

Norton Canes High School

Burntwood Road, Norton Canes, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 9SP

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, increased substantially. The school's assessment information indicates this is set to increase further in 2016.
- This year, rates of progress in all subjects and year groups have improved for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- The gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are below those found nationally and decreasing.
- Teaching is nearly always at least good because teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. They use assessment information effectively to plan interesting and challenging learning that meets the needs of pupils. As a result, standards are improving rapidly.
- Behaviour is typically good in and around the school. Leaders and teachers have high expectations and these are consistently upheld.
- The safety and welfare of pupils is central to the school's work and is effective.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have ensured that a culture of high expectations and aspiration permeates the school. They now have a thorough understanding of the school's performance because they monitor the quality of teaching and learning effectively.
- Middle leaders understand and carry out their responsibilities to monitor the quality of provision in their areas. They take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should.
- Post-16 provision is effective because it is well led and study programmes are carefully matched to students' needs and aspirations.
- Governors have responded very positively to the review of governance. They are now an integral part of school improvement. They challenge, question and support effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although now improving, the progress of boys is below that of girls in English and mathematics in most year groups.
- In a few cases, teachers do not apply the school's marking policy well enough to ensure that pupils know what to do to improve.
- Sometimes, teachers' expectations are not high enough and the most able pupils are not given as much work at the higher levels of challenge as they could.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding and all pupils make at least good progress, particularly boys, by:
 - ensuring that additional support to improve boys' achievement is carefully monitored for impact and adjusted where necessary
 - carefully checking that the advice given to pupils by teachers is consistently supporting accelerated progress
 - ensuring that appropriate levels of challenge are consistently offered to pupils, particularly the most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully established a culture of aspiration throughout the school. The 'Norton Standard' is fully understood by all staff and pupils and has become part of the daily life of the school. This underpins the commitment of all adults in the school to ensuring that pupils achieve the best that they can and that there is a constant focus on how further improvements can be secured. Leaders make sure that pupils' views are taken fully into account.
- Middle leaders now have a central role in improving outcomes for pupils. There is a clear system in place for checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility and the information gathered is used effectively to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- The sixth form is led effectively. Students enjoy their studies, feel well supported to achieve their best and attend regularly. Current Year 13 students are the last cohort to be part of a formal sixth-form collaboration with a local school, which has now come to an end. The number of students has increased in Year 12 and looks set to increase again next year.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have developed a much more rigorous system for monitoring the progress made by pupils and groups of pupils in all year groups. Those at risk of falling behind are now identified quickly and additional support is put in place. As a result, rates of progress for most pupils have improved and boys are beginning to catch up.
- Professional development is planned carefully to meet the improvement priorities for the school. The effective monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior leaders means that they can rapidly identify where a teacher may need additional support, but also where there is good practice that can be shared. School records and the work in pupils' books show that this approach has had an impact on improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is meeting the needs and interests of pupils. For instance, additional time has recently been allocated to English and mathematics and an additional GCSE option was introduced at the request of pupils. Consequently, there is a broad and balanced range of subjects for pupils to study at key stage 3 and a range of interesting options at key stage 4. Leaders of English and mathematics have reviewed and revised their schemes of work for all year groups to ensure that they are preparing pupils for the new GCSEs.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embedded across the curriculum as well as through additional activities such as assemblies, 'Diversity Days', school visits and visiting speakers. Pupils have a good understanding of modern British values because these are overtly promoted. For instance, an assembly seen by inspectors encouraged pupils to think about the different experiences of those living under democratically elected governments and those living under unelected governments. As a result, pupils can speak confidently about democracy, the law, respect and tolerance.
- There is an extensive range of additional activities available to pupils. These include clubs for the majority of sports, revision, chess, computing, reading and science. A range of residential visits are organised each year, many of which support learning in specific subject areas or qualification pathways.
- An effective careers guidance programme is in place, which includes visits to colleges, universities and to events such as the Skills Show. Pupils say that advice provided is impartial and based on their needs and aspirations. The school commissions support from an external careers advice service and all Year 11 pupils have interviews about their next steps. Pupils can request further interviews at any time.
- Leaders actively promote equality. For instance, pupils from the Resource Base are supported by their peers when in lessons or around the school. Pupils say derogatory language of any sort is not tolerated by staff or pupils.
- Pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are used well to improve rates of progress for these groups. As a result, those who need to catch up in English and mathematics are doing so. Improvements in reading have been particularly significant.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The reconstitution of the governing body and appointment of a new chair of governors has had a galvanising effect. Committees have been reorganised to better reflect the school's priorities and to ensure that the right information is received at the right time. Governors are fully involved in planning for improvement and take an appropriate role in monitoring progress against targets. Subject and improvement priority link governors are now well established and they visit the school regularly to gather first-hand evidence of progress. Consequently, governors now have a good grasp of the

school's strengths and weaknesses and are well placed to challenge and support in appropriate measure.

- The governing body carries out all statutory duties. Governors have a strategic overview of the quality of teaching and ensure that only those who meet the teachers' standards progress up the pay scale. They know precisely how additional funding is spent and the impact it is having on improving pupils' progress.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff receive appropriate training and know what to do if they have any concerns. The school works effectively with external agencies where required. Records show that even minor concerns are checked and followed up. The Student Development Centre provides a safe and nurturing environment for those pupils who may need additional support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- In this small school, teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. They use assessment to plan learning that is well matched to pupils' ability and takes their interests into account. As a result, pupils are interested in their work and keen to do well. This has made a notable contribution to the improved rates of pupils' progress.
- Most teachers use questioning very well to assess how well pupils understand new concepts and skills and to support them in explaining and extending their responses. For example, in a Year 13 mathematics lesson, students were working independently on aspects of revision for an examination. The teacher worked with each in turn, asking them to explain how they were approaching problems and why so that they were able to clarify how they were applying mathematical functions and theories.
- All teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for their subject and good subject knowledge. Pupils appreciate this and the vast majority say that they enjoy their lessons. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- The vast majority of teachers follow the school's marking policy effectively, providing useful advice and guidance to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. Inspectors noted that many pupils were responding to comments made and trying hard to take these into account in future work. In the very few cases where teachers' advice does not meet the standards set by the school, leaders are providing additional support to secure rapid improvement.
- The school's policy for challenging the most able is paying dividends. Assessment information shows that this group is making better progress than was previously the case. During the inspection, inspectors saw some good examples of teachers directing pupils to harder work. However, sometimes the most able pupils finish easier work quickly and spend time waiting to be given harder work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All staff, particularly those with pastoral responsibilities, share a common purpose to ensure that pupils are supported effectively to understand how to make the most of their opportunities, get along with each other and to respect different beliefs and points of view.
- Pupils arrive at school and at lessons punctually and well equipped to learn because they understand what it means to be ready to learn. Pupils are proud of their school and of their work, which is demonstrated in their well-presented books. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including online. They told inspectors that form time and assemblies regularly focus on aspects of safety, including cyber bullying, online risks and different types of grooming. Pupils are well versed in how they can reduce such risks and what to do if they are worried about anything. Pupils have great confidence that they can approach their teachers with a problem and be sure of help and action if needed.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare because in this small school everyone knows everyone else. The school's records support this view. One pupil told inspectors that although 'of course we fall out sometimes, there's no point not making up again because we can't avoid seeing each other every day.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All staff have high expectations of behaviour and reinforce these at all times of the school day. Consequently, pupils nearly always behave well in lessons and do not support poor behaviour from others.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school at all times of the day. As a result the school is a civilised and caring community.
- Pupils demonstrate tolerance, respect and an interest in caring for one another in many different ways. Recently, the school has established a programme for Autism Ambassadors. Pupils have received training and actively support pupils with autism in their daily school life. Sixth formers regularly act as mentors for younger pupils, including as reading buddies, and some support pupils in their subject learning as part of their enrichment programme.
- Attendance overall is in line with national averages and better for some groups of pupils. Persistent absence has decreased this year for all groups of pupils. Records for those pupils who attend alternative provision show that their attendance is in line with that of other pupils in the school. Reports from providers note good behaviour and attitudes to learning and these are confirmed by the school's own checks.
- Those pupils who struggle to meet the school's expectations of behaviour are supported through the well-run Student Development Centre, which has been reorganised this year to focus on time-limited, targeted support for such pupils. The positive impact of the provision can be seen in improved attendance and reduction in fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes are not yet good. Although rates of progress have improved significantly overall, the progress of boys, albeit better than in the past, is lagging behind that of girls in most year groups and subjects including both English and mathematics. This is because the focus on improving outcomes for boys has been more recent. However, inspection evidence shows that the actions taken by leaders and managers, together with the good quality of teaching that now exists in the school, are having a positive impact on boys' achievement. As a result, gender gaps are beginning to close, especially for younger pupils.
- The proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs including English and mathematics increased substantially in 2015. The school's records indicate this improvement is set to continue
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress from their starting points, including those in the Resource Base, because their needs are quickly identified and met. Leaders and teachers have high expectations. As a result, pupils are enthused and motivated to achieve their best.
- In 2015, rates of progress in English and mathematics for all pupils in Year 11 were below the national average, although disadvantaged pupils made better progress than other pupils in the school. The school's records for the current Year 11 suggest that pupils are now making more rapid progress in these subjects. Although disadvantaged pupils have made less progress than others in this year group, the gap is smaller than that found nationally. In Years 7 to 10, gaps in rates of progress are closing and are already smaller than those found nationally by the end of key stage 4.
- The school's work to improve rates of progress for the most able pupils has been successful. This is because appropriate challenge is now an integral part of lesson planning. Equally, careful and regular monitoring ensures that where leaders identify a risk of underachievement, additional support and challenge is rapidly put in place. Consequently, the most able are now making consistently better progress, in all year groups and in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress from their starting points because their courses of study are carefully matched to their needs and interests.
- Achievement in the sixth form improved substantially in 2015 and the school's information suggests that further improvement will be evident this year, particularly in academic subjects.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training. In Year 10, all pupils take part in a work experience week, in an area of interest to them, to help them understand the world of work and the skills and attitudes required to be successful.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Since the last inspection, a new leader for sixth form has been appointed. He has revitalised the post-16 provision, established the expectation of continual improvement and improved standards as a result. Consequently students enjoy studying in the sixth form, attend well and demonstrate good learning behaviours.
- Outcomes for students improved last year and are set to improve further this year, particularly in academic subjects, where rates of progress were previously lagging behind those for vocational qualifications. This is because the rigorous monitoring systems used in the main school have been adopted at post-16. As a result, any underperformance is rapidly identified and support put in place.
- Students who begin their post-16 programmes without having secured a C grade or above in GCSE English or mathematics follow appropriate courses to help them improve their skills.
- The sixth form offers a mainly academic curriculum. However, vocational courses are available to those who would benefit from such pathways. For instance, a small group of students with lower than average GCSE grades are very effectively supported in their design and technology qualification. As a result, they are coping well with the demands of the course and making good progress.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use effectively to both support and challenge students. They set high expectations and use a range of strategies to encourage independent study skills in preparation for further and higher education. For instance, in a Year 12 French lesson, well-planned activities enabled students to develop their understanding of how they would be assessed in examinations and how they could apply this knowledge to their personal revision programmes to improve their grades.
- Study programmes meet requirements well because they are personalised to meet the needs and aspirations of students, who are well supported to make appropriate choices about their qualification pathways. Enrichment activities enable students to develop skills and experiences to help them in their future lives, as well as in their chosen careers. All students participate in an enrichment programme that includes supporting younger pupils in a range of subjects through mentoring, work experience matched to their career interests and visits to universities. Consequently, the proportion of students who complete their courses has increased and is now in line with national averages for both boys and girls.
- High-quality careers advice and guidance is provided as part of the enrichment programme. Students have regular opportunities to discuss their next steps with school staff and with an external careers adviser. They feel well supported to make decisions about their futures. As a result, the proportion of students going on to the university of their choice or to appropriate apprenticeships is rising.
- Safeguarding in the sixth form is effective. Daily checks are made on attendance for all students, including those in Year 13 who are participating in the collaborative sixth-form offer, and work placements are checked for suitability and safety. Students say that they always feel safe and that they are able to discuss any concerns with their teachers.

School details

Unique reference number	124395
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10012410

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	406
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Les Bullock
Headteacher	Sara Birchall
Telephone number	01543 514400
Website	www.nortoncaneshighschool.co.uk
Email address	office@nortoncanes-high.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April – 1 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school, with a specialism in mathematics and computing.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision (The Resource Base) for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are looked after by the local authority) is average.
- A very small number of key stage 4 pupils attend courses run by alternative providers at Cannock Pupil Referral Unit, Peak Pursuits and Gartmoor Riding.
- Post-16 study programmes have been run in partnership with Kingsmead School. This has come to an end and Year 12 students now study solely at Norton Canes High School.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the post-16 interim minimum standards, which set the expectations for the attainment of sixth-form students by the end of Year 13.
- A national leader for education from Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust has been supporting the school since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons. Six of these were observed jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Visits were also made to the Resource Base for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and to the school's Student Development Centre. Inspectors visited tutor time, an assembly and observed pupils' behaviour around the school at different times of the day, including breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders, subject teachers, groups of pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning and experiences of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation including pupils' assessment information, the school's development plan and their self-evaluation, policies, documentary evidence of safeguarding, case studies, external reviews and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of 19 responses to the staff survey, 30 parent responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, 19 responses to the additional parents' inspection questionnaire and five letters from parents sent to inspectors during the inspection.

Inspection team

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Tracey Lord

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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