

Inspection of a good school: Notton House Academy

28 Notton, Lacock, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2NF

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Outcome

Notton House Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a clear, shared ethos which is focused on improving the lives of the pupils staff work with. Parents and carers agree that pupils are supported well and that the school has a positive impact on their child.

Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious about their future. Leaders ensure that pupils have what they need emotionally, socially and academically so that they can work towards these aspirations. Pupils are fully involved in how their learning is designed to meet their individual needs. Pupil voice is an important part of all that Notton House does. Pupils know the difference they can make to the school.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They model positive relationships to support pupils to meet these high expectations. Staff understand how important it is to build strong relationships with pupils so that they feel safe and secure. Pupils show respect for the key adults they work with. Staff show empathy and have a calm and consistent approach to support pupils when they are struggling. Pupils are not concerned about bullying. They feel it is managed well by staff when it happens.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have designed the curriculum with priority given to pupils' English and mathematics learning and their wider development. Leaders understand that pupils need to learn in a way that is individual to them. The curriculum for reading and mathematics delivers learning in a bespoke way and is ambitious for each pupil.

Reading is a whole-school priority. There are daily sessions timetabled. However, reading extends beyond this. Staff have been recently trained to deliver a consistent approach to teaching early reading. This approach supports the weakest readers to know their sounds and to use this knowledge to read texts matched to their ability. It has also had a positive impact on pupils' confidence in reading. Pupils talk about how the school has helped them to read when they say they could not previously. Learning in mathematics has strong links

to the world of work and preparing pupils for their next stage. Pupils' resilience and independence increase through problem-solving and applying their knowledge of number.

Leaders have made sure there is a range of suitable qualifications available to pupils. They take account of pupils' academic ability, aspirations for the future, strengths and interests. However, in subjects other than reading and mathematics, the important knowledge that leaders want each pupil to learn is not always clear. As a result, there is not precise information for teachers to know what pupils should learn and remember. This is not always clear in their bespoke curriculum as they work towards their qualifications.

The provision for pupils beyond their academic learning has been well considered. There is a strong offer of therapies and other targeted support to meet pupils' social and emotional needs. In addition, pupils have dedicated time to concentrate on their mental health and well-being. As a result of planned projects which involve learning about the different continents, keeping up to date with current affairs and national and international events, pupils learn to be respectful and appreciate diversity. This also deepens their awareness of different religions and cultures. Careers education runs through all areas of the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to meet a range of employers to inspire them and increase their knowledge of the world of work. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Leaders ensure that pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans inform their learning in all aspects of their development. Senior leaders have given middle leaders responsibility for specific areas. These include curriculum areas and special educational needs and/or disabilities. Middle leaders are knowledgeable about the areas they lead. However, in some areas, middle leaders do not have a fully accurate view of how well their actions and decisions are carried out by teachers.

Leaders have developed a consistent approach to managing behaviour. This has had a positive impact on attendance and behaviour incidents. Staff are knowledgeable about how they manage situations when pupils are dysregulated and experiencing high emotions. The strong team approach ensures that the welfare and well-being of all involved are considered.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, and staff are committed to getting the best possible outcomes for pupils. Staff feel confident to make decisions and know that leaders value their work. The academy council understands its responsibilities. It holds senior leaders to account effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. All staff are knowledgeable and receive frequent and up-to-date safeguarding training. Safeguarding is a central part of the daily communication around pupils to ensure that everyone knows their responsibility to keep all pupils safe. Leaders use external agencies effectively. They are rigorous in

following up and challenging external support. Leaders know the challenges faced by pupils and are proactive in managing these.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. This is a significant part of each pupil's weekly timetable. Leaders ensure that pupils regularly revisit important learning that is vital to keeping themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although leaders use regular communication and pupil voice to monitor areas of responsibility, middle leaders do not have an in-depth knowledge of how well their actions and decisions are implemented. This means they are unable to evaluate the quality of provision accurately. Leaders need to make sure that middle leaders are fully monitoring the impact of their actions and decisions.
- Leaders have not precisely identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember in subjects other than reading and mathematics. As a result, at times, the implementation and sequencing of the intended curriculum in some subjects are not as effective as they could be. Despite this being bespoke for each individual, leaders need to be precise in identifying the important knowledge that pupils need to know and understand.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Notton House School, to be good in February 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144286
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10212149
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	1
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrea Wills
Headteacher	Michelle Reysenn
Website	www.notton.learnmat.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Notton House Academy joined Learn@MAT multi-academy trust in September 2017.
- Notton House is a residential special school for boys with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including severe emotional, social and mental health difficulties and autism spectrum disorders.
- All pupils have EHC plans.
- The school uses three alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff who deliver targeted support and the chair of the academy council. In addition, an inspector talked to the interim chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also looked at additional subjects, including science.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement, and paperwork relating to the work of the academy council. Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum and EHC plans.
- An inspector spoke with two alternative providers used by the school. An inspector also spoke with a pupil who attends.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the telephone to listen to their views on the school. There were limited responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. However, nine free-text responses were also considered, along with the responses to the pupil survey and 23 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Leanne Thirlby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Hill

Ofsted Inspector

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