

Norton Hill Academy

Charlton Road, Radstock, Bath and North East Somerset, BA3 4AD

Inspection dates 17–18 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides the school with outstanding leadership. He is supported well by senior colleagues.
- Students achieve well, including in the sixth form, because teaching is usually good and some is outstanding.
- Achievement fell in 2012, but the school is now on track to meet, or exceed, the good standards in previous years.
- Students with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. The achievement of those students known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with other students and is improving.
- Senior leaders and key subject leaders keep a close check on students' progress and swift actions are taken when necessary.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary and there is an extremely positive climate for learning where students want to succeed and do well.
- Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the life of the school. The senior leadership team and the governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching constantly and take effective actions if they judge it is not good enough.
- The sixth form is good. Through the federation and links with the local college, students are provided with a rich curriculum that meets their needs and aspirations well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently strong enough to enable students to make outstanding progress.
- Not all subject leaders check the quality of teaching and its impact on students' progress carefully enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, 11 jointly with the headteacher or another senior leader. Inspectors also conducted a number of student pursuits, following individuals and small groups of students over a sequence of lessons. In lessons, inspectors looked at students' work and discussed their progress with them.
- Inspectors held meetings with five groups of students. They also used lunch- and breaktimes to hold informal discussions with many other students around the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, several middle leaders, and a member of the governing body.
- These meetings included discussions about school policies and procedures, the analysis of data and documented information, and records provided by the school, including records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and tracking students' progress. The lead inspector worked with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to analyse the school's data on the progress being made currently by students in each year group, including those in different groups, such as those supported through the pupil premium and those with special educational needs.
- Discussions with senior leaders and with a member of the governing body included the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- No lesson observations were possible on the second day of the inspection as the school was closed for students due to poor weather.
- Inspectors took account of the 82 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 76 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as the school's own surveys of the views of parents and carers and students.

Inspection team

James Sage, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Malcolm Davison	Additional inspector
Mary Hoather	Additional inspector
Kate Rick	Additional inspector
John Taylor	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Norton Hill Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportions of students who need extra help (supported through school action, at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs) are all lower than average, but rising.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked after children, those eligible for free school meals and children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces) is well below average, but rising.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2012.
- The school converted to become an academy school in June 2010. When its predecessor school, Norton Hill School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be an outstanding school.
- The academy has been federated with the neighbouring Somervale School, to form the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, since 2010. The two schools have the same headteacher,, the same governing body and share sixth form provision. The inspections of the two schools took place at the same time and were coordinated.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students who exceed expected levels of progress, making all teaching consistently at least good, and increase the amount that is outstanding by:
 - making sure that all lessons challenge all students, including the most able, to achieve as well as they can
 - ensuring that all teachers use the information they have about individual students' previous and current achievement in planning their lessons and in their teaching
 - improving teachers' use of questioning to provide opportunities for all students to be involved in discussions, to probe understanding and track students' progress, and to develop key teaching points
 - making sure that oral and written feedback to students is clear about their next steps
 - ensuring that all lessons, as appropriate, develop further students' skills in literacy, communication and numeracy, and in taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Ensure that all subject leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching and the impact on students' achievement in their subject.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Until recently, students entered the school with attainment well above average; that is changing and the current Year 7 and 8 students had average attainment when they joined the school. By the end of their time in the school, the attainment of many students is well above the national average. Although attainment fell significantly in 2012, particularly in English and to some extent in mathematics, the school is now on track to achieve the high standards of previous years.
- Close analysis of the school's own data and evidence from lesson observations show that the very large majority of students make good progress. However, the proportion making progress exceeding expectations is not high enough for achievement to be judged to be outstanding, although the proportion is rising. Achievement in English has improved significantly from the 2012 examinations and the slight decline in mathematics has been reversed. Achievement across a wide range of subjects is strong. These improvements are well established in all year groups.
- Students with special educational needs are supported extremely well, particularly in developing their skills in literacy, communication and numeracy. This sets them up well to make good progress.
- Those students known to be eligible for free school meals do well and their examination results compare favourably with other students. The achievement of these students is improving to be in line with national averages for all students.
- In a few lessons, students, including the most able, are not challenged sufficiently to make as much progress as they could.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form. In all subjects, achievement is at least in line with the national average and is better in some. All groups of students achieve well, although boys could do even better.

The quality of teaching is good

- Inspectors agreed with the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching. Teaching in all subjects, including in English and mathematics, is good and some is outstanding.
- In good and better lessons, students work with enthusiasm, contribute well when invited to do so, support each other and make at least good progress. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of approaches to maintain students' interest, and skilfully use questioning to probe understanding and to develop key teaching points.
- Some good lessons are prevented from being outstanding because the use of questioning is not so well developed, a minority of students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve as much as they could or students are not provided with opportunities to develop the skills to work independently – the work is too teacher directed.
- Students' work is usually marked thoroughly to indicate the stronger and weaker features. However, in some cases, the 'next steps' for the students are not clear. There are examples of good practice, for example in mathematics, which could be applied in other subjects.
- In a small proportion of lessons, teachers use a narrow range of approaches and this inhibits the progress students make. Some teachers do not make full use of the information they have about each student's previous and current achievement in planning their lessons or in their teaching.
- Those students with special educational needs are supported well in lessons, particularly in developing key literacy and numeracy skills, so that they make good progress.
- Group work is used well and lessons show that students' literacy and numeracy skills are being developed effectively, although occasionally opportunities to develop communication skills are missed.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. A variety of effective approaches are used and students develop independence well. Some teaching needs to take better account of the differing needs

of students in the group. Students are provided with good information and guidance about their next steps.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Attitudes to learning and the behaviour of students are exemplary. They respond well to lively and engaging teaching, and try their best even when it is not. Consequently, their excellent behaviour contributes to their learning and to that of others.
- Students are extremely courteous and well mannered, and show great respect for each other and for the adults in the school. They contribute well to the very positive ethos in the school and have, and apply, a well-developed moral code. Sixth form students provide excellent role models.
- Students feel very safe. They have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying; bullying is uncommon and students are confident that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The positive views of the students are supported well by those of their parents and carers and by staff.
- Attendance is high. Students move around the school during lesson changeover with a clear sense of purpose and are punctual so that most lessons start briskly and efficiently.
- Students are highly appreciative of the wide range of activities and events the school provides and many participate enthusiastically. This contributes well to their enjoyment of school.
- Students' views are valued highly by the school's leaders. The points they make are often perceptive and informative.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, and for the federation, and is relentless in driving improvement.
- The senior leaders and the governing body, supported well by an external consultant, have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and the priorities for further development. The very honest self-evaluation was essential in clearly identifying aspects of the school that required improvement that had been masked by the high attainment of previous years.
- All systems and procedures are much tighter and better focused on improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement. The headteacher has been effective in developing the skills of other senior leaders and key middle leaders.
- There are robust systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and for tracking students' progress. Senior leaders do this extremely well across the school and it is working well in the core subjects. However, some other subject leaders are not yet as fully involved. The five heads of house are also involved in tracking students' overall progress, but some tutors need more training in this key aspect of their role.
- The performance management of teachers is rigorous and there are clear links between teachers moving to the upper pay spine and the quality of their teaching and the achievement of the students they teach. Senior leaders and the governing body are absolutely clear about where teaching is not good enough. They have put in place support for some teachers, with clear targets for improvement, and plans for robust action where necessary.
- A range of whole-school professional development approaches are matched well to the improvements required in teaching. The next stages for subject areas and individual teachers are yet to have the full impact required. There are good plans to make use of the range of expertise across the federation.
- The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form meets the needs and aspirations of students well and fully prepares them for the next stages in their education, training or employment. The curriculum is frequently checked to ensure it meets these needs. The federation is used well to provide good breadth and a wide range of subjects. Students are

provided with good information, advice and guidance about post-16 courses and, for some, the local further education college provides more suitable courses. No recent leavers are classed as 'not in education, employment or training' and this is testament to the quality of post-16 provision.

- There is a well-planned and coordinated approach to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, although this is less secure in developing a deep understanding of wider cultural issues in the United Kingdom.
- The additional funding the school receives through the pupil premium is used well. Focused support to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of those students entering the school who need it most ensures that they make good progress throughout the school and achieve well. Students with special educational needs achieve well. The attainment of those students known to be eligible for free school meals, as indicated by their average points score in GCSE examinations, is rising and compares favourably with that of other students. The good achievement of all groups demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's promotion of equal opportunities.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet all current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are involved in the school's self-evaluation and have a clear view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved. The governing body has a good understanding of the analysis of students' achievement so that they can ask challenging questions of senior leaders. Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching in all areas of the school. Governors identify any subjects where achievement and/or teaching are not as good as they should be and question subject leaders directly. Governors were involved in the development of the school's policy and procedures for the performance management of teachers and the headteacher. They are well informed about how teachers moving to the upper pay spine relates to the quality of their teaching and the achievement of students. The governing body understands the purpose of additional funding through the pupil premium and is involved in determining how it is spent and how the impact on students' achievement is monitored. Governors ensure the efficient management of financial and other resources and the governing body fulfils all of its statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection. Auditing of the skills of all governors ensures that the governing body has the expertise to undertake all of its functions well.

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	136335
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	395513

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
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	1,519
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Warriner
Headteacher	Alun Williams
Date of previous school inspection	not previously inspected
Telephone number	01761 412557
Fax number	01761 410622
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