

Norton Canes High School

Burntwood Road, Norton Canes, Cannock, WS11 9SP

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although achievement is improving, it is not yet good. The progress made by some groups of students, such as the more-able in science and mathematics, is not rapid enough.
- The teaching does not consistently engage all students. Some teachers do not match work to students' abilities, use questioning to develop their understanding or encourage them to become more independent in their learning.
- There is considerable variation in the quality and frequency of marking. Information gained through marking is not used quickly enough to help students who are falling behind.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not get high enough grades at AS and A level.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at grades at A* to C has improved year on year for the last three years.
- Achievement in English has improved significantly since the last inspection. Students are now making at least the expected level of progress and many are doing better.
- Students are well behaved in lessons and around the school and, as a result, a calm learning environment is evident.
- Senior leaders and governors have shown drive and commitment in moving the school forward and have had a notable impact on the quality of teaching and the achievement of students since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, of which six were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and groups of students. Inspectors also spoke with many students informally, in lessons and around the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information showing students' progress over time, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of seven responses from the Parent View website, and the questionnaires completed for the inspection by 24 staff. They also considered the results of surveys of students and parents and carers carried out by the school.

Inspection team

Deborah James, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Jarvis

Additional Inspector

Victoria Bishop

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average secondary school with a sixth form.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is average.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- Sixth form provision is part of a consortium arrangement with Kingsmead School and Staffordshire University Academy.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 undertake part-time alternative courses at Nova Training, Veolia Environmental, Peak Pursuits and South Staffordshire College

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring lessons provide motivating and challenging activities matched to students' different needs
 - ensuring that teachers use a greater range of strategies to encourage all students to answer questions in lessons
 - giving every opportunity for students to work independently, through group work, discussions and independent research.
- Ensure students, including those in the sixth form, make good progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics and science, by:
 - making sure that all students receive regular feedback on their work through good-quality marking that gives purposeful advice on how to improve and then allows students time to respond to this advice
 - making good use of the school's assessment information to intervene rapidly if students fall behind
 - developing clear strategies to support the more-able students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased each year for the last three years, and faster than nationally, and is now close to average.
- Since the previous inspection, actions taken to strengthen weaker teaching have led to improvements in overall rates of progress. Lesson observations and the school's data show that most students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, are making at least the progress expected of them.
- More-able students, particularly in mathematics and science, do not make the expected level of progress, as a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, a lack of challenge in their learning activities and poor marking that does not guide them effectively in how to improve.
- Consistently good teaching in English has had a notable impact on the attainment of all students in that subject.
- The underperformance of a small group of boys in 2012 has been addressed through changes to the curriculum, including the use of alternative off-site provision, and better teaching. Current data show boys and girls achieving in line with each other.
- The school has carefully considered whether it puts students forward early for GCSE mathematics and English. Currently no students are sitting their examinations early.
- The school carefully tracks the progress of all students. However, not all subject leaders act quickly enough on this information to provide additional support for students who are not keeping up.
- The gap between the grades of students eligible for the pupil premium funding and other students is closing as a result of money well spent on additional staffing and activities, such as small-group work to develop literacy and numeracy skills.
- The grades achieved in the sixth form are below national standards at both AS and A level. However, there are clear signs of improvement, and the progress students make is broadly comparable to national levels.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies; much is good but some requires improvement. During the inspection, the following good features were seen in the majority of lessons: very positive relationships between teachers and students; a number of activities to keep the pace of learning high; and students who were prepared to work hard and were aware of their target grades.
- In the best lessons, the work is challenging and students make good progress. In these lessons, teachers plan carefully to take account of prior learning and teachers' questioning is used well to delve into students' understanding and measure progress. In a French lesson in Year 8, for example, the teacher engaged all the students through good questioning that helped them to

use new vocabulary and gave them the confidence to succeed and deepen their understanding

- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers' passion and enthusiasm for their subjects are highly motivating, leading students to make rapid progress with challenging activities.
- In some lessons, teaching requires improvement because the work is not sufficiently matched to the different ability levels of all students in the class. In these lessons, students continue with their work but do not make as much progress as they might because their tasks are either too difficult or too easy.
- When questioning students, teachers too frequently only take answers from students with their hands up. As a result, many students do not answer questions. Students do not have enough opportunities to work independently or with their peers.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported by teaching assistants in lessons and also receive more focused individual support if necessary. In the most effective lessons, teaching assistants plan in detail and tailor the learning to individual students so that students make good progress, but this is not consistent practice.
- The quality of marking varies considerably across the school. There is good marking in French, geography, English and health and social care. In these instances, students receive frequent feedback on the quality of their work and good advice on how to improve. In other subjects, including mathematics and science, marking is often cursory and consists only of ticks and few comments.
- Teaching in the sixth form shares the same qualities as teaching across the rest of the school and, therefore, requires improvement, as it is not yet good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In lessons, the vast majority of students work hard, behave well and show a keen interest in their work. Students were keen to tell inspectors that they enjoy school.
- Around the school, students conduct themselves sensibly and are well mannered and welcoming to visitors.
- Systems for dealing with the rare instances of misbehaviour have been strengthened. As a result, there is a good, consistently applied system of rewards and sanctions that gives students a clear understanding of how they are expected to behave at all times. Fixed-term exclusions, which were already low, continue to fall.
- Bullying of any form is very uncommon. Reported incidents are dealt with immediately and firmly. Students are well informed on how to stay safe and understand the harm that racist or homophobic name-calling can cause.
- Attendance is improving and is in line with national levels. The school carefully monitors attendance and takes rapid action to ensure students attend school regularly.
- Students feel very safe in school. They feel confident that any problems will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially by staff. The school's surveys show that parents and carers agree

that the school keeps their children safe.

- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because there are a few students for whom the support provided to improve their behaviour is not fully effective.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and most of the leadership team have been in post for two years. In that time, they have secured the confidence and full support of staff, students, parents and carers. Morale is good, and governors, the senior team and middle leaders are committed to leading improvement in all areas of the school's work.
- The performance of teachers is managed rigorously by senior leaders and the governing body. Underperformance is challenged and a range of support strategies is used to improve the quality of teaching if the observations of senior staff show that it is not consistently good. There is a comprehensive programme of training. As a result, the proportion of good teaching within the school is improving rapidly and inadequate teaching is very rare.
- The range of taught courses is now carefully adapted to meet students' needs and aspirations well. The most-able students are encouraged to pursue a wide range of GCSE courses and there are a number of more vocational pathways, including some provided off-site, to ensure all students are engaged and motivated by their choice of course. Students are able to participate in an extensive range of lunchtime and after-school activities.
- The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is honest and accurate. Improvements made to teaching, to students' behaviour and to the sixth form since the time of the previous inspection, together with a rising trend in examination results, all provide secure evidence of the school's good capacity to continue improving.
- The school has made good use of local authority advisors to support the development of the school's systems to track students' progress. The local authority has also helped heads of department review the quality of teaching and learning within their departments.
- Leaders recognise that the development of literacy and numeracy across the school is an important element in raising attainment. Literacy development has recently been enhanced, following a new appointment and whole-staff training. Inspectors saw evidence of effective use of key words in many subject areas and some use of prompt sheets for punctuation. However, less progress has been made in the development of numeracy outside of mathematics lessons.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is given a high priority and, as a result, students have a good understanding of how to communicate, behave and appreciate other cultures. Enrichment days have been used to raise money for homeless charities, and multicultural art work is used to good effect in public areas of the school
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. The challenge of small numbers has been met through carefully coordinated work across three schools, including shared tracking of students' achievement.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because teaching and students' achievement, although improving, are not consistently good.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governors bring a wide range of personal skills and professional expertise to the school. They are committed to challenging poor teacher performance, believing firmly that every child has a right to good teaching. They ensure that the arrangements for checking and improving teaching are thorough, and that teachers' pay rises are linked closely to students' achievement. They understand how the school budget is spent and how funding for the pupil premium can be used to close gaps in the achievement of different students. They ensure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding students, are met.

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

Unique reference number	124395
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	406240

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	467
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Ellis
Headteacher	Sara Birchall
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2011
Telephone number	01543 514400
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