

Nortonthorpe Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107804
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	356244
Inspection dates	11–12 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Carrie Birch
Headteacher	Mr Dennis Shields
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven lessons were observed and six teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with a small group of parents and carers, pupils representing the school council, three members of the governing body, staff and two representatives of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, whole-school data for tracking progress, safeguarding documentation, the school development plan, and two case studies of pupils. Inspectors also analysed the responses to questionnaires returned from staff, pupils and three parents.

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

- The achievement of the more able pupils throughout the school, those with learning difficulties in literacy and Year 11 pupils in their vocational courses.
- The effectiveness and consistency of behaviour management by all staff in lessons to promote good behaviour and learning.
- The rate of improvement in attendance to determine how well good attendance is promoted and how effectively persistent absence is reduced.
- The stability of the current leadership arrangements and the development of middle leadership in building the capacity for improvement.

Information about the school

Nortonthorpe Hall School serves the whole of the Kirklees authority in providing for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and some have a range of additional needs, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), general and specific learning difficulties in literacy and/or dyspraxia. Most pupils are White British and there are currently no girls on roll. A large majority of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils join the school disaffected with learning and with a history of disrupted education due to poor attendance and exclusion from their previous schools. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced turbulence in leadership. The governing body and the local authority implemented an action plan in May 2010 to settle the school, which resulted in the appointment of an executive headteacher and the strengthening of the senior management group. The school no longer operates from a split site as all pupils at Key Stage 4 are now accommodated in the main building. The roll has fallen by a third and most members of the governing body are recently appointed.

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

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Under the excellent leadership of the executive headteacher, and with good support from the senior management group, the school has effectively improved the quality of teaching, raised pupils' achievement and ensured good quality care, guidance and support since September. This has resulted in a more settled and secure school environment, rapid improvements in pupils' attendance from very low levels in recent years to broadly average levels now, good improvements in behaviour and in pupils' re-engagement in learning.

Most pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment and in recent years standards have remained low throughout the school. Since September 2010, standards have rapidly risen so that all pupils are on course to meet or exceed their challenging targets to reach broadly average standards, including the more able. Nearly all pupils in Year 11 are now on course to achieve at least five A to G grades. Some pupils are on course to achieve a GCSE grade C in art and in information and communication technology (ICT) but there are fewer opportunities for them to take appropriately challenging GCSEs in English and mathematics. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are making good progress in their vocational courses. Although most pupils at Key Stage 2 make good gains in reading, the progress of pupils in literacy, including those with learning difficulties in literacy, is satisfactory because their skills in reading and writing are not always improved rapidly enough.

Teaching is now at least satisfactory and sometimes good. All teachers have good relationships with pupils and good subject knowledge. Learning tasks are generally matched well to pupils' different levels of ability. However, where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, information about pupils' prior attainment is not always used to extend the learning of more-able pupils. Sometimes lesson time and resources are not used to good effect. Occasionally, teaching assistants do not support the teacher well in managing behaviour, particularly low level disruption, such as calling out when others are talking. Nevertheless, behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally satisfactory and pupils feel safe. The satisfactory curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to participate in sport, which enables them to exercise and stay healthy. A strength of the curriculum is the nurturing approach provided for pupils at Key Stage 2, which builds their self-esteem and enables them to re-engage with learning and settle into school quickly.

Members of the governing body know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have begun focused visits in key areas, such as safeguarding to hold the school to account for its work. Middle leaders are currently developing their roles with good support from the senior management group. However, they have yet to be fully involved in decision making, observation of the impact of teaching on learning and progress within their areas of responsibility, and the implementation of their action plans. Given the effective monitoring of teaching and learning by the senior management group, which has led to

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rapidly rising standards and good recent improvements in provision, the stability of the senior management group and the accurate use of self-evaluation to identify areas for further improvement, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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?

- Raise achievement by:
 - - ensuring consistently good learning and progress in lessons
 - - extending the opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 4 to prepare for GCSE English and mathematics
 - - ensuring that pupils at Key Stage 2 accelerate their learning in literacy so they make rapid gains in reading and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - - the information about pupils' prior learning is always used to extend the learning of more-able pupils in lessons
 - - all lessons proceed at a brisk pace and resources, including targets on display, are used to promote good learning and behaviour
 - - teaching assistants always support teachers in managing the behaviour of the whole class.
- Strengthen leadership by enabling middle leaders to:
 - - assume more responsibility in making decisions about improvements in their key stages and subjects
 - - implement their action plans for improvement
 - - observe and record the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress and use the outcomes of their observations to identify further areas for improvement and refine their action plans within their areas of responsibility.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory rather than good because, despite the rapid progress they have made in learning and the sharp rise in attainment from low to broadly average since September 2010, the legacy of underachievement in 2010 has impacted on their progress over time. The learning and progress of all pupils, including those with additional special educational needs are, therefore, satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, pupils at Key Stages 2 and 3 have made good progress since September from their prior attainment. They are on course to meet their challenging targets in English and mathematics and reach average standards in these subjects, although the development of literacy skills is not always accelerated fast enough at Key Stage 2. In lessons, pupils were generally focused on their tasks, they tried hard and made at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Occasionally they were noisy and lost concentration, particularly when the work was not challenging enough for more-able pupils. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have made equally good progress with their

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examination courses, particularly in reaching broadly average standards at GCSE. Most pupils are on track to achieve six or seven GCSEs at Grades A* to G, including mathematics and English. Some pupils achieve the higher grades in art and ICT but not in English and mathematics. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are making satisfactory progress in work-related learning and vocational skills. Pupils in Year 11 were seen to be making good progress in their construction course at the Build Academy, a local provider of vocational training, and are on track to gain accreditation, which provides them with opportunities to follow a diploma course in construction. All pupils in Year 11 will transfer to local colleges of further education, which is a marked improvement from 2010, when only 80% entered further education or employment.

Satisfactory behaviour in lessons enables pupils to learn and make progress. Their broadly average attendance, together with broadly average attainment in English and mathematics, prepares pupils adequately for the next stage of their education. Some pupils make healthy choices at lunchtime. They enjoy sport and were seen to exercise vigorously at break time and lunchtime when playing football or when using the outdoor equipment. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to their community through the school council and in fund raising events for charities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. As they grow in confidence, they develop a sense of morality, as seen in rapid improvements in behaviour and they learn to collaborate with others. Pupils develop an understanding of different cultures and traditions.

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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

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How effective is the provision?

In half the lessons seen teaching was good and it was never less than satisfactory. This represents significant recent improvement in the quality of teaching and is consistent with the school's own view. Pupils show respect for teachers and usually follow instructions because teachers maintain good relationships with them. Good subject knowledge ensures pupils acquire new knowledge and skills rapidly. Lessons are usually brisk and lively but this is not always the case. Where the pace of lessons slows, pupils become noisy and sometimes lose interest. Although behaviour is usually managed effectively, there is sometimes an acceptance of low-level disruption in lessons and the teachers' attempts to reduce this are not always reinforced by teaching assistants. As a result, pupils are not always given consistent messages about what sort of behaviour is acceptable. Sometimes there are missed opportunities to use resources to motivate pupils or refer to the display of targets to promote good behaviour. There has been good recent improvement in the use of assessment information by teachers for planning, target setting, in marking, and for matching learning tasks to different levels of ability. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend the learning of more-able pupils.

The curriculum has a broad range of subjects and is relevant to pupils' needs at all key stages, with an emphasis on promoting literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education. This makes a positive impact on pupils' learning and personal development. Satisfactory opportunities for participation in sport using local facilities, such as the leisure centre, promote healthy living. The school is extending its recently introduced nurture curriculum in Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. This has resulted in pupils' increased enjoyment of learning, recent good progress and a sharp reduction in incidents of unacceptable behaviour in lessons. There is an appropriate range of examination courses and vocational subjects available to older pupils, although limited opportunities for them to learn English and mathematics GCSE at a suitably high level. Links with local colleges and providers such as the Build Academy are enabling pupils at Key Stage 4 to sample a range of taster courses to guide them into making informed decisions about their futures. These include motor vehicle mechanics, hair dressing, catering, and fire services, where students have the opportunity to pursue BTEC diplomas when they leave school.

Good promotion of attendance, through consistent target setting and close work with the local authority and parents and carers, has led to rapid recent improvements in the rate of attendance and a sharp decline in the rate of unauthorised absence. Good guidance and support has also resulted in a vast reduction of challenging behaviour, rates of exclusion and pupils leaving the school premises. Pupils who find themselves in potentially the most vulnerable circumstances make rapid gains in confidence, improve their behaviour and attendance, and make progress which is as good as that of others, as a result of the school's effective links with outside agencies and the involvement of parents and carers in reviews.

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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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher and senior management group have successfully instilled a shared vision for the school amongst all staff, in providing a calm and dependable environment where pupils re-engage with learning and make at least satisfactory progress. Their drive for improvement is shared by middle leaders, but they have yet to develop fully their roles in monitoring teaching, implementing their actions plans and taking responsibility for decision making in bringing about improvements. The new governing body is supporting the school in ensuring that statutory requirements are met and has made a start in visiting the school as a critical friend. Pupils' safety and well-being is assured through the satisfactory promotion of safeguarding, where all requirements are met. The school has developed satisfactory partnerships with local colleges of further education, the Connexions service, outside agencies, local businesses and the pupil referral service to promote pupils' learning and well-being. There are satisfactory links with parents and carers and the school is focusing on developing these further. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily, with an emphasis on strengthening links within the local community and local schools. This has already led to an increase in the confidence locally and within the school community. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory and the school tackles discrimination soundly, as seen in the sharp decline in the number of racist incidents. The school makes suitable use of its resources to ensure satisfactory pupils' outcomes and as a result it provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The few parents and carers who returned their questionnaires hold very positive views of the school, which were also confirmed in discussion with a small group of parents during the inspection. They believe the school is well run because the school is now a much calmer place. They believe that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively, that their children are safe and the school meets the needs of their children well. They said that their children are making enough progress. There were no concerns expressed by parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Nortonthorpe Hall 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 3 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 51 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
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)	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

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.



18 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Nortonthorpe Hall School, Huddersfield, HD8 9JU

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We were impressed by the improvement in your attendance and in your behaviour and attitudes to school. You told us how well you are now doing and that you are working harder in lessons. Here are more things we found out about your school. Nortonthorpe Hall provides you with a satisfactory education. The good care and support you are given enables you to make the rapid progress in your personal development. Satisfactory teaching has led to satisfactory achievement and you are now reaching the same National Curriculum levels as pupils in mainstream schools. The nurture class helps the youngest pupils to settle into learning quickly and the oldest pupils are doing well in their examination courses. Your school is well run by the senior staff.

To make your school even better, I have asked the staff to make sure that:

- you achieve even more, particularly in GCSE English and mathematics and in developing your literacy skills faster
- teaching is lively and makes good use of resources to help you learn, enabling faster learners to learn even more, with all adults in the classroom helping each other to manage behaviour
- your teachers with special responsibilities check how well you are doing and use this information to make more improvements.

Good luck in your examinations and keep trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Lead Inspector

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