

Inspection of North West London Independent Special School

85 Old Oak Common Lane, East Acton, Ealing, London, Middlesex W3 7DD

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at the North West London Independent Special School know pupils well. They take time to understand pupils' individual needs and build positive relationships with them. One pupil, speaking for many, told inspectors, 'Because of this school and the time taken by staff to understand our needs, we have been given the opportunity to succeed.' Pupils achieve well because of the care and support they receive.

Pupils are happy and behave well. They settle quickly because the routines and expectations from adults and leaders are clear. Pupils enjoy school and make positive contributions to lessons. Staff are always positive when managing difficult behaviour. Staff are calm and responsive to pupils' needs even when pupils are upset. Leaders do not tolerate incidents of bullying. Leaders ensure that pupils feel safe and know where to go if they have a concern.

Leaders have high expectations for what they want pupils to learn. Leaders have prioritised the need for pupils to leave the school with key knowledge and skills in English, mathematics, science and the wider curriculum. Leaders also ensure that pupils complete qualifications in other areas such as art and physical education.

Leaders are keen to extend pupils' experiences beyond the classroom through visits to galleries and lunchtime clubs such as art and sport.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. They do not see pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities as a barrier to success. Many pupils at the school study core subjects such as English and mathematics at GCSE level. Other pupils complete functional skills qualifications. In the sixth form, the curriculum meets students' needs well.

Leaders ensure that staff are trained to teach and promote reading well. Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully. They ensure that pupils learn the phonics skills they need. Staff help pupils who fall behind or who join the school with weak reading skills to catch up. All staff can support weaker readers because phonics training is provided to those staff who have recently joined the school.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils, including in the sixth form. The curriculum is well thought through and sequenced. Teachers have thought carefully about the smaller blocks of learning that are needed to help pupils know and understand more complex ideas. Teachers present topics in a logical order. However, sometimes, teaching lacks precision so pupils are not able to build on what they already know. Adaptions to lessons are sometimes not successful in meeting pupils' needs.

In the most successful subjects, such as art, teachers use various methods to check pupils' learning effectively. Teachers recap previous topics and check that this knowledge is securely understood before moving on to new work. Teachers use

questioning effectively to check what pupils know and remember. Pupils value the help they receive from their teachers in helping them to make progress.

Staff promote pupils' personal development exceptionally well through a variety of additional activities and a highly effective personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. It is well planned and implemented. Leaders ensure that it is tailored to pupils' needs. Pupils learn essential knowledge about relationships and the world of work, for instance. Careers guidance is useful and tailored to pupils' needs. Pupils are very positive about the wide range of leadership opportunities on offer, for example the 'Leadership and LIFE programme'. This is an integral part of the curriculum. Pupils are also positive about the extra-curricular activities that leaders provide.

Staff are well trained to deal with pupils' complex and differing behavioural needs. They are vigilant to pupils' moods and slight changes in behaviour and use de-escalation strategies skilfully. Staff are well trained and deploy a range of appropriate strategies to meet pupils' behavioural needs.

Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their lessons. They attend school regularly and show respect towards staff. On the odd occasion that pupils misbehave, leaders take swift and decisive action. Leaders do not allow poor behaviour to distract from learning.

Leaders have developed strong links with local employers. There are lots of opportunities for students to meet employers and experience the world of work. Sixth-form students enjoy a wide range of activities that teach them how to become valuable members of the local community.

Leaders have built positive relationships with staff and are aware of the workload pressures that exist. They continue to take positive steps to reduce unnecessary workload. Staff enjoy working here and are proud to be members of the school community. Leaders have ensured that the school meets all the requirements of the independent school standards and is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor and governing body are knowledgeable and understand their role in the school. This includes meeting statutory obligations. For example, the successful introduction of the relationships and sex education and health education guidance. The proprietor and governors have gained an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. This has enabled them to identify the most important priorities for the school. Governors challenge and support leaders appropriately. The close working of leaders and the governing body has brought about improvements in the school, including the sixth form.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies to make sure that pupils are kept safe. They have comprehensive knowledge of pupils' needs and their record-keeping is detailed. Staff have regular training on how to keep pupils safe. By regularly checking in with each pupil about how they are feeling, staff pick up on pupils' worries quickly.

Pupils feel safe. They know adults they can talk to. Leaders ensure that individuals and classes have suitable safety knowledge, for example about e-safety, to be able to keep themselves safe. This complements the comprehensive PSHE education programme.

The safeguarding policy is available to parents and carers on the school's website. It is compliant with the latest government guidance. Leaders have ensured clear systems are in place for recruiting new members of staff and comprehensive pre-employment checks are carried out.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Sometimes, teaching is not adapted sufficiently to focus precisely on what pupils need to learn next in order to develop their knowledge and skills over time. This means that pupils find it difficult to link their different bits of learning together. Leaders need to ensure that subject staff have suitable training to ensure that they are consistently able to adapt teaching for pupils with complex needs.

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.

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

School details

Unique reference number	135794
DfE registration number	307/6401
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	10230754
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Thomas Keaney
Headteacher	Ishamar Blake
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,500 to £63,000
Telephone number	02087495403
Website	www.tces.org.uk
Email address	admin.nwlis@tces.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 and 21 November 2019

Information about this school

- North West London Independent Special School is a school within the TCES Group of schools.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan related to their autism spectrum disorder or social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Fewer girls attend the school than boys.
- Since the school's last standard inspection in November 2019, a newly appointed headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- At the time of this inspection, pupils on roll were aged between 10 and 19.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the head of school, the business manager, the proprietor, two governors, the executive headteacher and senior leaders. Inspectors also met with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, PSHE education, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the school's curriculum documentation, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their wider experiences of school.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to other subject leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, risk assessments, attendance information and behaviour logs.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff's training and the procedures that are in place to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered the suitability of the school building and leaders' work to reduce the risks that had been identified.

Inspection team

Phil Garnham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jude Wilson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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