

Norton Canes High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124395
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359655
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Roger Whittaker

This inspection of the school 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 the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	529
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Ellis
Headteacher	Sara Birchall (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
School address	Burntwood Road Norton Canes, Cannock WS11 9SP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 26 lessons and observed 25 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, reports to the governing body and monitoring data in relation to students' progress and the quality of teaching. They analysed 158 questionnaires from parents and carers, 100 from students and 38 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How the school has identified and addressed the reasons for the below national average results in English.
- How well the school has raised standards and so improved the progress made by all students.
- Evidence of student outcomes to support the school's judgements of good personal development.

Information about the school

Norton Canes High School is a below-average-sized comprehensive school. The number of students has reduced since the last inspection. The school achieved specialist college status in 2009, specialising in mathematics and computing. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are well below national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is above average. Provision at post-16 is through a long-standing consortium with two other schools. The acting headteacher was appointed in 2010 and since then the leadership team has changed significantly.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Norton Canes is a satisfactory school. It has made rapid progress since September 2010 following a period of low attainment, and many changes at senior and middle leadership level and with teachers across a range of subject areas. Changes to the curriculum and improved care, guidance support and reflect the senior leaders' better understanding of how to meet the needs of all students. The improvements made in teaching and learning are engaging students more effectively so that behaviour and students' attitudes to learning are improving, and their progress is satisfactory. As a result, attainment has improved, especially in English, and the percentage of students on track to gain five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics is significantly closer to national average. This improvement is evident in the satisfactory and often good learning and progress being made in lessons and through the school's strong tracking data. The school effectively identifies students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Specialist support is provided and ensures that all individuals and groups of students achieve at the same rate.

The improved provision is recognised by students who support the view that this is a rapidly improving school. In discussion, they reported that they feel safe in and around the school because they were confident that there was always someone to help and that incidents were dealt with effectively. Students' good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle is reflected in the high take up of physical activities and the healthy food provided by the canteen. Students enjoy school and this has resulted in improvement in attendance figures, which are now above average.

The school has satisfactory capacity not only to sustain current levels of performance but also to improve further, as shown by its track record of improvements since September 2010. These include managing the considerable changes in staff and addressing areas of underachievement, especially in English, where challenging school targets are on track to be achieved. The headteacher and senior leaders provide clear direction for the school's work. A large majority of the staff are committed to improving their performance and recognise the improvements that are taking place. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and the school's improvement plan identifies the right priorities. The impact of the mathematics and computing specialisms cannot yet be seen in lessons across the curriculum, where the use of technology to support learning is variable. There is still some inconsistency in the school's reviewing of new developments. The school's monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is sometimes over-generous, which results in teachers not always been clear about what they need to do to improve their teaching. As a result, activities in lessons do not always meet students' varying needs or match their prior attainment.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure consistency in the quality in the quality of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - regularly monitoring the implementation of new developments so that the school is clear about its actions on the impact on outcomes for students
 - increasing the rigour with which staff monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching by focusing on what teachers need to do to improve as well as celebrating their good work.
- Ensuring that teaching is good in all lessons so that:
 - students have regular verbal and written feedback so that they know what they can do and how to improve during lessons
 - work is always matched to the prior learning of different groups of students
 - activities enable students to take more responsibility for their learning by developing and using independent learning skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students join the school with broadly average attainment. During the past two years, students leaving the school have attained below the national average for five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. However, the present Year 11 students are on track to attain broadly average standards by the end of the year. This represents a significant and rapid improvement in the school's performance since September 2010 and students' achievement is now satisfactory. At the same time, intervention strategies being used to ensure that students at risk of underachieving, especially in English and mathematics, are proving successful. The progress of individual students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is in line with the overall rate of satisfactory progress. Data show that such students are doing much better. Learning and progress in lessons are satisfactory and, at times, good. In an English lesson in Year 10, students were immediately engaged in group activities, which enabled them to use well developed independent learning skills. The teacher's creative question and answer session meant that the learning of all students in the group was assessed. This improvement in teaching is helping to ensure that students are on track to achieve the school's challenging targets.

Students' attitudes to learning and their ability to apply themselves in lessons have improved significantly over the last year. Behaviour in lessons is good with students making effective contributions to their learning, especially in lessons where teaching is stimulating. Students show a good understanding of how to be safe and respond well in adopting safe practice in practical lessons. Students say that incidents of bullying are rare, but that there are always members of staff who will help and action is taken quickly. Students have a good understanding of how to be healthy and, as a result, the take-up of physical activities is high. Students are involved in a range of activities where they are able to take on responsibilities in the school, however, opportunities to contribute to the

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wider community are restricted to only a few of them. The school council has a strong voice and has helped to bring about many changes in the school, for example the change of uniform and the extended canteen facilities. Students show respect to other students and adults and engage well with groups from different ethnic, religious and social groups. Students demonstrate good spiritual, moral and social skills. Cultural development is evident in opportunities within the curriculum but engagement with different cultural groups is only available to a small proportion of the students.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has significantly improved and is now satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned and tasks are well matched to students' abilities. Students are motivated by interesting activities and good working relationships between students and with the teacher are evident, creating a purposeful learning environment. Teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about their subject and transmit this enthusiasm to the students. In a mathematics lesson, where the teacher planned the lesson so that they worked on tasks appropriate to their prior learning, students worked in small teams using different resources to develop and use their skills of working out ratios in real life situations. The students were well supported by teaching assistants who focused on groups of students who had special educational needs. Despite the improvements in teaching, there remain some inconsistencies which restrict the progress made by students

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in some lessons. Opportunities are sometimes missed to promote students' development and use of independent learning skills, and tasks are not always matched to students' ability. The use of assessment, including marking, is too variable to enable students to know what they can do and how to improve.

The school has recently developed the curriculum to further meet the needs of students so that it is now satisfactory. The curriculum for Year 10 and Year 11 students includes a wider range of vocational courses using extended services provided by local colleges such, for example hair and beauty, motor vehicle and construction. Different groups of students are catered for through additional courses, such as a fine arts course, for more-able students. To address the poor results in 2010, more curriculum time has been given to English. Despite the improvements in the curriculum, a few students still feel that their needs are not fully met and while the specialist status has increased the take-up of the specialism subjects, there is still a lack of information and communication technology across all subjects. Extra-curricular activity includes a broad range of activities including sport and the arts and student take up is good.

Students, together with their parents and carers, appreciate the care and support provided by the school. The tutor system has resulted in good relationships between students and their teachers. Students say that teachers are always available to help them. The support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities results in them feeling safe and happy around the school. Transition arrangements are effective and ensure that students, when they join the school, settle quickly and smoothly. Support for students so that they understand the opportunities available to them for further education, training and work at the end of Year 11 is provided by the school and the careers support worker. However, the system by which students are able to review their progress has not yet had a significant impact on their results.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive and enthusiasm of the very effective headteacher has focused the school on raising standards. She faced significant challenges, including a decline in standards, on taking up the post. Well supported by a newly structured senior leadership team, the headteacher has transformed the school by creating a culture of high expectations that is supported by a large majority of the staff. Resources are used effectively and management structures have been changed to better support the requirements of the school and its students. Intervention strategies have been introduced which have played a significant part in improving students' progress. Roles and responsibilities are clearly

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defined and staff are increasingly held to account for their actions and for outcomes. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the quality of leadership and management, at all levels, resulting in variation in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and in the implementation and monitoring of planned improvements. Self-evaluation has identified appropriate areas for improvement and suitable plans have been put in place to tackle them.

The school recognised the importance of communicating with parents and carers. Systems are in place to make sure that parents' and carers' views are taken into account through parents' and carers' focus group meetings and that issues raised with the school are quickly and effectively dealt with. The school has a range of partnerships with schools, colleges and outside agencies which are increasingly supporting students' learning. The school's promotion of equal opportunities ensures that all students have access to curriculum options and extra-curricular activities. Recent interventions have ensured that all groups of students are making progress at the same rate. The school's approach to community cohesion is at an early stage. The school has identified gaps in the provision but has not yet addressed them all, for example students do not have opportunities to engage with communities which have different cultural groups from their own.

The governing body is enthusiastic in their support for the school. However, its members do not take a lead role in holding the school leaders to account for their actions and outcomes. Safeguarding procedures are good. All staff receive regular updates to training in order to ensure that students are safe. The school has well-developed systems for reviewing and updating all policies and procedures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress relative to their attainment on entry to the sixth form. There is no significant variation between different groups or courses. The students make satisfactory progress so that, by the end of Year 13, their A level and BTEC results are in line with national averages. Progress is well tracked and there are intervention strategies to ensure that students keep on course to achieve their target grades. Students take an active part in the life of the sixth form and integrate well with students from other schools within the consortium. They are mature in the way that they manage their movements around the consortium. Attendance is in line with national average and punctuality is good. Students appreciate the wider opportunities available to them through the consortium. The students develop independence and demonstrate this by taking responsibility for their own study. Students feel well supported by teachers.

The quality of teaching is improving. It is consistently satisfactory and, in a minority of lessons, it is good. In the best lessons, planning, subject knowledge and opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills are common features. However, as in the rest of the school, not all lessons excite and engage students fully and tasks do not always take account of students' prior learning. In those lessons where students do not learn as well, teachers often talk for too long and students become passive and disengaged from their learning. The curriculum remains satisfactory but there has been a broadening of vocational courses since the last inspection. Students are well cared for and have good knowledge of the opportunities for further and higher education, training and work available to them at the end of Year 13. However, although regular progress reviews are well embedded this is not yet reflected in improvement in attainment. The strategic and day-to-day leadership of the sixth form is based on a clear vision of what sixth form education should provide. However, some developments are at an early stage and are not yet bringing about the improvement needed to raise standards further. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires were positive about the school. However, a small proportion of them had concerns about a few aspects of the school, particularly about how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and about how well the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team found that the school has recognised the issue relating to unacceptable behaviour and has implemented behaviour management strategies that have significantly improved it, both in lessons and around the school. Leaders have also worked

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hard at improving the systems by which they engage with parents and carers, including setting up focus groups, which enable them to have a better understanding of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Norton Canes High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 158 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 529 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	19	103	65	23	15	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	47	30	106	67	3	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	24	107	68	10	6	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	20	115	73	9	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	23	15	123	78	9	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	14	111	70	18	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	13	113	72	18	11	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	19	107	68	13	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	18	115	73	10	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	18	95	60	26	16	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	15	106	67	22	14	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	27	17	120	76	4	3	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	25	104	66	8	5	3	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



1 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Norton Canes High School, Cannock, WS11 9SP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited you recently. We were pleased with how mature you were in answering our questions and helping us to find our way around the school. We decided that yours is a satisfactory school and that the headteacher and staff have worked hard to make sure that the school has made significant improvements.

The standards that you are achieving by Year 11 are in line with the national average. This is because teaching has improved and is consistently satisfactory and sometimes good. The curriculum is also meeting your individual needs more effectively. This means that you are better prepared to move onto the next stage of your education, training or work. You are increasingly willing to contribute to the running of the school and to take on roles of responsibility, which enable you to be part of the decision-making process. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is much improved. Your headteacher and staff are enthusiastic and committed to continue to improve the work of the school.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

Ensure that all leaders and managers monitor how well you learn in lessons and regularly review the school's improvement plans and their implementation

Make sure that teachers enable you to develop and use independent learning skills in lessons, set tasks which meet your individual needs and give you verbal and written feedback so that you know what you can do and how to improve in lessons.

You can help the school by continuing to behave well and to contribute even more to your learning in lessons.

I wish you well for your future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Whittaker
Lead Inspector

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