

Northway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101395
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	335705
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Stevens
Headteacher	Lesley Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed and eight teachers were seen, as well as a number of sessions led by teaching assistants. Meetings were held with staff, governors and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment data, self-evaluation and monitoring information, teachers' planning and safeguarding documentation. Forty-seven parental questionnaires were analysed as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- To what extent the school has improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection.
- How well the school has adapted its provision to meet the range of pupils' difficulties, including the increasing number with complex needs.
- How well governors and leaders at all levels drive continuous improvement.

Information about the school

This is a primary special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, most of whom have additional needs. Over half the pupils have autistic spectrum disorders and there has been an increase since the last inspection in the number with complex needs. A high proportion of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and English is an additional language for most of these. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also high. Boys greatly outnumber girls. The school has National Healthy School Status and the Activemark award. It provides an outreach service to local mainstream schools in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is due to move into brand new accommodation on an integrated campus with the adjoining mainstream primary school and children's centre in December 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school that has sustained and built on the many strengths found at the last inspection. The school promotes pupils' academic and personal development exceptionally well. It provides high quality care, guidance and support and instils in pupils a real enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are happy, enjoy school very much and have a strong sense of belonging to the school community. They relate very well with one another and feel valued as individuals. Parents and carers say that the staff are 'absolutely wonderful' and they are confident in the knowledge, as one put it, that the staff 'are so professional, they are really experts, very caring and supportive'. Another parent said, 'All the staff and managers do an excellent job, we really cannot fault the school in any way.'

Achievement is outstanding and pupils make exceptionally good progress because activities are matched extremely well to their learning needs. The school has adapted very well to the increasing number of pupils with complex difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum disorders whose behaviour is at times extremely challenging and those who need additional help with communicating. From a vast array of good and mostly outstanding practice, two aspects of the school's work stand out as being truly exceptional. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, is now outstanding and teaching is exemplary. An extensive range of activities in physical education does much to develop pupils' skills, promote their total concentration and instil in them a tremendous excitement about learning. Here, too, teaching is excellent.

The school is led exceptionally well, and senior leaders and governors are passionate about meeting pupils' needs as fully as possible. Staff and pupils alike have very good opportunities to develop their potential, and the leadership of teaching is outstanding. Self-evaluation is good. It is based on accurate monitoring and good analysis of assessment data. The findings of this analysis are used well to check pupils' progress in subjects and year groups, and to identify areas for development. This ensures that the school is continuously refining its provision and identifying the right priorities. Senior leaders have ensured that the significant demand on their time in detailed planning and organisation for the new build have not reduced the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. This added demand has contributed to some slippage in how the school documents its work, however, and the way leaders record the school's effectiveness in the self-evaluation form does not do justice to the outstanding quality evident in practice. This is also partly a result of self-evaluation processes that are not quite as sharp as they could be, for instance in ensuring that all subjects are kept constantly under review. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and it

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has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the capacity to improve by keeping all subjects under continuous review and ensuring that self-evaluation is more sharply focused on justifying judgements about school effectiveness and pinpointing what differentiates good from outstanding practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in the consistently above average attendance and in their eagerness to succeed. All groups of pupils progress equally well, including girls and boys and those of minority ethnic heritage. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, those with moderate learning difficulties and with complex needs all make similar progress. The school prepares pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education, and for the future, by instilling in them an enthusiasm for learning and enabling them to make exceptionally good progress in basic skills. The excellent start children get in the Early Years Foundation Stage was obvious in a lesson where they worked on individual tasks from their 'work baskets'. Many made tangible progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills through the intensive one-to-one support they received from highly skilled staff. Others revealed an unusual degree of concentration for children of their age, for example as they independently ordered numbers from one to ten, or carefully copied a series of words and drew a picture to illustrate them.

Pupils say that they like school because, as one put it, 'Northway is nice, safe and makes me feel happy.' They know their targets and understand what they need to do to improve their work. Behaviour is good and many pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and they make exceptionally good progress in developing their social skills. They learn in a harmonious community where they are supportive of one another and readily celebrate each others' successes. They make a good contribution to the community, for instance, as members of the school council and through raising funds for a range of charities. Pupils respond extremely well to the school's many efforts to promote their understanding of healthy living, reflected in it gaining National Healthy School Status and the Activemark award. They take part with great enthusiasm in a very wide range of physical activities, some of which are recognised through certificates, and participation in events where they work alongside pupils from mainstream schools.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding: it is consistently at least good and many lessons are of very high quality. Teachers have high expectations which they convey skilfully to pupils through explanations, demonstrations and thorough use of communication aids, such as pictures, visual timetables, symbols and signing. The school makes exceptionally good use of assessment information to identify pupils who need specific support, and staff use their knowledge of pupils' prior attainment very well in planning lessons. This was particularly evident in an exemplary therapeutic session, led by a teaching assistant, where exercises on a trampoline were matched precisely to the prior attainment and different level of confidence of each child. Throughout the school, teaching assistants contribute significantly to pupils' progress and there are examples of outstanding work by assistant staff in a number of areas. Teaching is often lively and fires pupils with enthusiasm. This is seen most colourfully in physical education and dance lessons, where dynamic teaching and high expectations challenge pupils continuously so that learning proceeds at a rapid pace. Where teaching is good rather than outstanding, teachers do not always convey sufficiently high expectations of behaviour or encourage the exceptionally focused work found in the very best lessons.

The curriculum is matched extremely well to pupils' needs and interests. As a parent said, 'The school goes to great lengths to give the children a really fun and creative approach to learning.' Links with other schools and organisations do much to extend the learning opportunities and develop pupils' social skills. Pupils are well known as individuals and the school pays excellent attention to meeting the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Teachers work closely with therapists and other

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agencies to provide individualised support programmes, including for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and complex needs. The school manages challenging behaviour exceptionally well. It works very closely with the receiving secondary special school to ensure pupils make a smooth transition when they move on at the end of Year 6. The school offers a breakfast club and an after-school club that provides pupils with a varied range of activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and governors have worked very closely in forging a vision for the move to new purpose-built accommodation. Their high expectations and flair are clearly evident in the attention to detail in planning the new build, including through careful liaison with other establishments involved in what will be an integrated campus. Senior leaders have a very detailed knowledge of the school's work, though systems for recording self-evaluation judgements do not capture clearly the outstanding quality of much of the school's work or differentiate sharply between that which is good and that which is exceptional. The leadership of teaching is highly effective and, despite some staff changes since the last inspection, the school has sustained the high quality teaching found at that time. The headteacher is extremely accurate in judging the quality of teaching. She is supported very well by other members of the senior team in driving improvement and instilling ambition in all the staff. Subject leaders make a good contribution to school development.

The governing body provides outstanding support and challenge to the school. The Chair of the Governing Body and a number of other governors provide a great deal of 'hands-on' support to senior leaders and have in-depth knowledge of the school's work. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. Staff are rigorous in ensuring pupils are kept safe and protected, working closely with other agencies whenever a concern arises, but some paperwork needs tightening up so that it fully reflects the school's thorough practice. For instance, policies do not always make entirely clear the wide range of actions staff take to keep pupils safe. The school promotes community cohesion well. The school community is harmonious and there are very good links with the local area. An audit and an action plan have been developed and leaders have already begun to establish overseas links; they have, rightly, identified the need to forge links also with schools in differing parts of the United Kingdom. The promotion of equal opportunities is

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outstanding. The school ensures that the needs of all groups of pupils are met equally well. It sets very challenging targets and systematically tackles key priorities. Outstanding partnership with other local schools and organisations does much to extend pupils' learning and promote their personal development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Outstanding leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage has enabled the school to turn what was a relative weakness at the last inspection into one of its greatest strengths. Provision is excellent, ensuring that children develop valuable learning skills and become very motivated to learn. They make exceptionally good progress because teaching is outstanding and all the staff work as highly skilled members of a seamless team, sharing the same high expectations. The high staff-to-child ratio means there are plenty of opportunities for children to receive individual attention. Intensive support promotes their basic skills and social development exceptionally well. A wide and varied range of activities promotes children's development in all areas of learning, and the school is very well resourced with stimulating learning materials. Staff pay very careful attention to keeping children safe and promoting their well-being. Assessment records are detailed and thorough. Parents and carers are kept well informed by home-school diaries and frequent newsletters informing them of planned activities.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers express a high level of satisfaction with the school's work. In particular, they appreciate that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. They believe that teaching is good and that their children are making good progress. They think that the school is led and managed well, and all are pleased overall with their children's experience at the school. A very few parents and carers would like more information about how well their children are doing. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' positive views. Inspection findings indicate that parents are kept well informed, particularly through home-school diaries, regular class newsletters and involvement in the review of their children's individual education plans and at annual reviews.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northway School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	82	7	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	82	7	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	70	11	24	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	49	18	37	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	63	15	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	51	20	41	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	49	23	47	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	16	33	25	51	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	55	17	35	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	59	17	35	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	53	20	41	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	32	65	14	29	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	67	14	29	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northway School, London NW7 3HS

Thank you for making us welcome when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, seeing all the work that you have been doing and finding out what you think about the school. You told us that you enjoy school very much and many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are with it. We found that you go to an outstanding school; it was outstanding at the last inspection and it still is.

You make really good progress because your teachers plan lessons very carefully and make learning fun. We could see how enthusiastic you are about all the activities and especially how much you enjoy physical education (PE), dance and learning to use the trampoline. Those of you in the youngest class make fantastic progress and do some very good work. In all the classes, the staff look after you really well and care about you very much. We were pleased to see how well you get on together and how hard you try in lessons.

Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors are very busy at the moment, getting ready for moving into your brand new school. They are always working to make the school better for you, and we want to help them with this so we have asked them to:

- think even more carefully about what the school does really well and what could be improved a little
- keep notes about this that will help them when they are making decisions about what to do.

Make sure you carry on working hard and doing your very best, just as you do now, and we are sure you will love your new school building.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild

Lead inspector

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