

The Gateway School

St John's Road, Tiffield, Northampton, NN12 8AA

Inspection dates 9–10 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Since taking up post in September 2014 the headteacher has re-energised this successful school. The headteacher inspires students and staff to achieve their maximum potential.
- Students routinely experience teaching which is outstanding.
- The behaviour of students improves during their time at the school and is now outstanding. Students are proud of their school and are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- The safety of students is a high priority for leaders and staff. Students feel safe and the systems to ensure their safety are outstanding.
- The curriculum prepares students exceptionally well for the next stage of their education, employment or training. This work starts on the first day they arrive at the school.
- Through careful planning leaders ensure that provision for students' development in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain because the curriculum is broad and actively promotes democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Taking into account their starting points, disrupted education and learning difficulties, students' achievement is outstanding. Most students make the progress that they should during their time at the school.
- Due to very effective programmes of support, students' progress in reading is excellent.
- Governors are highly effective in supporting and challenging leaders to drive improvement.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students speak highly of their experiences in the sixth form because their courses match their needs and abilities exceptionally well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons and two assemblies; most of these were jointly observed with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and school business manager.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with newly qualified teachers, middle leaders and the co-ordinator for the sixth form provision.
- The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members of the governing body, including a parent governor.
- Inspectors spoke with students in meetings and during social times.
- Inspectors took into account 18 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, student progress data, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding procedures and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took into account a recent school survey of parental views as there were too few responses on Parent View, the Ofsted website for parents to express their opinions about the school.

Inspection team

Phil Harrison, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Bailey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Gateway School caters for students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Previously this was referred to as behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Many students have additional special needs that include moderate and specific learning difficulties, attachment disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders. An increasing number of students are being diagnosed with autism.
- Almost all of the students are White British boys.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for children looked after by the local authority and students known to be eligible for free schools meals, is well above average.
- The sixth-form provision was opened in September 2013 and currently caters for five students.
- The school is a strategic partner in the Fairfields teaching school alliance, taking a lead responsibility for school-to-school support.
- The headteacher is a director for the South West Area of Northants Educational Partnership (SWAN EP), which provides services and advice to schools within the partnership.
- The school has received a number of awards, including the Football Association charter standard, the Sports Active Mark, The Diana Memorial Award, Investors in People and, most recently, Basic Skills Mark re-accreditation.
- On the school site is a swimming pool and a vocational learning centre containing facilities for courses in motor vehicle maintenance, construction, hair and beauty and welding.
- The school uses a range of alternative providers both on the school site and at other venues in the area. These are: Rushmere Academy; REAL project; Playing for Success; NANNAs, Centurian Training Solutions (Motor Vehicle) and Construction and Vocational Education (CAVE).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the attendance of the minority of students for whom regular attendance is a challenge.
- Make full and effective use of the vocational learning centre to extend students' achievement and their preparation for life after school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school and is ably supported by an experienced leadership team. Due to their complementary skills they form a highly effective team who make decisions which are in the best interests of the students. In a meeting with inspectors, younger students said that the headteacher was 'funny and good' and 'he always explains the choices he makes about the school to us'. The deputy headteacher is described by the Chair of the Governing Body as 'a backbone of the school' and inspectors agree with his view.
- Any discrimination or lack of equality of opportunity is not tolerated by leaders. The headteacher leads by example in treating everyone in the school community with respect; as a result, students feel that they are treated fairly.
- School leaders have an in-depth knowledge of the students' personal lives, achievements, abilities and interests which allows them to make informed decisions about improving the quality of teaching and how the school operates. Leaders will not hesitate to make changes to the timetable for individual students so that their achievement can be improved. For example, leaders enabled a student to access a course of work in small animal care which resulted in higher levels of motivation and therefore accelerated progress in other subjects.
- Pupil premium and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding are used effectively to support students' achievement. Leaders have used this funding to increase the level of support given to students during lessons. They have also increased the use of alternative provision courses, providing counselling services, music tuition and intensive support to the youngest students, aiding their transition into school. Individual students make excellent progress, and this is a testament to the effective intervention plans that leaders put in place.
- Teachers who lead subject areas have clear systems for the analysis of data and actions related to students' achievement. They, along with senior leaders, always act on any cause for concern related to how well students are progressing in their subjects. No stone is left unturned in enabling students to make the most of their learning.
- Highly developed programmes of study greatly enhance students' learning and behaviour. British values are strongly promoted by the school's own values, assemblies, religious education and provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Many opportunities are taken to raise students' self-esteem, for example, through praise in lessons and certificates in assemblies. Staff are positive role models and students have strong relationships with them. This accelerates students' development in moral and social aspects of their learning. Cultural development is enhanced through the school's global curriculum and opportunities in assemblies to debate religious and political issues.
- Older students, including sixth formers, receive independent careers guidance alongside effective support from within school, enabling them to make informed decisions about the future. Students are well prepared for life after school as they get the opportunity to spend significant amounts of time at local colleges before starting on full-time courses there. Students consistently express the desire to achieve and to progress to further education, employment or training.
- Safeguarding meets requirements due to effective leadership in this area of work. Risk assessments, checks on the suitability of staff and plans for the use of physical interventions are well managed. Leaders have an effective oversight of the schools' use of alternative providers ensuring the quality of the courses and the progress, attendance, behaviour and safety of the students. The school's support for vulnerable students is tenacious.
- The local authority provides some oversight about the quality of the school. The majority of the school's effective support and challenge comes from the teaching school and local educational partnership.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very supportive and proud of the school. They are well organised into committees, meet regularly and are led by a well-informed and committed Chair of the Governing Body. They are driven to provide the very best educational experience for the students at the school.
- Governors have a particular strength in ensuring that staff and other resources are effectively deployed. They make informed decisions about expenditure and clearly take into consideration the impact of this spending on students' achievement, including those eligible for the pupil premium.
- They have a strong understanding of how well students achieve and the quality of teaching, through information provided by the headteacher, the challenging questions that they ask and from regular visits to the school. They have rightly identified that the increased use of the vocational learning centre can have a significant impact on raising students' achievement further.
- The recent reconstitution of the governing body has enabled the introduction of new governors who have been able to further support and challenge the work of the school.
- Governors are vigilant in the way that they oversee students' safety and welfare.
- Governors have a clear overview of the performance management of teachers and they ensure good performance is rewarded. They know what to do should there be any underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. From their starting points, students make excellent improvements in their behaviour over time. Leaders are clear that the purpose of the school is to enable students eventually to manage their own behaviour effectively. This approach ensures that students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Students demonstrate pride in their school environment. There is no litter or graffiti and there are relatively few instances of damage to property.
- Students are exceptionally positive about their school experiences. During a discussion with an inspector one Year 7 student said that 'staff always keep their promises' and 'this helps us to behave'.
- Students are punctual to lessons and move around school in a sensible manner. High levels of adult support are provided during break times and lunchtimes to enable students to interact positively with one another.
- Most of the students improve their attendance over time. There has been a reduction in the proportion of students who are persistently absent. There is a small minority of students who have exceptionally challenging times in their lives where attendance at school becomes a lower priority for them. The school works hard to ensure they get back to school as quickly as possible.
- The school keeps track of students' behaviour while on alternative placement to ensure that it is of a similar high standard to that expected in school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students appreciate the high level of care that is shown to them. The arrangements for the regular training of staff in child protection and the use of physical interventions are a strong feature of the school. The deputy headteacher ensures that any concerns expressed by staff or students about safety are followed up and resolved.
- Students report that there is a very small amount of bullying. However, when these instances occur students always have an adult to report this to and action is always taken to stop this happening. Inspectors observed an occasion where derogatory language was dealt with immediately and effectively by a member of staff.

- Students are able to access their personal mobile phones during break and lunchtimes. This enables staff the opportunity to teach the appropriate use of these devices. They use these phones sensibly and students reported that they are not aware of any incidents of cyber bullying within school.
- The governing body makes sure that the recruitment of staff is conducted in a robust way. Key staff are trained in how to appoint staff, ensuring the safety of students. Comprehensive induction procedures are in place for new staff. This means that all staff are clear about how to spot any signs that students may be at risk both in and out of school.
- The school's arrangements for fire safety and site security and safety are extremely good. Staff are well trained in risk assessment for activities both on and off the school site. The use of alternative provision by the school is well thought out. The headteacher ensures that students are either appropriately supervised while at other places of study or that there are the necessary precautions in place to ensure students do not come to harm.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers have very high aspirations for learning and behaviour and this is reflected in focused planning for each student's progress. Without exception, teachers use accurate assessment information to inform their planning for the students' next steps. Teachers also check students' understanding throughout lessons and intervene accordingly.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. School leaders know the staff team well; they use their diverse skills well to ensure the maximum achievement of students. Most lessons are taught by subject specialists, which support the consistency of high quality teaching.
- The teaching of reading is highly effective. Students receive all the support they need to make accelerated progress.
- Resources are used well to engage the students. In a Year 11 English lesson the teacher used photographs on the interactive whiteboard from the film 'Fast and Furious 7' to explore the theme of sexism. This resulted in a lively debate which the teacher used to accelerate students' learning.
- The space provided for specialist facilities in design and technology, physical education, art, science and food technology is a strength. School leaders acknowledge that they could make better use of the vocational learning centre to raise achievement further.
- The school uses an effective mixture of activities to help students make progress in mathematics. Throughout the curriculum, teachers regularly provide students with opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and undertake investigations. Over time students see the importance of mathematics in everyday life and by the time they reach year 11 students achieve challenging qualifications in GCSE, functional skills or entry level mathematics.
- Time is used effectively both throughout the school day and within lessons. Inspectors observed teachers change their planned lesson to meet the emerging needs of students and therefore make the most of the learning. In an art lesson, the teacher quickly established the abilities of a new student to the school through her skilful use of questioning and ability to create an instant rapport with him. Armed with this information the teacher quickly moved the student on to a suitably challenging activity.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together. Despite the challenges of limited meeting time, staff make sure that they liaise effectively with one another before, during and after lessons. Together they ensure that the students receive the support that they need to make progress in all areas of their development.
- The school does not apply a consistent approach to feeding back to students about their work, including the marking of books. However, students are clear in each lesson and with each teacher about how

feedback will be given and how they can act upon it. Inspectors observed the staff selecting the right moments to share their thoughts about students' work with them. One example seen by inspectors was, 'Do not let your drive for perfection hinder your progress; sometimes things do not turn out how we expect, but that does not mean failure – just a different angle of success'. This considered approach ensures that feedback has maximum impact, and is deeply personal to the student.

- Students' behaviour is managed with considerable skill during lessons. When students present challenging behaviour it is calmly managed so that learning can resume. The staff team are exceptionally skilled in negotiation and have a clear desire for students to be successful at managing their own behaviour.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most students enter the school with skills and knowledge below what would be expected for their age, especially in English and mathematics. As a result of the school's work students make excellent progress from their starting points and achieve very well in many areas, especially in English.
- Achievement in reading is excellent. School leaders and key staff put considerable effort into the identification of students who require additional support with reading, including those students with dyslexia. Once identified, highly effective interventions are put into place, including the use of one-to-one tuition which accelerates students' progress. This effective support for reading soon has an impact on the improving achievement of students in other subjects and most importantly during examinations.
- The external accreditation and qualifications on offer to students between the ages of 11–16 mean that they are very well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training. The school has worked closely with local colleges to understand their entry criteria. This knowledge has allowed leaders to create a curriculum which allows students the opportunity to achieve, while ensuring they can continue in education after they leave school. On very rare occasions and in order to boost students' self-confidence, the school has entered a few students early for their GCSEs.
- Sixth-form students and those who access alternative provision for part of the week achieve well on challenging, accredited courses, and improve their behaviour and key personal development skills which aid their future transition to college placements. Students in the sixth form successfully attain an appropriate range of vocational qualifications, including diplomas in construction, carpentry and motor vehicle maintenance.
- Due to the nature of the students and the size of the school, there are no significant differences in the achievement of groups. Students eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as others. School leaders look closely at the achievement of all students each term and put in place individual plans to support learning.
- Children looked after by the local authority achieve well and are exceptionally well supported by staff at the school during their time going into or leaving care. This effective pastoral support means that students can undertake their examinations and coursework even during these very challenging times.
- In lessons, the school's most-able students are challenged by teachers to achieve their personal best. Students' books clearly demonstrate that teachers have matched the abilities of the most-able students to the work they receive. During a history lesson about Ghandi, the teacher used questions which allowed the most-able students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning, while including the whole class.
- There is an overwhelming trend of higher achievement by students who have accessed the school for the longest periods of time and who attend well. Due to the complex nature of students' behaviour and the challenges to their learning, students start to benefit from the school's work at various points throughout their education. Students work files and books demonstrate excellent progress during topics of work and individual lessons.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding because informed decisions are taken to provide an appropriate curriculum for students. The headteacher displays an intense interest in the success of these students and keeps in regular contact with the vocational education and post 16 co-ordinator who organises their curriculum. The headteacher also personally liaises with the alternative providers, who deliver many of the courses, to ensure the quality is of the standard he expects.
- Leaders ensure that students are safe while their courses are delivered by alternative providers. The school has robust systems in place to ensure the staff working with the students during these courses are suitable to do so. The sixth form curriculum and pastoral support also mean that students are taught to keep themselves safe in different environments and work places.
- Inspectors and school leaders observed the exceptionally positive behaviour of students in the sixth form. Students show an excellent attitude to their work and a desire to learn more. During a bricklaying session delivered by an alternative provider, inspectors observed the outstanding subject knowledge of the tutor and very positive relationships with students that he had created. This resulted in the students producing high quality work of industry standard.
- Students benefit from excellent, tailored careers advice in the sixth form from an independent advisor and knowledgeable school staff. This advice ensures students have every opportunity to make the best choices about their next steps and therefore have every chance to succeed.
- The admission criteria for the school's sixth form mean that only the students who would benefit from the curriculum and support stay on. Most students successfully access local colleges. Teaching is outstanding. Individual programmes of work and externally accredited courses are in place for all students. This structure ensures high levels of student motivation and engagement. Students said that they feel well supported and cared for in the sixth form, which helps them to be successful. Their achievement is outstanding.
- Throughout their time in the sixth form, all students have the opportunity to continue developing skills and knowledge in English and mathematics. As a result, students make progress in these areas of work and quickly make links about how these key skills benefit them in the working environment. Inspectors observed a sixth form student using his English and mathematics skills to cost menus for use when he got his own flat.
- Sixth form students are excellent role models for the younger students. They display very mature behaviours and are trusted by staff to undertake responsible jobs around school. These older students make a significant contribution to the school. An example of this is how one of the sixth form students, who is a world champion stick fighter, coaches younger students in mixed martial arts.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122162
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	449442

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernard Ingram
Headteacher	Conor Renihan
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2012
Telephone number	01604 878977
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