

Nethergate School

Swansdowne Drive, Clifton, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG11 8HX

Inspection dates

28 February – 1 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The executive principal has a strong vision and determination for continual improvement. Self-evaluation is highly accurate. The whole-school planning is always centred on improving outcomes in pupils' learning, and their well-being.
- The highly effective governors share the executive principal's ambition. Their decision to join the multi-academy trust last year has further strengthened and secured school improvement.
- Senior and middle leaders are highly skilled and share the determination for each pupil to succeed. They have developed a warm, purposeful learning environment, which motivates pupils to quickly engage in education after their admission to the school.
- Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points because learning is personalised, expectations are high and no ceiling is placed on what they can achieve.
- Teaching is consistently strong across the school. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Staff know their pupils well. They show compassion and provide consistent care. They are excellent role models.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are very respectful of each other, staff and visitors. They value their own work and the efforts of others.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school and feel safe. They are very well informed about how to keep themselves safe, including keeping safe online.
- Strong and effective partnerships are established with parents and carers and outside agencies. Parents say that they highly value the help and support from school staff, who go 'above and beyond' to help their children.
- Pupils experience a wide range of activities in the rich Nethergate curriculum. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for very well.
- Students aged 16 to 19 make outstanding progress and achieve recognised accreditation. They are exceptionally well prepared for college or employment because staff work with providers to make sure that their transition is as smooth as possible.
- Governors and leaders recognise the need to continue to maximise learning for all in response to the admission of an increasing number of pupils with complex needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop provision to meet the needs of an increasing number of pupils with complex needs, especially those with autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties, by ensuring that:
 - all staff fully understand how to respond to pupils' unique learning and behavioural difficulties
 - resources used continue to support and motivate pupils' learning and development
 - the learning environment continues to develop to maximise learning for all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The executive principal is very well supported by the senior team and middle leaders, who share her passion, vision, energy and determination to ensure that each pupil receives the best possible learning experience. Leadership across the school is highly effective.
- All staff have benefited from a wide range of professional development, which has resulted in a very positive culture across the school, together with the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding with which to support learners.
- The highly effective governing body took the decision last academic year to join a multi-academy trust to further strengthen the work of the school. Governors also identified the opportunity to develop leadership further, for example by giving leaders the opportunity to share with, and learn from, colleagues in other schools.
- Leaders and governors know the school very well through their robust approach to self-evaluation. They have a detailed and accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities. Thorough checks are made to identify the impact of actions taken to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- The vast majority of pupils, regardless of circumstances or needs, make very good progress in relation to their starting points in their all-round personal development as a result of the school's commitment to equality. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form, and many opportunities are taken to celebrate the diversity within the school.
- Senior leaders closely monitor the school's performance, resulting in a clear view of how the school is doing. They set challenging targets and ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress. Some pupils make very rapid progress when they first join the school.
- The executive principal makes sure that effective checks on performance take place, through the close monitoring of teaching and learning, and regular feedback is given to members of staff. As a result, teaching is highly effective, and staff are reflective and adapt their teaching following feedback.
- The Nethergate curriculum caters very effectively for the vast majority of individual pupils' needs. It adds breadth and depth to learning. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities that promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare them well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils have taken part in their own elections and have representation at the pupil parliament within Nottingham city.
- The curriculum is further enriched by a range of visits and activities, including residential experiences. Pupils enjoy a wide range of art, music and physical activities. The outdoor activities and work-related learning allow pupils to experience enterprise and to fundraise.
- Funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to support and accelerate their learning and improve their well-being. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils of all abilities and needs are supported to make the best progress possible.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is used effectively to offer a broader range of sporting activities to pupils, increase their skills and enable them to experience

competitive sport. For example, they attend Nottingham city council disability-sports events and take part in an outdoor education programme. As a result, pupils develop increased confidence and self-esteem.

- The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium has been used effectively to support identified pupils through the use of targeted interventions and resources. As a result, some pupils have made particularly good progress in reading and understanding of number.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Those spoken with during the inspection were particularly positive about the work of staff. One spoke of the 'fantastic school for my child', while another stated, 'I would certainly recommend to other parents', comments which reflect the views of others well.
- While staff know and meet the needs of their pupils well overall, they do not always fully understand and respond to the full complexity of needs, especially for those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and social, emotional and mental health needs.

Governance of the school

- Governance is very strong. Governors consistently support and challenge leaders. They know the school's strengths and priorities very well, because they frequently visit and make appropriate checks on teaching and learning. As a result, they hold leaders to account for improvements in the school.
- In considering the future development of the school, governors recognised the potential advantages of joining the multi-academy trust. Leaders are already noting the positive impact of sharing skills with other schools.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is at the heart of the school and a high priority for all staff.
- Regular safeguarding training and update sessions ensure that all staff are aware of current legislation and understand how to report and record their concerns. An online system is used very effectively for this purpose.
- Records show that referrals are made in a timely way and the designated lead will continue to express concerns to the appropriate agencies if these are not acted upon quickly enough to protect pupils. Close working partnerships with other professionals are evident in these records and show effective support for pupils and families.
- The school makes all the required checks on staff, governors and volunteers and records these meticulously.
- Governors make sure that the designated safeguarding lead and her deputies have up-to-date training for their roles and the time to exercise their roles fully.
- Through the curriculum, leaders make sure that pupils have frequent opportunities to learn about their own well-being and safety and how to manage risks. This helps them to keep safe.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors, and others who responded to the online survey and the school's own questionnaire, agree that their children are kept safe. They particularly

value the rigorous policy and practice, including risk assessments, checked by leaders, which keep their children safe when taking part in a wide range of outdoor and off-site activities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The school is welcoming, inspiring and thoughtfully resourced, motivating pupils who have previously found school to be a challenge. Indoor and outdoor space is used effectively so pupils can access the wide curriculum.
- Pupils engage in learning very well. They take great pride in their school. The quality and presentation of their work is excellent.
- Teachers and their assistants know their pupils very well. They are sensitive to their learning and health needs, knowing where to pitch teaching, when to challenge and when to provide further support.
- All pupils are encouraged by staff to become as independent as possible and to communicate through speaking, signing and the use of symbols as necessary. All pupils are taught to sign, and in 'The Big Sing' whole-school assembly pupils enjoyed singing together, making sounds such as 'boom, boom' in the firework song and joining in the actions.
- The quality of teaching across the school is consistently strong. The school's assessment records and work in pupils' books and on display confirm this. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subjects they teach. They use resources to great effect, capturing pupils' imagination and developing their confidence and self-belief.
- The school's drive to improve reading has been very effective. There is a strong culture of reading across the school and 'reading buddies' enjoy sharing books with each other.
- In a mathematics lesson, pupils were keen to explain how the practical apparatus, such as triangles, hexagons and circles, helped them to construct their own shapes using elastic bands on geoboards. The teacher's approach ensured that pupils fully understood and engaged with their learning.
- Staff quickly build positive relationships with pupils. Aspirations and expectations are high and set out clearly for pupils to understand.
- Staff are accomplished in meeting the needs of pupils in their care. The relentless focus on meeting pupils' individual needs is evident across the school. The school's emphasis on providing an individual approach to learning enables the vast majority of pupils of all ages and abilities to become successful learners.
- Staff are skilful in making use of the assessment information they have about pupils' current abilities and needs. They set realistic targets for pupils' further learning, together with useful feedback to help pupils understand the next steps in their learning, in line with the school's assessment and learning policy.
- Teachers and their assistants use questioning very effectively to engage pupils in learning. Teachers do not settle for the first answer but guide pupils to explore their ideas in more detail. As a result, pupils learn to justify their opinions and they respond constructively to the ideas of other pupils.

- Pupils are encouraged to make choices and to learn subject-specific language to reinforce their knowledge. Teachers give clear expectations and model what they expect from pupils. They provide guidance on what good and excellent work looks like. Pupils consider the work they present with great thought and are not routinely satisfied with their first effort.
- Leaders' careful management of pupils' transition into school includes meetings with parents, and pupils visiting the school before they start. This ensures that pupils' interests and needs are understood and their confidence gained. Strong relationships are maintained with parents, with regular updates on their child's learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff know their pupils exceptionally well. All adults treat pupils with compassion and sensitivity. Therefore, pupils feel secure in the knowledge that they are cared for well.
- The well-being of pupils is of very high importance to all staff across the school. Targets for personal development, as well as academic targets, are regularly reviewed, which helps staff focus on how to meet pupils' very individual needs.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and staff keep them safe. Pupils are taught about the risks associated with the internet and how to avoid them.
- Staff prepare pupils to travel independently, providing individual, step-by-step support. Pupils learn to travel on their own on public transport. Parents told inspectors what a 'big difference' this means for their children and how these skills are also used for social time at the weekend.
- Pupils spoken with said that if there was any bullying, staff sorted it out quickly. They were clear about what to do if someone hurts them or calls them names.
- Baxter, the school dog, is a very popular member of the school. Pupils take responsibility for looking after him and take him for regular walks. Pupils are learning to train him to become a fully qualified assistance dog. Already he is providing support for pupils who have anxieties and helping pupils to become independent.
- Staff work very effectively with outside agencies and therapists to support children and families, providing help where it is needed.
- Careers education is highly effective. Pupils are provided with careers guidance and many opportunities for work experience, related learning and visits. They are given opportunities to attend Nottingham College for taster courses. Leaders ensure that staff always accompany them, providing support in the lessons and ensuring their attendance, safety and well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school is a very welcoming place. Staff members' calm approach enables them to be

excellent role models for pupils. As a result, in lessons and around the school, pupils are typically polite and respectful to each other and adults.

- Pupils' conduct around the school is excellent. They socialise well with each other during breaks and move around the site calmly and purposefully. They are encouraged to take responsibility, for example by giving out resources or collecting in work. They take great pride in carrying out these tasks.
- Pupils respect the fabric of the building and its surroundings. Vibrant displays show photographs of pupils' enjoyment in learning. There was no evidence of graffiti or litter inside the school or in the outside play area.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently and model positive behaviour effectively. Staff keep records of incidents of poor behaviour, and support is put in place to help pupils to reduce anxieties. Pupils know that they can use 'bubble time', a whole-school agreed strategy to speak privately with their teacher.
- The area known as 'The Hub' is used effectively by staff to work with pupils and encourage them to reflect on incidents and learn from situations. Pupils settle into school quickly and engage with the expectations and routines, because they are secure in the knowledge that these will be consistently applied across the school.
- Attendance is monitored carefully, and if pupils' attendance falls below an acceptable level and absence is unplanned, rapid action is taken by leaders to ensure that the absence does not continue. The majority of absence is due to pupils' health conditions. Leaders work closely with parents and professionals to ensure that pupils return to school as quickly as possible, and provide work for pupils to do during their absence if they are well enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils arrive in school with prior attainment significantly below average.
- Pupils with a range of different identified needs make equally strong progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils also make excellent progress overall, as a result of very effective support.
- Pupils' work in exercise books and learning journals, and that displayed around the school, shows that pupils clearly enjoy learning and work hard to complete tasks set for them by staff.
- Staff ensure that the most able pupils are challenged to achieve their very best. For example, a specialist science teacher provides activities which enable pupils to develop research and inquiry-based skills. Assessment information, exercise books and learning journals reflect the excellent progress made by the most able pupils.
- Pupils study for a range of qualifications. They are particularly successful in completing their chosen subjects. They also enjoy working towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Staff work tirelessly to raise pupils' aspirations to achieve their ambition. Pupils' self-esteem and motivation to succeed are reflected in the work they complete.
- In 2017, pupils at key stage 4 achieved a range of qualifications. For example, they gained GCSEs in English, mathematics and biology, functional skills certificates, entry-

level qualifications and other unit awards. These courses and the qualifications enable pupils to secure a place in further education.

- Transition to workplace and study is supported with high-quality careers advice. Pupils complete work experience, participate in enterprise and fundraising activities, and go on college taster courses. At the end of key stage 4, pupils continue with further education, many moving into the school's key stage 5 provision, employment or training. Parents say that 'staff provide highly effective support' to pupils to become independent and successfully take these next steps.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The quality of education for students aged 16 to 19 is outstanding because they are provided with a curriculum which is highly individualised and suited to their needs.
- Students benefit from facilities within the newly built sixth-form block. Staff contributed to the design, which provides spacious classrooms together with a central area where students enjoy socialising at lunch and breaktimes.
- Leadership of the provision is outstanding. The safeguarding and well-being of students is a key priority at all times. Staff consider each student's strengths and needs before identifying the objectives for their learning programmes. Staff encourage students to become independent and open up opportunities for them with regard to future employment, education or training.
- Some students are benefiting from the internship programme this year. They are working in school one day a week on their functional skills and also experiencing a two-day work placement supported by The Royal Mencap Society. Parents spoken with were very positive about the opportunity, saying that this gives 'a valuable real-life work experience, which could lead to employment, whilst continuing their learning'.
- All students attend Nottingham College for one day a week and experience a range of courses, which include animal care, construction, catering, motor vehicle maintenance and hair and beauty. Some students progress through the units to achieve accreditation, leading to a place at college.
- Students' English, mathematical and computing skills are developed well and staff challenge students to achieve the very best they can. All students work on functional skills in these subjects areas.
- Students make excellent progress and gain accredited qualifications and unit awards dependent on their interests and abilities. In 2017, students in key stage 5 achieved a range of qualifications. For example, they gained functional skills certificates, entry-level qualifications and life and living skills unit awards. This qualified pupils to secure a place in further education.
- Students also take part in a range of work-related activities. These include working in the school's own 'Crumbs Café' and allotment. They also have placements in health and a variety of local businesses. For some students, this leads to paid employment. They also enjoy their work on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, which helps them to develop their independence.
- Students conduct themselves very well because they are provided with an interesting

curriculum which promotes very strong progress. The consistent approach and high expectations of staff result in a calm and orderly atmosphere. Students feel safe and say that staff provide them with very good support.

- Students are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education. Students are provided with good careers advice and guidance and supported to make appropriate choices. Staff also involve parents in this process.
- Attendance is good and is carefully monitored by leaders. Students say that they enjoy coming to the sixth form because the activities are fun.

School details

Unique reference number	137915
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10036061

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	24
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Hamlin
Principal	Tracey Ydlibi
Telephone number	01159152959
Website	www.nethergateschool.co.uk
Email address	tydlibi@nethergateacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2014

Information about this school

- Nethergate School, as a stand-alone special academy, joined Greenwood Academy Trust in May 2017. The school is sponsored by the trust.
- The school provides for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. A growing number of pupils also experience other complex needs, such as social, emotional and mental health needs, autism and speech and language difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.

- The school uses Nottingham College as a provider for pupils in key stage 4 and students in key stage 5.
- A new sixth-form block was opened in 2017 for students in key stage 5.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held discussions with the executive principal, other senior and middle leaders, staff and governors of the school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils' views about their school in meetings and through informal discussions. Their responses to the pupils' questionnaire were also taken into account.
- Although there were insufficient responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, inspectors considered the five free-text responses.
- Inspectors spoke with parents by telephone. They also took into account views expressed by parents through the school's own questionnaire.
- Questionnaire responses from 38 staff were examined.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's records of checks on pupils' personal development and progress and a wide range of other documents, including the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils, the school's own self-evaluation documents and its plans for further development.
- Inspectors visited classes, observed learning and considered a wide range of pupils' books and other evidence of their learning, such as their learning journals and displays.

Inspection team

Lynda Morgan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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