed about student progress data and undertake careful checks, understanding the links between the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. They have contributed to the improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement since the previous inspection by ensuring any under-achievement is tackled robustly. Governors ensure there is no gap between the performance of different groups of students, monitoring the impact of the spending of the pupil premium very well. They ensure salary progression is linked to high quality performance. Governors are involved in the school's work, to review how well it is doing, and development planning, and this helps them to set precise targets for the headteacher's performance management. Governors are rigorous in ensuring safeguarding requirements are in place for all settings the school uses and update policies regularly.

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	132905
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	439471

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Samuel
Headteacher	Bernice Kostick
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2011
Telephone number	0161 234 3588
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