

# The Norton Knatchbull School

Hythe Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 0QJ

**Inspection dates** 28–29 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher reinforces high standards and drives improvement with determination, vision and ambition.
- Students achieve well, particularly in mathematics and science where their progress exceeds expectations.
- The sixth form is good. A sharp focus on monitoring achievement and attendance means that students make good progress from their starting points. Girls integrate successfully and achieve well.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school. They set challenging targets and monitor the quality and impact of teaching carefully.
- The school is a respectful and tolerant community, in which students feel safe and behave well. They are keen to do well and they attend regularly.
- Teaching is good, and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge which is clearly communicated. They value and benefit from well-managed training opportunities to improve their practice.
- The curriculum meets students' needs and expectations and equips them well for the future. Students take full advantage of additional opportunities to develop interests and skills, for example in sport, the arts and extra academic subjects. Music is a particular strength.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is as good as the best. Some lessons do not challenge all students fully or encourage them to think deeply enough.
- There are too few planned opportunities across all subjects for students to develop their reading, writing and communication skills.
- Teachers' marking does not always provide enough detail for students to understand and act upon specific areas for improvement.
- The proportion of GCSE and A-level A\*/A grades is not high enough in some subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching and learning in 41 lessons, including some with members of the school leadership team. They attended two assemblies.
- They held meetings with students, parents, staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and the school’s external advisor.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school’s development plan, its analysis of how well it does, an external review and current assessment information.
- They discussed professional development and the quality of teaching and learning with teachers and school leaders. They also considered support for students who need additional help, and the use of the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for students in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Inspectors took account of 63 responses on Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and 69 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Russell Bennett, Lead inspector	Seconded inspector
Patricia Metham	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Terence Cook	Additional Inspector
Wendy Walters	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in April 2012. It is a slightly larger than the average-size secondary school.
- The school caters for boys in Years 7 to 11. The sixth form is co-educational; girls make up about one fifth of the sixth form roll.
- The school is selective on intake in Year 7. The ability of boys on entry is in the top 25% of the Kent ability range.
- Around one fifth of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds; the largest group is of Nepalese heritage.
- A below-average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The proportion of disabled students and those supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The standards achieved by students exceed the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expected levels for students' attainment and progress.
- A very small number of students attend off-site provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that more is outstanding and none is less than good, by making sure that teachers:
  - have consistently high expectations of what all students can achieve in lessons
  - mark students' work using a consistent approach, which clearly identifies specific areas for improvement and allows students to reflect on how they can make better progress
  - challenge students to think deeply and allow them to develop more confident communication skills through structured discussion
  - pay further attention to improving students' reading, writing and communication skills in all lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment at GCSE is consistently high. As their attainment on entry to the school is also high, these good results are to be expected. The progress that students make in mathematics and science is particularly strong and sustained. Their progress in English is not as consistent so, although GCSE scores remain well above the national average, students' achievement overall is good, rather than outstanding.
- High numbers of students gain A\*/A grades in a range of GCSE subjects, but their performance was stronger in some subjects than in others in 2012. The school now has a much more rigorous achievement tracking and monitoring system in place and indications are that standards are likely to improve further in 2013.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make as much progress as others. Careful individual tracking by the school's inclusion team is ensuring that any identified underachievement is quickly addressed with high-quality, targeted support for individual students. The school carefully monitors the performance of different groups of students, taking swift and effective action where underachievement is identified. As a result, the gap between the performance of a small group of students who speak English as an additional language and others is closing.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve well, benefiting from individual guidance and high-quality support from student-support managers. Their average point score at GCSE is higher than the average score achieved by all students nationally. The gap between the achievement of these students and others in the school is small.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Results at A and AS levels compare favourably with the national picture, although there is some variability across subjects. Systems for monitoring students' progress and attendance are very effective. Students are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment with effective, supportive guidance given to each student.
- Although students usually make good progress in lessons, sometimes this is not as rapid as it could be because the level of challenge is not high enough.
- The school makes use of early GCSE entry only in exceptional circumstances, and for very small numbers of students, who benefit from taking some examinations early.
- Most parents expressed confidence in students' progress and these views are supported by inspection findings.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching across the school is good and some is outstanding. Lessons are calm and generally purposeful. Relationships between staff and students are good; students say that teachers are supportive and that they get help when they need it.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this supports the good progress made by students in most lessons. In some lessons, however, the range of activities is limited and the teacher spends too long asking questions which do not always challenge students to think more deeply.
- Where teaching is outstanding, all students are expected to participate fully. Teachers ask probing questions, which encourage students to give detailed, considered answers. The pace is brisk and activities are varied and designed to stimulate and sustain students' interest. In an outstanding geography lesson, for example, there was a ripple of excitement when a live graph, plotting real-time population growth, was displayed on the whiteboard; the teacher's skilful questioning encouraged students to deepen their understanding and think about the global impact of the rapidly increasing number. Students were then required to justify their answers, which resulted in thoughtful and high-level responses.
- In the best lessons, activities are clearly designed to encourage students to develop their independence, working things out for themselves, or with others. Where teaching is less

effective there are not enough opportunities for students to build confidence in taking responsibility for their own learning.

- The school has recently introduced a marking system based on 'what went well' and 'even better if'. Students report that this is helpful and enables them to improve their work. However, this practice is not yet fully embedded across all subjects, and does not always give clear enough guidance to students about how to make work better in the future.
- The teaching of reading, writing and speaking is not consistently good across all subjects and this means that students do not have enough opportunities to develop these skills as rapidly as they might.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students are very positive about the school. They feel safe and say that bullying is rare and that when it does happen the school acts swiftly to resolve the situation. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and know how to keep themselves safe on the internet. Most parents support these views. Students show tolerance towards each other and are respectful to staff.
- Exclusion rates are low. The school can demonstrate many examples of the impact that targeted support has had in improving the behaviour of individual students over time.
- Students from all year groups mix very well together. There are many opportunities for them to take on responsibilities and the sixth form provides strong role models. Prefects and mentors provide very good support for younger students.
- Attendance levels are high and the school has well-developed systems for tracking the absence of all groups of students. Effective support is given if the attendance of an individual student becomes a concern.
- The school has strong reward systems, which are highly valued by students, motivating them to achieve and to contribute to the wider life of the school.
- Students display excellent manners and behave very well in corridors and around the school site during all times of the school day. They are polite and courteous to visitors and are punctual to lessons.
- Sometimes students take a less active role in lessons than they need to, and do not work with independence, relying on direction from the teacher to motivate them, rather than working things out for themselves. Although most students are prepared to work with others in groups, some contribute less than others and occasionally lose focus, which hinders their progress.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has a relentless focus on improving the school. Her vision is that 'only the best will do', and that every member of the community can actively contribute to achieving excellence in all areas of the school's work. She has worked tirelessly to bring improvements to the predecessor school and this approach has gained even more momentum since the school became an academy. One parent said, 'There has been nothing but change since the new head arrived, but it's all good.'
- The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Rigorous systems are in place for monitoring the quality of teaching, including regular walks around the school, checking on lessons with heads of department and reviewing the progress that students are making in all key stages. Whole-school professional development is suited to the individual needs of staff and the skills of the best teachers are being used to support and coach others. The impact can be seen in the increasing amount of teaching which is good or better.
- The arrangements for managing the performance of staff are strong and effective. As a result, the headteacher has a very clear view of the impact that teaching has on students' achievement. Senior leaders make use of detailed tracking information to hold teachers

securely to account; good performance is recognised and rewarded.

- The leadership of reading, writing and communication across Key Stages 3 and 4 is less effective, and senior leaders are aware that these areas of the school's work need to be more robustly monitored, to enable rapid progress to be made by students in all subject areas.
  - Senior leaders have identified that performance in the sixth form, while good, could be improved. They have clear, detailed plans to bring improvements to the range of courses on offer, in order to strengthen and build upon current arrangements from September 2013.
  - Students study a wide range of courses at Key Stages 3 and 4, providing them with a broad and balanced programme of study, which also offers opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. There is an extensive choice of after-school clubs and activities and students join in with enthusiasm. The school has a particularly strong tradition of musical excellence, with students regularly performing in national venues.
  - The school monitors carefully the achievement and progress of the very small number of students who attend off-site provision. There is close and effective liaison with the local authority pupil referral unit and hospital tuition services for those students attending each provider.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. The new Chair of the Governing Body has only been very recently elected, but has a clear view of the school's performance and is well supported by the long-standing Vice-Chair. Governors have a clear view of where the school needs to build on its successes and bring further improvements. They review the quality of teaching and are aware of where this is having the greatest impact on the achievement of students and where it is less successful. They are in the early stages of monitoring the use of the pupil premium, though they are aware of the achievement of eligible students and the use of additional staffing to support the progress of these students. They make effective use of data to monitor the performance of different groups of students in the school. They regularly review the performance of the headteacher and have a clear view of the pay and performance of all staff at the school. Governors check rigorously that statutory policies are regularly updated and reflect all current requirements. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough, including: safe recruitment, regular child protection training and health and safety checks.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138019
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	403726

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,020
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	282
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian Richards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Susanne Staab
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
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