

# Inspection of The Garden School

Wordsworth Road, London N16 8BZ

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|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Inspection dates:         | 3 and 4 December 2024 |
| The quality of education  | <b>Good</b>           |
| Behaviour and attitudes   | <b>Good</b>           |
| Personal development      | <b>Good</b>           |
| Leadership and management | <b>Good</b>           |
| Early years provision     | <b>Good</b>           |
| Sixth-form provision      | <b>Good</b>           |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding           |

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school has high expectations for all pupils. It is working effectively to establish these aspirations through recent strengthening of the school's curriculum and the accreditation routes available to pupils. Across the school, from the early years through to the sixth form, pupils' futures are carefully considered. Students in the sixth form study towards qualifications, awards and accreditations. These prepare them well for adulthood and their next steps in education or employment.

Staff build positive working relationships with pupils. They get to know pupils well. Pupils trust the adults they work with. As a result, behaviour across the school is mostly settled and calm. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe in school.

The school provides a range of experiences to nurture and develop pupils' interests and talents. This includes working with professional actors, musicians and dancers and visiting local theatre groups. Pupils participate in weekly enrichment visits to forest schools and adventure playgrounds. Pupils are encouraged to take care of themselves and be respectful of each other. Through a range of special days and assemblies pupils are encouraged to understand and respect other religions and cultures.

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

The school has designed a new ambitious curriculum, which is being established. The school has thought about the key knowledge and skills pupils need to learn and remember in most subjects, including in the early years and sixth form.

Subject curriculums are mostly ordered so that pupils build on their prior knowledge. Sometimes, when the detail of what pupils need to learn over time is not specified, pupils do not learn new knowledge in a way that enables them to build their learning securely. Sometimes, pupils have gaps in their prior knowledge that mean they cannot build on previous learning to access more complex ideas.

There is a clear structure to lessons. Pupils are familiar with class routines. This helps them settle well in lessons and means learning is rarely interrupted. There are opportunities for pupils to rehearse what they know and can do. This enables teachers to check for understanding and recall. However, there is some variability in the way teachers carry out these checks. This means that sometimes, teachers do not have a clear idea of where there may be gaps in pupils' recall or understanding and what each pupil needs to learn next.

Since the last inspection, the school has taken swift action to improve the teaching of phonics. There is a systematic approach to this. Staff who teach early reading have secure knowledge of phonics. Teaching closely follows the phonics scheme as it is intended. Pupils read books that are matched to the phonic sounds they know. As a result, pupils' outcomes in phonics are improving.

All staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They work with specialist behaviour teams and therapists. They share expertise and devise personalised plans that meet pupils' specific needs.

Children in the early years work and play alongside each other well. Across the school, pupils learn ways to communicate their needs and to ask for help. This strengthens and encourages pupils' independence and resilience. Typically, pupils attend school regularly and leaders have robust procedures in place to improve attendance.

Pupils and students in the sixth form take part in regular outings in the community, such as bike rides or visits to local markets, museums and galleries. They apply what they have learned in school to real-life situations. This includes work experience placements at local cafés and businesses. The schools' careers curriculum teaches pupils functional and life skills. This helps to support pupils who leave the school to continue their studies with other providers or to take up supported internships.

The school works closely with parents and carers to help them to support their children's education. Regular coffee mornings and workshops delivered by school staff and other professionals cover topics including understanding autism, complex behaviours and supporting communication. Parents said they value these opportunities to come into the school, to meet other parents and to understand how they can further support their children at home.

Current leaders have taken effective action to strengthen the school's work. A specialist priority board of governors has been established which holds the school to account and ensures rigorous checks on the school's effectiveness. Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel that the changes that leaders have made have improved the school. They value the training they receive because it helps them to fulfil their roles.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, the curriculum does not define clearly the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. This means that, in those subjects, pupils do not build their learning cumulatively and securely. The school should set out precisely what it wants pupils to learn in all subjects, so that pupils learn well across the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of teachers' checks on pupils' learning is variable. Sometimes, teachers do not identify or address gaps in pupils' understanding and, consequently, do not set precise enough next steps for them. The school should ensure that it supports staff to use assessment effectively, so that pupils' needs are identified and addressed consistently 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

|                                                   |                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 100311                                                           |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Hackney                                                          |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10323232                                                         |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Special                                                          |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Community special                                                |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 4 to 19                                                          |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed                                                            |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed                                                            |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 200                                                              |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 24                                                               |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | The governing body                                               |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>                    | Jo Clare                                                         |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Raymond Lawrence (interim headteacher)                           |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.the-garden.org.uk">www.the-garden.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>               | 21 and 22 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005  |

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates over two sites. The Garden provision, at Wordsworth Road, London N16 8BZ. The Pavilion provision, at Ickburgh Road, London E5 8AD.
- Since the last inspection there have been three interim headteachers. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2024.
- Since the last inspection there have been changes to the governing body. The current chair of governors was elected in October 2024.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has initiated a priority governing board, which meets fortnightly.

## 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 any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, PSHE and expressive arts. To do this, they met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- 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 senior leaders, teachers and the wider school team.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and other members of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View and the online staff survey. They spoke with pupils to gain their views on the school.

## Inspection team

Kieran Bird, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Canning

Ofsted Inspector

Ruth Harding

Ofsted Inspector

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