

Norton College

Woodbury Lane, Norton, Worcester, WR5 2PU

Inspection dates 30 September–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

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

- Although students make expected progress, achievement requires improvement because not enough students gain qualifications by the end of Year 11 in GCSEs or their equivalents.
- Students rarely gain qualifications in science and information and communication technology (ICT) because the school has a limited range of equipment to develop skills in these subjects.
- Post-16 students make expected progress and begin to fill the gaps in their knowledge but they do not leave with a wide enough range of qualifications. This is because the leadership of this phase of education is not well established.
- Not all students have specific and measurable targets, and where these are in place they are not shared effectively with all staff. This means that students' key skills are not always reinforced in other sessions.
- Staff do not always use written feedback effectively nor are questions regularly used to check students' understanding in detail and set them extra challenges, particularly the most able.
- Senior leaders check how much progress each student makes but subject leaders do not regularly identify which students are making slower progress. They do not agree ways that all staff can help these students to make faster progress.
- Senior leaders keep an eye on the quality of teaching and its impact, but staff are not often set specific targets to improve their skills.
- The school looks thoughtfully for ways to improve but it does not always set down detailed targets to improve students' attainment in its school development plan. This means that not all staff are clear about what the school is aiming for.

The school has the following strengths

- Students conduct themselves well and behaviour is good. This is because staff guide students successfully and so they learn the best ways to work with others.
- Students' spiritual development is promoted well and so they become more confident in their abilities and are keen to try new activities and learn skills.
- Students feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. This is because staff care for them and form very positive relationships with them.
- A valuable partnership with parents is created because the headteacher and his staff welcome students from the minute they arrive and contact parents to share each student's successes.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed the impact of teaching on students' achievement in nine sessions and went on two walks with the headteacher to find out about what students are learning in the school.
- Discussions were held with headteacher, school staff, students and several representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector observed students' behaviour and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures. The inspector looked at work in books and folders for literacy and mathematics. Some case studies for students who attend the school were studied.
- Not enough responses were added to the Ofsted Parent View survey but 13 parents wrote letters to the inspector and four parents spoke to the inspector on the phone or in person.
- There were 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at documentation including, the school development plan, individual education plans and checks made on students' progress. Arrangements for managing the performance of staff were discussed.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Norton College is an independent special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social needs. It opened in 2010 and is owned by Crucible Education Ltd. The school was last inspected in February 2012.
- The school's aim is to give the most challenged and challenging children and young people the sort of educational, social and vocational skills that will enable them to integrate into society.
- The school provides for up to 80 young people who are not attending mainstream secondary schools or, if over 16 years old, are not going to a mainstream sixth form college full time. It is registered to take students between 11 and 19 years.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds but a few are from minority ethnic groups. A few children are looked after by carers and the local authority.
- There are 39 boys and girls on roll. The students currently on roll are aged between 11 and 17 years of age. They all have a background of disrupted education. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Some students also attend Worcester College and The Bridge Education Centre, Worcestershire.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effect of teaching on students' achievement, including the sixth form and the most able, by ensuring that:
 - students gain more qualifications, especially in ICT and science
 - all students have specific and measurable individual targets
 - students' individual targets are shared successfully with all staff
 - staff use questions effectively to check students' understanding and challenge them further
 - written feedback for students is more detailed.
- Develop leadership and management and its impact on students' attainment by making sure that:
 - subject leaders and the sixth form leader identify which students are making slower progress and agree strategies with all staff which will enhance students' knowledge and skills
 - staff are set more specific personal targets to refine the impact of their teaching
 - the school improvement plan contains targets which are more detailed
 - better equipment is made available for students' work in science and ICT.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met. The headteacher and Chairman of the Board watch over the school's work appropriately. Some staff are not set specific targets which will assist them to improve the effect their teaching has on students' achievement.
- Underperformance in staff is monitored carefully and they are supported to improve their skills. Staff who have a proven track record of successful work with students are rewarded with extra responsibilities and pay rises.
- The school is keen to improve the education it offers students but its development plan does not always contain detailed targets. This means that some staff and leaders are not clear what they are aiming to do to raise students' attainment and achievement.
- Records and data show students' levels of skill over recent years but subject leaders do not effectively identify which students are making slower progress. This means that a few students do not make the progress they could. Staff do not always help to sort this out because they do not understand what strategies could be used with each student. This is because meetings are not used methodically to share ideas about ways to help each student.
- Since the last inspection, the school has developed the use of Functional Skills and GCSE qualifications so that students gain key skills suitably. Nearly all students go on to further education or gain paid employment. The accommodation and premises have been improved and are in good order. Another improvement is the creation of a new food technology room which enables some students to gain BTEC qualifications in cookery. The school recognises that it does not provide a wide range of opportunities for students to obtain other vocational qualifications.
- Students study a wide range of subjects apart from English and mathematics. They enjoy learning science, ICT, design and technology, art and design, music, history, geography and physical development.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher means that all staff place a high priority on treating every student as a valuable member of the school and society. Many students have not been successful in other schools. Whether they arrive at the start of the school year or part way through they are efficiently integrated into school life, whatever their different backgrounds or abilities.
- Parents and carers speak very positively about the school and its impact on their child. One parent said: 'The headteacher and his team have been very supportive with my child's particular needs and encourage him to try new tasks regularly. The school keep me up to date with my son's progress.' Individual needs of students are met, including those with care plans or medical needs. Procedures for handling complaints are effective and the school has not received any complaints since the last inspection.
- The school's leadership makes sure that statements of special educational needs are reviewed regularly. As a result, students' progress is as expected. The school works productively with the local authorities who place the students at the school. They agree that students make great strides in improving their personal, social and emotional skills because of the successful ways that staff manage students' behaviour.
- Students receive valuable careers advice. This is because staff work diligently to find out about students' talents and then offer guidance about how they could use these in future careers. The school makes sure that students take part in work experience so that they are prepared for the world of work.
- Policies and procedures are followed carefully for all aspects of the schools' work. Health and safety issues are followed up quickly and efficiently. Risk assessments are used methodically to keep students

safe in school and on trips in the local community.

- Safeguarding requirements are met. Staff are effectively trained in first aid. All the necessary checks for staff are carried out before they start at the school and they are recorded appropriately in a single central record. Incidents and accidents are recorded rigorously, with the actions taken and their impact noted.
- The leadership of students who are post-16 is underdeveloped. Although students make expected progress, their achievement is not good because leaders do not watch productively over the ones making less progress than they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They respond quickly to staff guidance to help them improve and manage their own behaviour. This is because positive relationships are created between students and staff. All staff and parents agree that behaviour is good and that it is managed well by the school. One parent summed up others' comments when she said, 'My child's behaviour has been completely turned around.'
- Students concentrate well in sessions and have positive attitudes to learning. Low level disruption is uncommon and students are keen to learn new skills. This is because of staff use of rewards successfully. Exclusion is rare.
- Pupils conduct themselves well at different times of the day and as they move around the school. There is no graffiti on any walls and students pick up any odd pieces of litter they find. Students are proud of their school and they respond well to the positive ways in which staff manage them.
- Students become mature young people. They explore British institutions, including how British democracy works. Some students wrote to the Prime Minister when they were unhappy about an important national issue. They discuss moral and ethical issues which they read about in newspapers. This is because of good levels of staff support and guidance. Leaders ensure that students receive a balanced view of current affairs and are not exposed to extremist views in school.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Bullying and racial incidents are rare. The use of inappropriate and derogatory language is uncommon. Parents all agreed that their child is safe in school.
- Attendance has improved again this year and is above average. Some students who had low levels of attendance now have attendance levels which are above 95%. This is because staff welcome students when they arrive and treat each one as a unique individual. The school ensures that students come to school regularly because, for instance, staff collect some students using school cars.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe on the internet and understand how to handle cyber bullying. This is because staff guide them thoughtfully. Students are safeguarded successfully because all staff receive effective training in child protection.
- Students become responsible young citizens and learn to work in the local community productively. For example, during the inspection week some students baked cakes to raise money for a baby unit in a local hospital.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because sometimes staff do not challenge students sufficiently to work at higher level skills. This means that some students, including the most able, do not make as much progress as they could in some areas of learning.
- Students' individual targets are not always specific enough. They are not effectively shared with all staff

because staff meetings are not always used productively. This means that a few staff do not have a detailed knowledge of how to help the students.

- Marking in students' folders encourages them to keep trying but it does not often record in detail what they have done well and could do to improve. This means that students are not totally clear about how to reach higher levels of knowledge and understanding.
- Staff encourage students to keep trying new ways to solve problems. This means that students' self-esteem develops well. They become more confident and so they try new work and persevere when they get stuck with a difficult task. They worked diligently to repair a boat using wood even though the task seemed very difficult at the beginning when they looked at the curved sides and edges.
- Practical activities are used successfully to develop students' skills. For example, in one session observed a student arranged photographs to create an art portfolio after he used mouldable materials to make a costume using leather and fabrics imaginatively. He utilized his mathematical skills well when he measured the length of the leather he would need to make shoulder pads.
- Staff check on students' basic skills when they arrive at the school. They use this information to plan individual learning programmes. This means that they begin to catch up on the skills they have forgotten or not gained because they were out of school for considerable amounts of time.
- Post-16 students agree their individual learning programmes with staff. Some also attend local colleges to follow particular courses or develop extra skills because of productive partnerships with other education centres.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students, including those from minority ethnic groups, do not gain enough qualifications in science and ICT because resources and equipment for these subjects are too limited. The school is working to improve the situation and has appointed a new science teacher who has identified a group of students who are ready to take GCSE science this year. A suitable science laboratory is being developed.
- The most-able students make expected progress in English and mathematics. A few more-able students gain a GCSE in English and mathematics. Sometimes staff do not expect enough from these students.
- Students enter this school often after being out of school for eighteen months or more. The students, including those who are looked after, begin to fill the gaps in their knowledge because staff check adequately on what they do and do not know. Sometimes staff do not use questions effectively to assess what students really do not understand. As a result, they miss opportunities to set extra challenges which will deepen students' knowledge and skills.
- All students gain Entry Level 1, 2 or 3 Functional Skills qualifications. Some students gain Higher Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English and mathematics but more students are capable of working at this level of skill by the time they leave the school in Year 11. Their individual targets which could help them to reach higher levels of skill are used appropriately, but sometimes these are rather broad and so it can be rather difficult for them to work out how they will meet them.
- Progress in mathematics is in line with what is expected. Work in folders shows that a few of the most-able students are working at GCSE grade C and are able to work with negative numbers successfully. This is because the students are encouraged and supported thoughtfully to try new work.
- Students make steady progress in learning to read and write. Work in books shows students learn to read texts and write about them productively. For example, students wrote thoughtfully about what vaccines do for us after they read an article on modern medical practices. This is because Functional Skills courses are followed rigorously.
- A marked improvement is seen in students' personal development. They learn to explain how they are

feeling and discuss ways to put things right when they go wrong. This is because their communication skills are developed thoughtfully by staff.

- Students often develop several skills at once. For instance, students wrote the lyrics as well as composing raps in a music session because staff encouraged them to use their literacy skills rigorously.
- Food technology skills are promoted well and so over the last two years many students gained a BTEC in cooking. The students enjoy creating new dishes and some made chicken and bacon pasties during the inspection. They diligently cut up the meat and were clear about how they could tell when it was cooked because of the effective use of staff expertise.
- The physical development of students improves because the gymnasiums and local sports facilities are utilised carefully. The students enjoy playing football together because staff show them how to develop their skills and ensure that games are played fairly.
- Trips out allow students to broaden their knowledge of modern Britain. Some students found it fascinating to visit a mosque and so they found out about other peoples' beliefs and cultures.
- Extra activities are planned which match students' interests. They can learn all sorts of sports so, for instance, some students learnt they need to work in disciplined ways when they develop skills in boxing.
- Post-16 students make expected progress and a few gain GCSE qualifications. Their personal interests are used thoughtfully to set up courses which will interest them.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Students in the sixth form make sound progress and some gain valuable qualifications. Achievement requires improvement because some students do not gain a wide enough range of qualifications. This is because the school offers a narrow range of vocational courses.
- A few more-able students are beginning to do better in mathematics and some are studying the subject at A level. This is because of effective use of staff expertise and so a lot is expected of the students.
- Students who have gaps in their knowledge begin to fill them and so they develop their basic literacy and speaking skills suitably. This is because staff create individual learning programmes which meet their needs.
- Students enjoy developing their cooking skills and gain higher levels of skill when they design their own recipes and cook them successfully. This is because of good use of the food technology room, equipment and levels of staff knowledge.
- Post-16 students look after younger ones and help some to develop their reading skills by acting as reading mentors. They set a good example to others by working hard and concentrating well in sessions.
- Parents very much value the opportunity to speak to a member of staff about their child every week and feel this allows them to understand what sort of progress they are making. Useful guidance is given to students about which careers would suit them because staff get to know them well and so they identify each student's flair for particular types of work.
- The leadership of post-16 students is not well developed because the school has not had many students of this age in the past but growing numbers want to stay on at the school in the sixth form provision.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	136262
Inspection number	452377
DfE registration number	885/6040

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Proprietor	Crucible Education Ltd
Chair	Andrew Harter
Headteacher	Ian Hardicker
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,600
Telephone number	01905 359257
Fax number	01905 358302
Email address	ian.hardicker@nortoncollege.org.uk

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