

Nortonthorpe Hall School

Busker Lane, Scissett, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD8 9JU

Inspection dates 16–17 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Pupils' achievement is good and has improved significantly over the last three years because there has been a clear focus on learning rather than on simply managing pupils' behaviour.
- The quality of teaching is good and there are some examples of outstanding teaching. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics. Achievement in science is a particularly good feature.
- As a result of better teaching and a motivating curriculum, pupils' behaviour is good, especially in lessons, and improves over time in the school.
- The school has enjoyed a period of stability and leaders, including members of the governing body, have given the school a clear direction. They have well developed plans in place to ensure continued improvement.
- The welfare of pupils is extremely well supported through a nurturing environment which enables pupils to settle quickly when they arrive at the school and begin to make progress in their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is yet outstanding. This is particularly true where teachers do not make it sufficiently clear what they expect individual pupils to achieve in each lesson. Sometimes, adults do too much for pupils and more-able boys, in particular, do not have to think hard enough or find out things for themselves.
- Although reading skills have improved markedly, writing skills are not so well developed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Two of the observations were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Pupils were heard reading in lessons; discussions were held with pupils in two meetings and informally in lessons and around the school.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and members of the governing body. A telephone call was held with a representative of the local authority who also attended the feedback at the end of the inspection.
- An insufficient number of parents completed Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, but inspectors took into account parental views expressed in the school’s own questionnaire which followed a similar format and was completed only recently.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to pupils’ progress; behaviour incidents; the school’s checks on how well it is doing; development planning; attendance and exclusions; curriculum planning and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Nortonthorpe Hall School provides for boys, from across the whole of the Kirklees area, who have statements of special educational needs relating to their behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- About a third of pupils have been identified as having additional learning difficulties, particularly relating to speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Pupils can be admitted at any time during the school year and at any age from seven years upwards.
- A large majority of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, well above the national average. The pupil premium in this school provides additional funding for pupils who are entitled to free school meals and for those in the care of the local authority.
- Prior to the previous inspection, a senior leadership team had been seconded into the school by the local authority. This team has remained in place over the last three years until the end of the spring term, at which time the executive headteacher retired. A member of the leadership team had just taken up post as acting headteacher at the time of this inspection. Following a staffing review, plans are well advanced to make permanent appointments to all senior posts.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' literacy skills further by:
 - creating more opportunities for them to develop and practise their writing in lessons and to produce pieces of extended writing in all subjects for a variety of purposes
 - governors ensuring that the pupil premium funding is used effectively.
- Further improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - planning lessons which clearly identify the intended learning for individual pupils
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are able to work independently, to research and find things out for themselves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join Nortonthorpe Hall School after varying periods of disrupted learning to their education, which means that the large majority of pupils arrive with attainment which is low compared with national expectations.
- The school provides nurture groups which help boys build their self-esteem and confidence. The care and support they are given help them to settle quickly and most begin to make rapid strides in their learning. Some boys join the school at later stages and it is noticeable that those who join at a younger age make the most progress over time.
- This is particularly true in reading and mathematics where at least half of pupils make better than expected progress. Pupils are given good opportunities to practise their reading and mathematical skills in subjects across the curriculum. For example, in a music lesson, pupils read aloud part of a classical story to create an atmosphere for music they were to compose.
- Science is a particular strength of the school curriculum, with pupils achieving close to national expectations and with 100% success in GCSE science at lower grades last year.
- However, pupils' writing skills are less well developed with insufficient opportunities for boys to produce pieces of extended writing or for different purposes. This is because they are sometimes provided with worksheets which require only one-word or one-sentence answers. The school has already identified this as an area for improvement.
- The school has been particularly successful in ensuring that the large number of pupils who are disadvantaged in some way, including those who are eligible for the pupil premium, are able to achieve as well as the others by providing one-to-one support for pupils who are experiencing difficulties.
- Pupils are now well prepared for leaving school. The success rate in examination awards has increased year on year and all of last year's leavers went on to college placements to continue their education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and the majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good or better. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils help boys to stay on task, although there can sometimes be a tendency to do too much for pupils, which restricts opportunities for them to think through and find out things for themselves.
- Pupils frequently have very good knowledge and understanding of subjects and enjoy sharing information. Teachers use the contributions which boys make by adapting their lessons to match interests. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at helping pupils to develop their ideas further, building their confidence as effective learners.
- Teachers pay attention to what interests and engages their pupils and prepare lessons that will motivate them. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson on 'Romeo and Juliet', successful links were made to modern-day situations such as gang feuds and the mafia which the boys could recognise.
- Consideration is given to including reading, communication and numeracy into all subjects, for instance by working out shapes in a design technology lesson and following recipes in food technology. The high priority given to these subjects across the curriculum ensures boys make good progress in developing their basic skills.
- Teachers constantly check pupils' understanding and make sure that all of the group are involved in and contributing to a lesson. Although extension work is often planned for more-able pupils, staff very occasionally avoid conflict by not challenging boys to complete additional work and quicken their progress.
- However, lessons generally move at a brisk pace and time is used effectively. Resources are

collected and used well, particularly the use of internet information. The learning environment is very pleasant and purposeful and specialist subjects have good accommodation. Displays provide reminders to pupils about key behaviour messages and learning techniques to help them with their work. They also showcase pupils' work and pupils take pride in having their work included in the displays.

- Boys receive good verbal feedback from staff during lessons and the school has developed its marking policy so that pupils know better how well they are doing and how to improve further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- On entry to the school, at various ages, most pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour. However, the carefully nurturing approach builds self-esteem so that pupils settle to learn quickly and begin to believe they can succeed.
- It is noticeable that, as they move through the school, boys are supported to develop coping strategies and their attitudes to learning improve. By the time they leave school, pupils have learned to be more tolerant of others and to respect differences. Older pupils are keen to take on responsibility such as working with younger pupils.
- Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and are generally keen to contribute their views in discussions but will also listen to those of others. They are proud of their achievements and are keen to tell how much more they enjoy their learning at Nortonthorpe Hall School compared to their previous experiences.
- As a result, attendance rates have improved significantly over the last few years, because boys want to come to school. Exclusion rates have fallen with no permanent exclusions during the last year. The school is keen to reduce and eliminate the use of temporary exclusions and is working towards this aim.
- Pupils' views are listened to and respected. In every school day, there are times when issues and concerns can be discussed and any disagreements can be worked through. The introduction of a 'restorative justice' approach, which boys respect and value, has helped to reduce the number of behaviour incidents in the last year. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that if bullying occurs, or if there are issues at home, they can confide in adults in the school who will deal with matters appropriately.
- The school's annual questionnaire to parents shows increasing confidence that the school will keep their child safe. Parents appreciate the support the school gives them to manage their children at home.

The leadership and management are good

- Following frequent changes in senior leadership prior to the previous inspection, the school has enjoyed a period of stability. The local authority has monitored the school's provision closely. Officers have been involved with the governing body and senior leaders in developing a staffing structure that will meet the needs of the school into the future and ensure that pupils continue to be provided with a stable school experience.
- The acting headteacher and leadership team have been very committed to moving the school from a focus on managing behaviour to seeing learning as the main priority. Monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and senior leaders have a clear understanding of what is needed to improve the provision further. This is reflected in the good quality of the school's development plans.
- There has rightly been a strong focus on the development of staff to raise professional standards, which has resulted in pupils' improved academic and personal development.
- Since the previous inspection, middle leaders have undertaken professional development in their role and feel empowered and excited by the opportunities to develop their areas of

responsibility.

- The curriculum is well thought through and provides rich experiences which promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils contribute to the development of topics and subjects so that they are motivated to learn and the number of behaviour incidents has decreased over the last two years. The outdoor education curriculum is particularly successful and provides boys with different activities such as kayaking, walking, climbing, cooking outdoors and residential holidays, which they enjoy but may not otherwise have the opportunity to pursue.
 - Partnerships with a range of agencies and with parents are particularly strong in order to safeguard pupils at school and in their communities, through a consistent approach which is shared and agreed by all those involved.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have also developed their role since the previous inspection and have grown in strength and expertise, including appointing more parent governors. The governing body has played a large part in raising standards and members ensure they are up to date in fulfilling their safeguarding duties. Governors have become more involved in the life of the school so that they are better informed and can challenge data and information given to them. They monitor performance management of the headteacher and staff effectively and ensure it is linked to pay progression through agreed targets to improve pupils' achievement and meet school development objectives. The pupil premium is used appropriately to target achievement for the boys for whom it is provided and to enrich the curriculum but governors are not yet monitoring the impact of this spending effectively.
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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

Unique reference number	107804
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	405125

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	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carrie Birch
Headteacher	Deborah Navaratnam
Date of previous school inspection	11 April 2011
Telephone number	01484 222921
Fax number	01484 222966
Email address	debbie.navaratnam@edukirklees.net

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