

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Bridge School

251 Hungerford Road, London N7 9LD

Inspection dates:

11–12 December 2019

Outcome

The Bridge School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a safe and nurturing community. As one parent put it: 'The school is very supportive, and the staff are beyond wonderful.' Pupils run into the school each day and are warmly greeted by staff. Pupils settle well, because routines are clear and familiar. There is a sense of calmness across both sites, because staff know pupils very well and are skilled at responding to pupils' needs.

Staff do everything they can to help pupils communicate about their learning, their needs and their opinions. Staff are always positive in managing pupils' behaviour. Whenever pupils become anxious, troubled or are in crisis, staff are consistently calm, kind and effective in helping them to feel secure and supported. Staff work hard to help pupils make friends.

Parents, carers and staff said that that bullying does not happen at The Bridge School, but that minor conflicts are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Leaders, governors and staff have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. Staff think and plan carefully about how to help pupils to achieve well from their starting points. Their planning supports the wide variety of individual needs across the school, so that all pupils experience success.

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

Governors and leaders at all levels are exceptional role models for the staff and pupils. They share a clear vision for the continuous improvement of this outstanding school.

Leaders make sure that plans for pupils' learning in all subjects are well thought out. Staff plan carefully to make sure pupils achieve their individual targets. Highly skilled and well-trained staff keep a careful check on how well pupils are achieving, so that they can be precise in planning their next steps. Strong, caring relationships with adults motivate pupils to try their best.

Pupils enjoy a range of experiences to support their achievement and development. Their sensory needs are always well considered. Staff use a range of resources and devices to support effective communication. For example, during our visit pupils used a range of communication devices to answer questions about different objects. They then chose music to dance to when they gave the right answer. Pupils responded joyfully to their successes and enjoyed the dancing.

Many pupils at the school benefit from the formal teaching of reading and mathematics. Teachers are skilled in teaching phonics but also sharply focused on making sure that pupils understand what they read. Pupils in Year 4 who read to inspectors showed delight in their achievement. Staff work hard to develop a love of stories and of reading. Students in the sixth form talk with pride about their role as librarians, and their regular visits to the local library where they listen to stories.

Teachers make activities and learning collaborative and fun, whenever possible. Pupils sing beautifully together and enjoy their physical education (PE) lessons. Staff are also very sensitive to pupils who need space and time to be alone or work alone.

Children in the early years are well cared for. Staff understand their needs and support them very well. Children engage well with painting and they also respond positively to sensory sessions in the therapy rooms.

Students in the sixth form enjoy working together. They show respect and interest when they talk about their day. They coach and support each other to do the best that they can. They show confidence, resilience and delight when they are successful at expressing their views. Students read to inspectors and helpfully reminded each other to be sure to read clearly. They then listened attentively to each other and showed interest in what they each had read.

Teachers provide a wide range of activities for pupils to enrich their lives beyond the school and help them to be prepared for the next stage of their education. Staff help pupils to practise travelling around London. Sixth-form students recently took part in a Shakespeare Schools Festival.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects, including art, swimming, drama and music. The school's approach to supporting parents is a special feature of its work. Parents receive guidance on how best to support their children. They also enjoy events and trips designed to help them take 'time out' to look after themselves.

Leaders and governors care deeply about staff well-being and offer a range of activities to support them. They think carefully about ways to reduce workload. The majority of staff are proud and happy to work at the school and feel well supported in their roles. A small proportion of staff would like further support and training. Leaders and governors know this and are planning a range of ways to provide this guidance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' physical and mental well-being and safety are an absolute priority. Staff are well trained and highly vigilant. They support each other to keep pupils safe at all times. Routines to support individual pupils who are in crisis are rigorous and effective. Staff skilfully keep individual pupils secure, while making sure that all other pupils are supported and safe. Staff team work is exceptional.

Staff make sure that pupils' health and care needs identified on education, health and care plans are met. Pupils who need support with toileting or nappy changing are treated with care, kindness and respect.

Staff are swift to identify any potential safeguarding issues, because they know their pupils very well. They seek advice from each other and from leaders, even if they have very minor concerns.

Leaders make sure that they use appropriate external services to safeguard pupils and to support families. Checks made when staff are recruited are thorough.

Background

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school The Bridge School to be outstanding.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143217
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10119927
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The Bridge London Trust Board
Chair of the Governing Body	David Tait
Headteachers	Penny Doswell and Julian Matthews
Website	thebridgelondon.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Bridge School converted to become an academy on 3 May 2017. It is part of The Bridge London Trust. When its predecessor school The Bridge School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The predecessor school's executive headteacher has become the chief executive officer of the Trust. There is a primary and a secondary headteacher.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties and/or autism.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteachers and other members of the leadership team. We met with the chief education officer of the trust. We met with trustees and governors, including the chair of governors.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, personal, social and emotional development, and physical development. To do this, we met with leaders and visited lessons with them. We visited English, music, art, drama and PE lessons. We looked at pupils' work and spoke with some pupils about their learning and their school. We met with the teachers we observed. We reviewed the school's planning for the subjects that we visited.
- We reviewed care plans and profiles for a sample of pupils.
- We reviewed the eight responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey and the 38 responses to the staff survey.
- In order to inspect safeguarding, we reviewed the school's record of pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff. We met with leaders who have responsibility for safeguarding and reviewed documentation relating to child protection.
- We reviewed documentation relating to behaviour, attendance and exclusions.

Inspection team

Ruth Dollner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Matthews

Her Majesty's Inspector

Phil Garnham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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