

Inspection of Northgate High School

Sidegate Lane West, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 3DL

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a large school that feels like a tightly knit community. Pupils are highly respectful towards each other and staff. They are exceptionally polite and considerate of one another. Pupils feel happy, and they know that the staff care for them.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum offer throughout the school. They achieve well because their teachers have planned a challenging curriculum for them. Students in the sixth form are able to achieve the very highest outcomes because teachers have excellent subject knowledge.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. They listen to their teachers carefully and try their very best. They appreciate all that the staff do for them. This is a highly inclusive school that values diversity.

The school provides an extensive range of trips and opportunities for pupils. Many pupils also choose to take part in the varied clubs and activities provided for them. Staff go the extra mile to ensure pupils can explore their many interests. For example, there is a string band, a debating society and even a weekly slot-car racing club, which includes a trip to a racing circuit.

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

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders have carefully considered how pupils learn best and have precisely set out what they need to know. This means that knowledge is built on over time. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and remember. This means pupils are supported to achieve well.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. This means that they are able to set out ideas clearly to pupils. The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide teachers with the training and guidance they need to help pupils with SEND to learn. When teachers adapt the learning for these pupils, they make progress through the curriculum. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always use the guidance to make adaptations that pupils with SEND need. This means that some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could.

The school has put in place a wide range of strategies to develop pupils' reading. Weaker readers are quickly identified. Staff provide pupils with the support they need to help them to become more fluent and confident readers. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. This means that many pupils enjoy reading beyond the school day.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are kind and considerate to each other. Pupils value the positive relationships that they have with staff, and they know staff will go the extra mile to support them. Pupils attend well because they enjoy coming to school. There are clear systems in place to support pupils who do not attend school as regularly.

Pupils in all key stages receive highly effective careers education and guidance. The school encourages pupils to be aspirational for their future. Students in the sixth form appreciate the wide range of subjects they can study. In sixth form, the 'Aspire' programme helps students to access the very best universities. After sixth form, high proportions of students enter further education, employment or training successfully. Students in the sixth form appreciate the opportunities they have to succeed and appreciate that leaders listen to their views.

The extra-curricular opportunities leaders provide to broaden pupils' wider development are a strength of the school. The school carefully tracks those who access these opportunities. This ensures that all are encouraged to take part in a wide range of experiences. These help them develop the skills necessary to thrive beyond their school life. This is a highly inclusive school. All pupils feel that they can be themselves. Staff teach pupils about equality and diversity. This means they understand and support each other.

Governors regularly visit the school and know it well. Staff enjoy the sense of community they feel at Northgate High School. Leaders take exceptional care of staff well-being. This means that staff love working at the school and want to do their very best for the pupils. The school is relentless in continually seeking to further develop all aspects for the pupils. Parents are highly complimentary about the support their children receive and the opportunities they are given.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Learning is not adapted well enough to meet the needs of some pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school needs to ensure that learning is suitably tailored so that all groups of pupils progress through the curriculum well.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	124840
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10345269
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	1,708
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie Ferguson
Headteacher	Rowena Mackie
Website	www.northgate.suffolk.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered and seven unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- 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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history, design and technology and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the assistant headteachers, the special education needs coordinator, the head of sixth form, middle leaders, support staff and class teachers across the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- Inspectors met with the chair of governors and seven other governors.
- Inspectors visited breaktimes, lunchtimes and assemblies and met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils around the school site.
- Inspectors conducted further meetings on safeguarding, personal development and behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s online staff and pupil surveys. They also considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

Andrew Robinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
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Nicola Ready	Ofsted Inspector

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