

# Norton College

Independent school standard inspection report

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Norton College is a secondary day school in the village of Norton, near to the city of Worcester. It admits boys and girls from 11 to 16 years of age. There are currently 43 students on roll funded by Birmingham, Worcestershire and Warwickshire local authorities. All the students have a statement of special educational needs for complex social, behavioural, emotional difficulties or are on the autistic spectrum. Most students come from White British families. The college opened in November 2010 and is located in a fully refurbished two-storey building on a small business park. The college is owned by Crucible Education Limited and has a board of directors. The college aims to provide 'individual and personalised learning programmes which are an essential part of each student's learning journey into the world of work, and to becoming a responsible purposeful citizen and taking up their rightful place in society.' This is the college's first published inspection report by Ofsted.

The college has requested a material change to increase the registered number of students from 40 to 80 and to extend the registered age range from 16 to 19 years. The change was considered as part of this inspection.

## **Evaluation of the school**

Norton College provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aims. The curriculum, teaching and assessment are good and, as a result, students make good progress. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good as is their behaviour. Safeguarding procedures, including welfare, health and safety arrangements are good. The college meets all regulatory requirements. The material changes to admit up to 80 students and to extend the age range to 19 years are recommended by the inspector.

## **Quality of education**

The overall quality of education is good. The good curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs and aptitudes of the students. The curriculum is also well developed towards meeting the needs of prospective students aged 16 – 19 years. The college

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

ensures that the requirements of individual statements of special educational needs are fully met through the curriculum. Students join the college from a wide variety of previous educational settings and some students have not attended for long periods of time. The college is successful in achieving its curriculum aim, 'to provide individualised and personalised learning programmes', as it offers a good range of appropriate externally accredited courses for a wide range of abilities. More-able students work towards GCSE qualifications, while lower-attaining students are successfully engaged in a good range of vocational courses. The college has appropriate schemes of work and curriculum planning in place for post-16 students. Students report that they particularly enjoy brickwork, plastering, and painting and decorating. Key skills such as mathematics, science, English and information and communication technology (ICT) are regularly taught. Students have daily opportunities to develop their reading skills and the latest college data indicate that progress in reading is beginning to accelerate. However, opportunities are sometimes missed in reading lessons to fully extend students' skills in inference, deduction or prediction. Assessment procedures are thorough and students' progress is checked regularly. Parents and carers report their children enjoy their lessons but they would like students to receive more regular homework. There are many visitors to the college and off-site visits to enrich the curriculum. Weekly visits to a local animal rescue centre are eagerly anticipated and students are encouraged to take responsibility for walking the dogs and looking after the animals as part of a structured Holistic Education Therapy programme.

A strength of the college is the personal and social development of the students. Parents and carers report that they have observed positive changes in the behaviour and attitudes of their children since attending the college. One parent typically commented, 'My child was out of school for a long time and the college has been fantastic in getting him to learn again.' All students have personal targets and these are monitored daily to ensure that any issues that arise are quickly resolved. Students and their families receive good advice and support regarding health and diet, emotional management, behaviour and relaxation techniques from the Holistic Education Therapy department within the college. Students receive regular advice and support for their future through careers guidance provided by the local Connexions service and undertake work experience placements in Years 10 and 11. Although the college has established links with local colleges of further education, at this point in time no students have gained places to undertake further study.

Teaching and assessment are good and the students make good progress. This is because staff know all the students very well and there are robust arrangements in place for the induction of new students. Lesson plans clearly link to individual education plan targets and ensure that activities meet the needs and interests of each student. Behaviour is well managed in lessons and praise is used judiciously to motivate and re-engage students in their learning. Teachers and support staff work effectively together and as class sizes are very small students receive a good amount of individual help and support. Relationships between adults and students are positive and, as a result, students are motivated to learn and behaviour is good.

Students are referred to Norton College through their local authorities. They receive regular home visits and attend induction days before they start and their educational, behavioural and emotional needs are carefully assessed. Students receive individual tuition, sometimes at home, until they are ready to be integrated into the college. Placing authorities report that they are very satisfied with the quality of education and support received by their students at Norton College. One placing authority commented very positively on the 'inspirational' headteacher and the 'beneficial therapeutic options' available to students and their families.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students demonstrate a sense of achievement and success through re-engaging with their learning and working towards nationally recognised qualifications. This does much to promote their confidence and self-esteem. One parent typically commented, 'my child now loves coming to school and hasn't missed a day, he is more relaxed, more positive and the whole family benefits.' Behaviour is good and is managed in a positive manner by staff. As a result, there is a calm atmosphere around the college. Behaviour logs indicate that when incidents occur students are appropriately supported to 'put things right'. Students, parents and carers report that the 'green card' reward system is effective in improving behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning. Students have a keen sense of right and wrong and have very positive attitudes to learning. They respond well to expectations of appropriate behaviour and treat adults and visitors with respect. Some students exhibit challenging behaviour on entry, but over time their behaviour improves substantially.

The college is particularly successful in re-engaging students in their learning. This is clearly demonstrated in their high levels of attendance. The latest college data indicate that attendance is 95%. As most students come from situations of poor or non-existent attendance, this is very encouraging. Students make a positive contribution to their college and wider community through playing in the football team, competing against other schools in London Olympics 2012 events and undertaking small jobs to keep the site clean and tidy. Adults come from a wide range of different cultures and faiths and are good role models. This has a positive impact on the promotion of students' tolerance of people who are different from themselves. The college has rightly identified that students would benefit from meeting more people from a wider range of backgrounds. The personal, social, health and citizenship curriculum ensure that students have a good understanding of the role of public organisations in England. This provision is often taught in a practical way, such as a demonstration by drugs and explosives sniffer dogs and visits by community police officers and local lawyers. As the college has only been open for just over a year, students have yet to complete examination and accredited courses or move on to further education. However, the college has been successful in re-integrating students back into maintained educational settings.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Procedures to ensure their safety are robust and all the required health and safety policies are in place and they are implemented effectively. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out for activities both on and away from the college site. Students are taught to be aware of potential hazards and how to be safe in practical lessons. Rules are clearly established and students are well supervised at all times. Fire evacuations are practised regularly. Robust procedures for first aid are in place and a good number of adults have been trained, some to a higher level in emergency first aid. All staff, including the designated person, have undergone child protection training at the appropriate level.

Students report that they feel safe in college and are well-supported by staff. The curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship covers key areas such as substance misuse, sex and relationships, road safety and e-safety. Healthy breakfast, break and lunchtime choices are provided. The Holistic Education Therapy department provide nutritious drinks for students as well as health and dietary advice for families. Although the school is a non-smoking site, several students have established smoking habits which the college manages well by restricting opportunities for smoking to a minimum. The school fully meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The college complies fully with the regulations in respect of the checks made on prospective employees. Staff and directors have undergone enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to confirm their suitability to work with students. The single central register contains all of the required information.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The college is located in a fully refurbished two storey office and factory building and provides a good quality environment for effective learning. The premises have been carefully planned to provide spacious corridors, appropriate internal teaching areas, workshops, a good-sized ICT suite and a large gymnasium. The accommodation and facilities can suitably accommodate up to 80 students. The outdoor area is large for the number of students on roll and provides a safe area for recreation. Adjacent to the main building there are further facilities for gardening.

## **Provision of information**

The college has established strong links with parents, carers and outside agencies. Parents and carers are kept well informed through regular telephone calls, home visits and annual review meetings. Almost all parents and carers report that they are kept very well informed about their children's academic progress, behaviour and

personal development. The college prospectus has been recently updated and fully meets requirements.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The college has a clearly written and fair complaints procedure which meets regulatory requirements.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the college meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

### **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the college might wish to consider the following point for development.

- Ensure that every opportunity is taken to extend and develop students' reading skills.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary College		
<b>Date school opened</b>	November 2010		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 39	Girls: 2	Total: 41
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 41	Girls: 2	Total: 43
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 0	Total: 6
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£28,500 to £78,000		
<b>Address of school</b>	Woodbury Lane Norton Worcestershire WR5 2PU		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 359257		
<b>Email address</b>	office@nortoncollege.org.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Hardicker		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Crucible Education Limited		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



10 February 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Norton College, Norton WR5 2PU**

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome and help you gave to me when I visited your college. I enjoyed talking with you and hearing your comments. You told me that you were happy at Norton College and I could see that this was the case in your good behaviour and high levels of attendance. I found that Norton College is providing a good quality of education and that you make good progress. The college ensures that all government requirements are met. You have positive attitudes in your lessons and clearly enjoy practical work such as DJ music mixing, brickwork and helping out at a local animal rescue centre.

I have asked your college to make sure that you are given more opportunities to develop your reading skills, such as discussing the books you are reading and hearing your opinions about the different characters in fiction books.

Thank you for completing the student questionnaire. You told me that almost all of you enjoy coming to college and you feel safe and well cared for by the staff. You also said that you appreciated the opportunity to study for vocational qualifications that will help you in your next steps in education, employment or training.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Marian Harker  
Her Majesty's Inspector