

Inspection of an outstanding school: New River College Medical

Ifor Ward, Highgate Hill, Archway, London N19 5NF

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2021

Outcome

New River College Medical continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils appreciate being in this small and nurturing school environment. They feel safe and value the positive difference it makes to them. Pupils spoke confidently about the school being a safe space for all. Bullying is not tolerated.

Each pupil has an individual plan which supports them to attend well. Attendance at 'The Lodge' provision has improved significantly. Very strong professional relationships exist between staff, pupils, and parents and carers. These are based on trust and clear communication. Staff at the hospital build a rapport with pupils very quickly.

Pupils are rightly proud of how well they learn. They know that teachers help them do their best. Adults have very high expectations of all pupils. They organise work to ensure that pupils are successful in their learning. Each pupil has a timetable tailored to their specific interests and needs.

Leaders provide individualised support and guidance for pupils when they leave the school. For example, pupils have transition plans to help them get off to a strong start at the colleges they go on to attend.

Adults confidently use personalised strategies to help pupils to manage their own behaviour. Careful planning helps pupils to feel safe and secure, and make the most of the curriculum on offer.

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

Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils are able to achieve exceptionally well. They are highly ambitious for all pupils.

Leaders plan the curriculum carefully for each pupil. This includes making sure that pupils can take qualifications that match their future aspirations. Individual programmes meet each pupil's needs and interests, and incorporate the right level of support for pupils to

succeed. Parents are extremely complimentary about the school and the support provided for their children.

The curriculum is well planned to build on pupils' prior learning. When pupils join the school, teachers carry out comprehensive assessments of each pupil. These checks identify gaps in knowledge and inform the future planning of pupils' personalised programmes.

Staff on the 'Ifor Ward' plan learning which is closely linked to what pupils are currently studying in school. Although pupils typically attend for very short periods of time, staff are highly attuned and responsive to pupils' needs. Comprehensive information is gathered about pupils and this is used to build personalised and ambitious curriculum programmes covering a range of subjects.

Reading is a priority, especially for those who need the extra support. This includes a well-planned phonics programme where appropriate. Leaders recognise the crucial role that reading has in accessing all elements of the curriculum. They have put in place clear routines to support the development of pupils' reading. Pupils show a love of reading and are enthusiastic to show how well they are progressing. Teachers give careful thought to the books that pupils read. They select texts that reflect pupils' interests, but also engage and develop pupils as readers.

Leaders keep staff fully informed about pupils' needs, including any changes that they need to be aware of. Staff know pupils very well and encourage them to recognise and talk about how they are feeling. Leaders and staff provide excellent levels of support for pupils' well-being and behaviour. This is because they understand which strategies work best for each individual pupil. As a result, pupils are able to increasingly focus on their learning.

Leaders plan very well for pupils' personal development. They have an ambitious programme to support individual needs. A wide range of support is available. Activities on offer include therapeutic boxing and horse therapy. Pupils receive high-quality support to prepare them for life beyond school, for example they are taught how to use public transport. Pupils also learn ways to manage their emotions and behaviour. This helps to increase pupils' readiness for their next stages of education. This is a clear priority for leaders and staff.

Adults encourage pupils to build good relationships with one another. Pupils learn about tolerance and respect. They try to put what they learn into practice in the way they speak to one another. Teachers build in time for pupils to discuss topical issues and encourage all pupils to contribute. Content is carefully selected to reflect pupils' interests and needs. Pupils learn to express their ideas respectfully and confidently. For example, in an assembly linked to the Pride celebrations, pupils readily shared their views on why the concept of Pride is important.

Staff appreciate the time leaders provide for them to reflect on their practice. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is well established across the school, including on the Ifor Ward. Staff are confident about how to deal with concerns, including how and when to involve external agencies. Professionals meet regularly, as multi-disciplinary teams, to check that any potential safeguarding issues are identified and managed swiftly.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are vigilant to pupils' needs, wherever they are being educated. They are fully aware of individual pupils' contexts and also work closely with families to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or 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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in October 2011.

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 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 school and 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 [here](#).

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	134274
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10192566
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	
Headteacher	Sharon Kelly Nigel Smith (Executive Headteacher)
Website	https://newrivercollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school provides different types of provision. Pupils attend 'The Lodge' for full-time education. Some pupils receive education at home. Leaders also provide education on the Ifor Ward at the Whittington hospital.
- There has been a change in the chair of the management committee since the last inspection.
- A new head of centre has taken up post since the previous inspection.

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the head of centre, the deputy headteacher, the school business manager, other members of the leadership team, teachers and support staff. They also met with the chair of the management committee and four other governors. They spoke to pupils and parents, medical professionals and a representative of the local

authority. They also visited lessons. This included a home visit and a visit to the Ifor Ward.

- Inspectors did deep dives in reading, science and personal, social, health and economic education. This involved visiting lessons, talking to pupils, looking at their work and speaking to teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about safeguarding and looked at documentation, including the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff.
- Inspectors looked at responses from seven pupils and 20 staff to Ofsted's surveys. They also considered seven written comments from parents and carers.

Inspection team

Sophie Welch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jude Wilson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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