

Norton Primary Academy

Berkshire Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees TS20 2RD

Inspection dates

4–5 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- A strong and determined leadership team, ably supported by governors and the trust, has secured considerable improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have strengthened the teaching of reading across the school. Pupils read regularly, demonstrating fluency and understanding. They show a love of reading and enjoy regular visits to the new, well-resourced library.
- Skilled teaching assistants work effectively alongside teachers. Together, they make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and development.
- Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their individual starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also make good progress, because of the effective support they receive.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a consistent approach to teaching and learning. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan learning that sustains pupils' interests and challenges their thinking in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, outcomes for pupils are good.
- The new leader of the early years has supported the team effectively to strengthen the quality of teaching in this key stage.
- Middle leaders demonstrate good subject knowledge. They receive much support from senior leaders to undertake their roles. While their plans for improvement are appropriate, these are yet to be fully implemented.
- Pupils experience a broad curriculum. However, in subjects such as science and geography, teachers do not use assessment information to plan activities that build upon what pupils already know and can do. Consequently, pupils do not make the same good rate of progress in these subjects as they do in English and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in acquiring their mathematical skills and knowledge. However, they do not receive sufficient opportunities to apply these skills in other subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are very proud of their school and cooperate extremely well with one another. Pupils are polite and courteous and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Adults are vigilant in ensuring the welfare and safety of pupils. A strong safeguarding culture is evident.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of new middle leaders, so that they check more effectively the impact of actions to improve pupils' learning and progress
 - implementing plans to develop the curriculum further, so that the progression of pupils' knowledge and skills is carefully planned.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by:
 - refining the systems to assess pupils' skills and evaluate their progress in the foundation subjects, such as science, history and geography, to ensure that there is strong and sustained progress in all subjects
 - ensuring that teachers challenge all pupils to think hard in their learning in subjects such as science, history and geography
 - using opportunities to reinforce mathematical skills across the wider curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has established a highly effective partnership with the vice-principal. Together they make a formidable team, who provides strong strategic leadership. They are determined to ensure that pupils receive the very best possible start in life.
- The principal, working closely with the trust, has successfully tackled the areas identified at the previous inspection. Together, they have worked successfully to eliminate pupils' underachievement and accelerate the progress pupils make in their learning.
- The principal, supported by the trust, has prioritised high-quality professional development for all staff. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and is now securely good. Staff feel well supported and are enthusiastic and committed in their roles. Morale is high.
- A number of middle leaders are new to their role. They are enthusiastic and keen to support school improvements. Middle leaders' skills in monitoring standards of work are steadily developing. They are beginning to check the impact of their actions against outcomes for pupils. It is too soon to see the evidence of their work reflected in the learning and progress of pupils across the wider curriculum.
- Pupils experience a broad curriculum. However, improvements to the curriculum are ongoing, as leaders recognise that some activities do not build pupils' skills sequentially. Teachers do not routinely use assessment information to plan activities that help pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils do not make the same rate of progress in subjects such as science and history as that seen in English and mathematics. Likewise, teachers do not provide opportunities for pupils to embed their mathematical skills by applying them in other subjects effectively.
- The excellent promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that the school is a calm and caring environment where pupils mix happily together. The school's ethos mirrors British values of respect and tolerance to everybody, regardless of background. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to decision-making and they do so confidently.
- Senior leaders use pupil premium funding successfully to provide academic and emotional support for disadvantaged pupils. They deploy skilled teaching assistants effectively in order to promote the progress of pupils. Leaders and the academy council closely monitor the impact that any additional provision has on the development and well-being of every pupil.
- The leader of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly effective. She has established improved identification procedures and sought the advice of external agencies to implement learning support plans for pupils who require them. As a result, teachers swiftly implement appropriate interventions to help pupils with SEND make improved progress from their often very low starting points.

- The physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is carefully spent. Sports coaches run a range of clubs during and after school. Participation rates are high, and pupils are enthusiastic about the different activities on offer.
- The majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. One parent's words capture the views of many, stating: 'Teachers are caring and supporting towards all children, so they reach their potential.'

Governance of the school

- Local governors, who form the academy council, access training to ensure that they are knowledgeable and able to challenge and support school leaders effectively.
- Members of the academy council have a range of valuable skills and experiences that they bring to their roles. They show strong commitment to the school through their regular visits and high rates of attendance at meetings. This ensures that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.
- Members of the academy council ensure that the additional funding is spent wisely. They carefully evaluate the funding and the effect it is having on the progress of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The long-established culture of keeping pupils safe remains evident. Those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding ensure that they, and others, carry out their roles effectively.
- Leaders, including the academy council, ensure that a thorough system of checks are in place for the safer recruitment of adults wishing to work at the school.
- Leaders are aware of the potential risks specific to the local community. They provide staff with high-quality training to ensure that they are vigilant and able to identify any perceived risks. In addition, staff receive regular national training linked to the government's most recent legislation. All staff are aware of the important role they play in keeping children safe.
- Staff know their pupils and families well and are vigilant in noticing any changes in pupils' behaviour. Leaders are diligent in their record-keeping, maintaining detailed records of any concerns or issues that may arise.
- The school works effectively with external agencies to provide timely support for pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Senior leaders place high importance on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled and have strong subject knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. They constantly seek to improve their practice and enjoy the many opportunities provided to develop their skills and share their expertise. As a result, teaching has improved and is now good.

- The learning environment is well organised, with a range of high-quality resources to support learning. Pupils enjoy collaborative work and they cooperate well. The atmosphere in the classrooms and around the school supports pupils' learning effectively.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are extremely positive. Teachers are enthusiastic and encouraging. They have high expectations of pupils' conduct during lessons. Teachers' positive language and their use of praise help pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem. As a result, pupils are comfortable asking questions and expressing their point of view.
- Additional staff training and the use of new resources have strengthened the teaching of early reading and, in particular, phonics. Teaching is effective and contributes well to younger pupils' progress in reading. Phonics lessons are well structured. Teachers closely match books to pupils' phonics knowledge. Pupils are able to use and apply their phonics knowledge with confidence when reading and writing unknown words. Pupils who read to inspectors read with enjoyment, expression and fluency.
- There is now a consistent approach to the teaching of reading skills across key stages 1 and 2. Teachers pose a good range of questions to check on pupils' factual understanding and probe deeper to explore unfamiliar words and meaning. Quality novels support thematic work, and pupils are enthused by reading these texts. Consequently, reading standards continue to improve.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge in English to plan lessons that interest pupils and encourage them to make good progress in their writing. The promotion of pupils' vocabulary and oracy skills is a key characteristic of many lessons. For example, teachers make frequent use of subject-specific vocabulary and promote pupils' understanding of unfamiliar words from reading books and spelling lists. Pupils are confident in applying their growing vocabulary to written work. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to apply and practise their developing English skills across a wide range of subjects.
- In mathematics, teachers use carefully structured work and focused questions to extend pupils' knowledge and skills. The 'three-part mathematic lesson' places an appropriate emphasis on problem-solving and reasoning. However, teachers do not always use opportunities to extend and deepen pupils' learning by developing these mathematical skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers' assessment of English and mathematics is accurate. Teachers usually pitch work well, according to pupils' abilities. However, in subjects such as science and geography, assessment information is less accurate. Consequently, activities across the wider curriculum do not challenge pupils sufficiently or build upon what they already know and can do.
- Parents and carers receive regular and detailed updates about how their children are doing at school. As well as the written reports, staff are readily available if parents wish to talk about a particular issue. Parents said that they welcomed this.

Personal development and welfare

- The leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- All staff live and breathe by the school's vision, 'outcome focused, child centred education'. Senior leaders and teachers have high expectations of, and positive relationships with, pupils, built on mutual support and respect.
- Staff show a high level of care for pupils. They know pupils individually and quickly respond to meet their needs. Adults regularly check that pupils are happy in the school. The strong nurturing culture ensures that support for pupils' well-being is highly effective.
- Pupils show high levels of respect and treat everyone equally. Leaders have successfully raised pupils' awareness of equalities, through carefully chosen books and topics and a thoughtful personal and social education programme.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Visitors, such as community police officers and fire fighters, also help develop pupils' awareness of their personal safety. Pupils are very aware of the dangers of using technology inappropriately. They learn how to stay safe online and how to use mobile phone technology correctly.
- Staff actively promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness. For example, pupils discuss and understand the potential risk of allergies and know that sugary drinks may damage their teeth. One group of pupils confidently explained how they handle PE equipment safely.
- All pupils who spoke to the inspector said that they feel safe and secure in the school. Pupils know the signs and types of bullying that may take place. They feel bullying is extremely rare and are confident that adults would quickly sort out any small disagreements that may arise. Inspectors saw a number of examples where pupils supported one another, such as pupils holding doors open for each other.
- Pupils develop a strong sense of community by working together. Leaders have created a wide range of roles and responsibilities, such as academy councillors, team captains and head boy and girl. Together, they discuss ways of improving the school. They carry out specific jobs with pride, while learning how to be responsible citizens. Pupils are articulate and self-confident, because they are encouraged to contribute to school life and know that their efforts will be valued.
- Most parents feel the school is nurturing and supportive of their children's personal development and welfare needs. One parent commented: 'School has an outstanding inclusive ethos'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils respond well to the high expectations of staff. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and conduct around the school are exemplary. Pupils are not easily distracted from their learning, and low-level disruption is extremely rare.
- Pupils conduct themselves sensibly. They carry out additional classroom responsibilities in a mature manner and contribute well to the school's positive climate.
- Playtimes are happy, lively occasions. Pupils engage in a range of active games or play with friends. Staff reassure any pupils who need support and encourage them to join in with others.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their community. Pupils welcome visitors to their classroom and are keen to share their achievements.
- Pupils enjoy school and understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Leaders and staff present a determined and supportive approach to ensure that pupils have high attendance levels. Consequently, the levels of attendance are improving, and the level of persistent absence has significantly reduced and is lower than the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders' monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, from the early years to Year 6 are rigorous and informative. This information, confirmed by checks of pupils' work carried out by inspectors, demonstrates that current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 was above the national average. However, this fell to below average in 2018. Leaders acted swiftly to address this. Leaders have improved the organisation of phonics teaching to focus more sharply on pupils' needs and to accelerate progress. This is supporting pupils' good progress.
- At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils in Year 2 reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average in 2018. This represents good progress from their historically lower-than-average starting points. Inspection evidence shows that current pupils continue to make good progress in key stage 1.
- In 2018, attainment for pupils at the end of key stage 2 demonstrated significant improvement on the previous two years. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The number of pupils reaching the greater depth standard was above average in writing and mathematics. Progress was average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils have started to make considerable gains in their learning, due to the improved quality of teaching and the support provided by additional adults. At key stage 2 in 2018, disadvantaged pupils did better than other pupils nationally at the

expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' progress was also strong in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Assessment information shows that pupils with SEND are generally making good progress from their starting points. In the 2018 key stage 2 tests, the progress measures of pupils with SEND were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because of the effective support that pupils with SEND receive and the extensive systems that are in place to make relevant checks of their learning. Skilled teaching supports and challenges these pupils, and staff adapt work effectively to meet their individual needs.
- In subjects beyond English and mathematics, teachers do not use assessment information sufficiently well to plan activities that challenge pupils and build upon what they already know and can do. Consequently, pupils do not make the same rate of progress in other subjects, for example computing and geography, as that seen in English and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter Nursery and Reception with knowledge, skills and abilities below those seen typically in children of this age. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception has been below the national average over time. The new leader of the early years has high expectations and a clear commitment to raise standards.
- The leader of the early years is confident in her role and provides good direction to other adults. The leader has identified strengths and key areas for improvement. She has embraced the effective support from the local authority and trust. As a result, improvements to the early years are developing quickly and successfully.
- Staff have sharpened assessment systems. Teachers check the accuracy of their judgements regarding children's progress with colleagues in the school and within the trust. There is a consistent approach around observing children at work and play. All staff are becoming more skilled in challenging children appropriately. The children's 'learning journey' records convey good progress clearly.
- Adults accurately identify barriers to learning. Many children enter the early years with poor communication and language skills. Well-trained adults, working alongside the speech and language therapist, help children to begin to express themselves confidently, using full sentences.
- In Nursery and Reception classes, children are encouraged to listen attentively to stories and sounds in the environment. Staff are skilled in their teaching of phonics. They have high expectations of the children. Phonics sessions include opportunities for pupils to consolidate existing knowledge and learn new sounds for reading and spelling. Reception children are making stronger progress this year. Staff are determined to ensure that children leave Reception ready for the new challenges in Year 1.
- Teachers plan an effective balance of adult-led activities and activities that the children choose for themselves. They are sensitive to children's needs and demonstrate a good

understanding of how young children learn. As a result, children are happy, confident learners who are interested and engaged.

- The well-organised environments in both Nursery and Reception have a wide range of high-quality resources. The number of challenges in the Reception are appropriately greater than in Nursery. Children learn and play calmly and purposefully together. They enjoy the activities and show good levels of concentration.
- Children in the Reception class are delighted with the new outdoor area. This has provided greater space and more opportunities to engage with nature. Staff have arranged the environment effectively. They provide children with a wide range of interesting experiences that help them to understand the wider world. Children have regular opportunities to learn through exploring and experimenting.
- Children behave well and are respectful of each other and their environment. This is because adults consistently model the behaviour they want to see and are highly skilled in managing those children who are at an earlier stage of personal and social development. Children are extremely happy and well looked after.
- Parents regard the early years highly and feel involved in their children's learning. They appreciate the opportunity to attend daily 'drop-in sessions' and value the online assessment information which they receive. Leaders recognise the need to increase the levels of parental engagement, so that a greater number of parents are encouraged to support their children's learning at home.
- Safeguarding practices are extremely effective. Staff teach children how to manage risks from an early age. The strong safeguarding culture that permeates the school is equally apparent in the early years. There are no breaches of welfare requirements. Children are safe and well supported.

School details

Unique reference number	140519
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10087571

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	368
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr J Taylor
Principal	Mrs M Randall Harris
Telephone number	01642 356091
Website	www.nortonacademy.org
Email address	nortonpri.school@stockton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Northern Education Trust. The trust board is accountable for the performance of schools within the trust. The trust board delegates responsibilities to the school's academy council to provide support and challenge to school leaders.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEND is above the national average, although the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is considerably higher than the national average. Just over half of pupils are supported by the pupil premium.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the principal, senior, phase and subject leaders, members of the Academy Council, including the chair, and representatives of the Northern Education Trust.
- The inspection team visited teaching sessions across a range of subjects from Nursery to Year 6. The executive principal, principal and vice-principal accompanied inspectors in the vast majority of these visits.
- The inspectors scrutinised samples of pupils' work in their books across a wide range of curriculum areas. They also reviewed pupils' work in other curriculum areas, such as art, by considering the work on display around the school.
- 11 pupils from key stage 1 and 2 read their reading books to inspectors and discussed how the school supported their reading development.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including leaders' written self-evaluation and notes of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Inspectors also looked at a range of documents and records relating to safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in the playground and around the school. They observed pupils around the school building, in the school grounds and as pupils ate their lunch. Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils about what it is like to be a pupil at the school.
- Inspectors took account of staff members' opinions via the responses made to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and through formal and informal discussions.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 responses to Ofsted's free-text survey. Inspectors also spoke with several parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Lee	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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