

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Bridge Integrated Learning Space

1 Dowrey Street, London N1 0HY

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

The Bridge Integrated Learning Space continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well looked after and kept safe in this small and specialist setting. High levels of training and support mean that adults know pupils very well. Staff are highly skilled in understanding what can cause pupils anxiety. They are alert to any changes in demeanour and proactive in helping pupils to regulate and manage their emotions. Bullying does not typically happen, but if pupils are unkind to one another, adults intervene and deal with it swiftly.

Leaders and staff have exceptionally high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They work extensively with parents and carers to ensure that these expectations are realised. Every effort is made to understand each pupil's different ways of communicating and supporting them to expand on this. The primary focus is to enable pupils to have increased access to the community they live in. This goal underpins the ambitious curriculum, as well as the rich range of wider opportunities on offer to pupils.

Staff work closely with a range of professionals to support pupils to meet, and frequently exceed, the targets outlined in their education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Achievements are celebrated in daily assemblies, where pupils enjoy joining in with singing and being thankful.

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

The specific needs and individual starting points of pupils are swiftly identified. From this basis, leaders have created an ambitious, bespoke and personalised curriculum. Learning is carefully sequenced to support each pupil to develop important knowledge, skills and understanding, including communication and independence.

Throughout the school, pupils' individual targets are aligned and tailored to those in their EHC plans. These targets are created in close partnership with the multi-disciplinary team. This includes an occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and clinical psychologist. Regular communication with parents helps to ensure that they feel fully

involved in their children's learning and know about ways to help them work towards their targets when at home.

Staff have an excellent understanding of pupils' needs. This, together with the carefully planned curriculum, means that what pupils learn, revisit and practise is sharply focused on making sure that they achieve well. Teachers provide regular opportunities to support pupils to work towards meeting their individual targets. For example, in dance, pupils choose their accompanying music. Similarly, pupils are encouraged to maintain eye contact with their 'key person' or indicate a 'yes' or 'no' when answering questions. Leaders regularly review and refine pupils' targets. This enables teachers to reinforce, refine or adapt chosen methods and strategies, including for communication.

Leaders have adopted a systematic phonics programme for pupils learning to read and spell. Effective training has ensured that staff have the subject knowledge to deliver the programme with precision. Staff are experts in adapting their approaches for pupils with different needs. This includes increased repetition, shorter and quicker tasks to maintain attention or introducing new sounds at a slower rate. As a result, pupils increase their reading accuracy and fluency over time.

Staff continuously seek out ways to extend pupils' willingness to try and tolerate new experiences and challenges. Adults have a clear and shared understanding that effective learning cannot take place when pupils are anxious. Therefore, they maintain an ongoing focus on supporting pupils to reduce their anxieties and regulate their behaviour. Staff use a range of appropriate techniques to achieve this. For example, through using sensory rooms, singing, taking time to walk outside or hand massage. Class teams are highly skilled at anticipating what might cause anxiety. They are proactive in taking steps to manage these situations. For example, they use 'now and next' boards, visual timetables and transition support plans to ensure that pupils understand and work to familiar and structured routines.

Leaders support pupils' wider development through exceptionally well-thought-through provision, which is tailored to pupils' needs and experiences. Within this, staff and leaders maintain a relentless focus on preparing all pupils for life in the community beyond school. For example, the curriculum is designed to help pupils learn a range of functional independent skills such as shopping, travel and food preparation. Visits to the coast, art galleries, museums and adventure playgrounds all take place to enrich the curriculum learned in school. Leaders arrange many social activities for pupils, from assemblies to group singing. Pupils also access a range of physical activities such as swimming, cycling and football, and these are planned to further develop their fine and gross motor skills.

Staff are rightly proud to work in this unique place. They feel well supported by the training that they receive and the range of professional development opportunities. They described leaders as accessible and considerate of their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. As a result, they recognise signs a pupil may be at risk of harm and know how to report any concerns they may have. Detailed records and clear management systems help to monitor pupils at risk. All pre-employment checks are carried out appropriately.

Leaders have developed excellent working relationships with the local authority and other external agencies. They are persistent in securing the right support for pupils and their families.

Leaders have ensured the curriculum helps pupils to learn about how to be safe. Adults are vigilant to risk and maintaining pupils' safety.

Background

When we have judged a 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in October 2017.

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](#)' 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	141605
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10255541
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Tait
Headteacher	Ed Ashcroft
Website	www.thebridgetrust.academy
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an EHC plan and a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school is part of The Bridge Multi Academy Trust.
- Leaders do not use an alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in language and communication, personal, social and health education and visual and creative arts. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of

pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other areas as part of this inspection.

- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Una Buckley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Fawzia Govender

Ofsted Inspector

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