

New River College Secondary

Lough Road, London N7 8RH and Golden Lane, London EC1Y 0TZ

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels have failed to ensure that standards across the school have remained acceptable since the addition of a new key stage. Pupils' overall attendance is below that of other similar schools nationally.
- The management committee has not ensured that leaders accurately apply policies and procedures. The standards of education received by pupils vary too much as a result, across both school sites. The school's overall effectiveness is not yet good.
- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Teachers' expectations are not high enough. They do not all use detailed and accurate assessment information to plan for the needs of the pupils they teach.
- Outcomes for pupils require improvement. Some pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points. This is particularly true of the most able pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The performance of Year 11 pupils in the 2016 examinations for science was not good enough. The progress made by pupils in science was weaker than in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement. A number of pupils fail to behave well or attend on time.
- Staff do not always offer timely help for pupils to learn well. Consequently, too many pupils leave lessons or fail to settle.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils say that they feel safe. Inspectors agree that safeguarding procedures are effective. The school works closely with other professionals to support the needs of pupils, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Pupils receive well-planned and effective careers information advice and guidance. The majority progress successfully on to their next stage of education or training.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those educated at alternative provision make good progress because of the effective support they receive.
- A few pupils are successful in obtaining the highest grades at GCSE in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, art and modern foreign languages.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the management committee holds leaders at all levels firmly to account through clear routines and responsibilities, so that there is consistency across both school sites
 - leaders are accurate in their self-evaluation and analysis through close monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupil outcomes
 - staff across both sites work more closely together to share good practice where it exists.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - effectively use assessment information to plan and adapt work to meet the needs of pupils
 - check that pupils know how to improve their own work so that they can make consistently good progress from their different starting points
 - have equally high expectations of what pupils can achieve in all subjects.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by ensuring that:
 - those who demonstrate more challenging behaviour attend regularly, and on time
 - effective and timely support helps pupils remain in lessons.
- Improve the outcomes of the most able who are eligible for the pupil premium.
- An external review of the work of the management committee should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and the management committee have not ensured that teachers' expectations are high enough. The overall effectiveness of the school is not good. While leaders have identified weakness and addressed underperformance, significant differences remain in the expectations of what pupils may achieve between subjects and across sites. For example, within art the expectations for pupils' work is consistent across both sites. However, differences remain between teachers' expectations and the progress made by pupils in science and English. Therefore, leaders are not ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is challenging pupils to make good progress and achieve their full potential.
- Management policies and assessment methods are inconsistently applied. Leaders at Golden Lane have developed behaviour support strategies to meet well the needs of those pupils with more complex needs. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is regularly checked and staff receive advice and support from clinical professionals. However, at Lough Road the systems to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are less stringent. Consequently, too much variation exists in the standard of teaching across the school. The Ofsted staff survey showed that some staff agree that leaders inconsistently apply policies.
- The strategies used to support pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are variable. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they do not always receive clear messages from teachers about their behaviour. For example, pupils who leave lessons without permission do not always receive sanctions for their behaviour. Their teachers do not challenge them when they use derogatory language. During the inspection, learning support staff were much more effectively challenging key stage 3 pupils who were having trouble at Golden Lane than those pupils at Lough Road.
- Staff access a range of training opportunities. However, these are not always targeted at their personal needs and requirements. For example, the staff at Golden Lane receive fortnightly reflective training from the child adolescent and mental health services (CAMHS) coordinator to provide them with advice and assistance to meet pupils' needs. This does not include the staff at Lough Road. Some staff told inspectors that they infrequently share good practice with colleagues from both sites.
- Leaders evaluate the use of the pupil premium. They effectively use the funding to provide mental health support and care for those eligible pupils. However, leaders have not ensured that the pupil premium enables those eligible most-able pupils to academically progress as well as other groups of pupils, and those from similar starting points nationally. This is particularly true of those who took GCSE examinations in 2016.
- Leaders carefully check the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The interim special educational needs coordinator has developed a clear plan to support the work of the school. The funding for special educational needs enables strong support for pupils by a range of professionals including CAMHS. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to catch up in their learning from often low starting points.

- The curriculum offered is broad and suitable at both sites. It meets the needs of most groups of pupils including those most-able and those who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The curriculum provides a balance of academic and vocational subjects. All pupils learn about respect and tolerance. They are appropriately prepared for life in a modern Britain through their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were enthusiastic about the quality of their developing art and music skills, and the end of term extra-curricular reward trips to theatres, cinemas and activity centres.
- Leaders closely monitor the progress of pupils who attend alternative provision. They visit pupils regularly and request weekly reports on the progress they make. Any pupil failing to make the progress expected is swiftly identified so they do not fall behind.
- Local authority support has enabled the school's outreach to be widely developed. An effective range of outreach work is available for local mainstream schools.

Governance of the school

- The management committee has not been effective in ensuring that standards across the school have remained acceptable since the addition of a new key stage. During the inspection, staff did not all apply policies and procedures accurately enough.
- The management committee has not effectively supported leaders in developing their culture and vision of a single school. Lough Road and Golden Lane operate in considerable isolation. Therefore, expectations vary for staff across both sites. Some staff who completed the Ofsted survey indicated that leaders do not communicate a single vision.
- Records of meetings show that leaders and members of the management committee fulfil their statutory duties. Members of the committee have a good level of educational experience, including being senior leaders of local schools and healthcare professionals. They appropriately check financial spending, performance management and the policies and procedures for safeguarding. However, recent developments have not been sharply evaluated. Therefore, teachers' ambitions remain low for some pupils, and standards across the school are too inconsistent.
- The management committee receive regular reports and the sub-committees ensure that 'link governors' have an effective understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The chair of the committee and her members are clear about what needs to be done to improve the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding link governor visits the school regularly to review the single central record of staff recruitment checks. School staff are trained effectively to identify when pupils may be at risk of neglect, abuse, child exploitation, and extremism or radicalisation. They are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff work well with other agencies, including the police safer schools team, to keep pupils safe and provide appropriate intervention, care, guidance and support. Staff and parents who spoke with inspectors agree that the school effectively ensures the safety of its pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations are not high enough. Time in lessons is not always used productively in ensuring that pupils make progress. During the inspection, teachers'

plans at Golden Lane focused on meeting pupils' complex needs. However, the teachers' planning at Lough Road did not always consider individuals' targets to help them improve. Consequently, in some lessons visited by inspectors, pupils were not supported in progressing their learning.

- Teachers and learning support assistants do not all offer timely interventions to help pupils learn well. As a result, when pupils become anxious or distracted, staff are not always successful in calming them to maintain their interest in learning. This is particularly true of a number of pupils at Lough Road who often leave lessons unchallenged. Although support staff ensure that the pupils are safe and offer them help, they take too long to return pupils to their learning.
- Teachers do not plan well for the groups of pupils they teach. Not all teachers use detailed information about the needs of pupils to ensure that they challenge and extend their learning. Where planning is focused on the needs of pupils, they make effective progress from their starting points. For example, key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils were able to create their own 2D drawings and paintings in art because they knew how to develop their work. However, the work seen in some literacy books in key stage 3 showed that pupils were not challenged to complete work appropriate to their needs. Furthermore, pupils who spoke with the inspectors described how they lose interest in lessons when they repeat work. They are more excited when work is interesting and different.
- Pupils' work seen by inspectors shows that their progress varies across subjects. For example, key stage 3 pupils do not apply their writing skills as well in literacy as they do in humanities. Similarly, in key stage 4, Year 10 pupils' work in English is not as detailed as that of Year 11. This variation in progress is particularly noticeable for those most-able pupils eligible for the pupil premium. The work seen in the books of these pupils was not always challenging enough. As a result, pupils do not make consistently strong progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders acknowledge that differences in pupils' progress are a consequence of teachers' varying use of assessment. Inspectors agree that expectations for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not high enough. For example, in some subjects, pupils' work was not assessed in accordance with the school's policy.
- Pupils' reading skills develop well. The least able readers in key stage 3 are able to use phonics to help them read and decode new words. The most able readers in key stage 4 read novels with confidence and include appropriate pronunciation and expression. Both boys and girls are encouraged to read in lessons. As a result, they can communicate well and express themselves both to their teachers and their peers.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully nurtured. As a result, those pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties gain resilience and develop their literacy, speaking and numeracy skills well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Too many pupils over time arrive late or leave lessons without permission. Consequently, this interrupts the learning of their peers.

- During the inspection, inspectors were aware of a considerable number of pupils who failed to remain in lessons. In talking with inspectors, these pupils were clear that their learning was being disrupted. However, they lacked an awareness of how to be successful. For example, one pupil was able to convey that repeated activities caused him to lose interest. However, another explained how they had received reward points because they had not walked out of all lessons. Therefore, pupils are not always clear of the sanctions, expectations and rewards to support their learning. The school's own analysis shows that in 2016, when compared to 2015, fewer pupils shared the view that they learned a lot from lessons.
- Some staff are inconsistent in challenging pupils to improve their behaviour. This affects the self-confidence of pupils because they do not all need to follow the same expectations for learning. Staff who completed the Ofsted survey indicated that the same level of urgency does not apply to all pupils. Inspectors agree that some teachers fail to challenge derogatory language when pupils use it. Consequently, during the inspection, while a number of pupils openly apologised to staff or pupils because they understood their behaviour affected the welfare of others, some pupils were not aware of their actions. In these cases, inspectors observed them using inappropriate language to staff and pupils alike.
- The school's work to support pupils' knowledge and ability to stay safe is secure. Pupils receive information to help them understand forms of bullying and are confident that when issues arise, supportive staff quickly resolve matters. Those pupils who spoke with inspectors were able to describe how they could seek advice and help about many issues, including gang violence, racism and radicalisation, should it be required. Inspectors agree that pupils recognise the important role that their teachers and support staff have in maintaining their positive behaviour.
- The school has a good range of provision to help meet the needs of more vulnerable pupils. Positive working relationships are maintained between the school and other professionals. These include the college education welfare officer (CEWO), the CAMHS team, youth support services, the police safer schools team and the local authority careers service. As a result, the emotional well-being of pupils is appropriately supported.
- Pupils receive well-planned careers information advice and guidance. A number of different trips are coordinated to raise pupils' aspirations and promote their awareness of future employment or training opportunities. The effective careers support ensures that a high proportion of pupils, including those studying in alternative provision, progress successfully on to their next stage of education or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Of the staff who completed the Ofsted survey, 5% indicated that pupils' behaviour was not well managed.
- The regular attendance and punctuality of pupils remains low and below that of other similar schools nationally. While the attendance of pupils overall has improved, there remains a significant difference between the attendance of pupils across both sites. The school's own information on pupils' attendance shows that, last academic year, seven in every 10 pupils attended overall at Golden Lane. However, at Lough Road, less than six in every 10 pupils attended during the same period. Pupils' attendance is therefore not as high as it should be.
- The punctuality of pupils remains an issue for the school. Leaders rightly acknowledge

that this as a focus to improve in their plans for development. However, during the inspection and over time, too many pupils failed to remain in their lessons throughout the day. Staff who completed the Ofsted survey reported that leaders are working towards effectively managing pupils, but issues are not always addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. Inspectors agree that a sharper analysis of pupils' punctuality is required. During the inspection, more than one in every 10 pupils were late to morning or afternoon registration.

- The number of incidents that result in exclusions and the number of disruptions to lessons has reduced over time. However, the number of fixed-term exclusions has risen. The school's own analysis shows that the majority of incidents of poor behaviour relate to verbal abuse by pupils, and this figure has fallen by 11% over time.
- Bullying behaviour has fallen over time. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were confident that when such issues arise, staff carefully deal with them. Furthermore, the school's own survey shows that a high proportion of parents share the view that any bullying is resolved. Inspectors confirmed that the school takes appropriate action to record, analyse and therefore reduce incidents of bullying.
- The behaviour and attendance of pupils attending alternative provision is closely checked. The CEWO visits any pupil failing to attend regularly and leaders review their behaviour and progress with parents or carers. As a result, these pupils are carefully supported to improve their work and overall attendance.
- The school successfully improves the attendance of most pupils from their individual starting points. As a result, they progress their learning. An increasing number of pupils are reintegrated successfully back in to education. Furthermore, a rising proportion leave the school with GCSE examination passes.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Overall pupils do not make good progress from their individual starting points because there is too much variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. While pupils often start with low levels of attainment because of gaps in their learning, some do not make enough progress during their time in school. This is particularly true of the most able pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. A number of pupils do successfully reintegrate back into mainstream education or pass national qualifications at the end of key stage 4.
- The school's own information shows that a higher proportion of pupils at Golden Lane in 2016 made the progress expected of them in mathematics and science when compared to reading, writing, speaking and listening. Approximately one in every three key stage 3 pupils failed to make the progress expected for their age in reading and writing.
- Work seen in current key stage 3 pupils' books shows them to be making better progress in science and mathematics than in literacy. However, the quality of pupils' writing varies between subjects. For example, they develop more detailed writing in humanities, than in literacy. The quality of work of pupils at Lough Road varies between subjects. Key stage 4 pupils' work in English is stronger than that seen in mathematics and science. However, the artwork of current pupils is consistently strong across the school. As a result, all pupils progress well in developing their art skills and techniques from their often low starting points.

- Pupils in key stage 3 develop their reading skills successfully. Most are able to read and communicate effectively by the end of the key stage, so that they are able to progress on to their next stage of education. However, a few pupils that are more vulnerable or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities require specialised help to support their education. Pupils in key stage 4 read with relative confidence.
- The 2016 Year 11 provisional results show that more pupils successfully achieved a GCSE at grade A to G than in previous years. The most able pupils gained a higher proportion of GCSEs in English, mathematics and science when compared with previous year's results. However, the performance of the most able pupils eligible for the pupil premium falls behind other most-able pupils. Only 3% of these pupils achieved a GCSE A grade in any subject. Therefore, the school's use of the pupil premium failed to ensure that those most-able pupils eligible for support made consistently strong progress from their different starting points.
- The school's own information on the Year 11 provisional examination results in 2016, show that around three in every 10 pupils, including those who returned to their home school, were successful in gaining a GCSE at grade A to C in at least one subject. Furthermore, around two in every 10 Year 11 pupils who remained on roll achieved a GCSE at grades A to C in English, mathematics and science. However, the performance of Year 11 pupils in science fell behind that of English and mathematics. Only 6% of pupils who entered GCSE examinations in science were successful.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable make similar progress to their peers. In 2016, a small number of Year 11 pupils were successful in obtaining the highest grades at GCSE in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, art and modern foreign languages.
- The vast majority of pupils who are educated in alternative provision make similar progress to their peers. As a result, very few pupils from this group fall behind and many progress onto their next stage of education successfully.
- Most pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Nine in every 10 pupils who left Year 11 in 2016 and remained in the area gained college places, employment with training or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	100391
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10019633

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	Management committee
Chair	Catherine McClen
Headteacher	Nigel Smith
Telephone number	02076076500
Website	http://newrivercollege.co.uk/
Email address	nigel.smith@nrc.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school caters for pupils from across Islington who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils have a wide range of attainment when they enter the school.
- The school is part of a consortium of three pupil referral units (PRUs) split across four sites in the London Borough of Islington. The New River Secondary PRU is located at Lough Road. It has a satellite centre for pupils with social, emotional, mental health, and behavioural difficulties at Golden Lane. The Primary PRU is also located at Golden Lane. The Medical PRU offers provision at the Whittington Hospital and Elthorne Road, and provides home schooling where necessary. All consortium PRUs have individual Unique Reference Numbers (URNs).

- In September 2013, the key stage 3 provision merged with the New River Secondary PRU. The executive headteacher is responsible for all PRUs in the consortium.
- All pupils have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Some pupils also have moderate learning difficulties.
- Most pupils are White British. A proportion are from African, Asian or Black Caribbean backgrounds. The school has more boys than girls on roll.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding which supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils. The providers are: Westminster Kingsway College, The Boxing Academy and Academy 21 (online learning).
- The school does not receive Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across both sites, many jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. They also visited an assembly and observed during registration and breaktimes. Inspectors discussed learning observed in the lessons jointly visited with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with: the executive headteacher; the head of each site; other senior staff and those with leadership responsibilities; a range of staff including teachers; support staff; and groups of pupils.
- Discussions took place with a parent by telephone, the chair and members of the management committee and representatives from the local authority and CAMHS.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: records of meetings; the work of pupils; assessment information; each site leader's own self-evaluation; improvement plans; and records relating to the quality of teaching and anonymous records of the management of teachers' performance. They also reviewed records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, and checked the school's records relating to safeguarding.
- Too few responses were available for inspectors to take into account of parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors did take account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the school's own analysis of the views of pupils and parents.

Inspection team

John Lambern, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janet Hallett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jill Thomas	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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