

# Inspection of a good school: The Norton Knatchbull School

Hythe Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 0QJ

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2022

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere at Norton Knatchbull. Pupils try hard to live up to staff's high expectations and the school's core values of integrity, inspiration, growth, respect and community. Pupils are polite, sensible and responsible.

Pupils feel safe in school and know that staff will help them if they have any worries. Staff deal with any bullying or unacceptable behaviour promptly and effectively. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and kind. Pupils are motivated to do well in their studies. They are committed to getting the most out of what the school has to offer. However, pupils in key stage 3 do not deepen their understanding across all subjects because the curriculum is not structured well enough.

Students in the sixth form are positive role models for younger pupils. Students work hard and are well prepared for their next steps. Some become mentors, sharing their experiences and guiding younger pupils.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities available. For instance, they are excited to attend the architecture society, computing club and daily art club. Many pupils enthusiastically join the school's sports teams and participate in popular design technology competitions. Pupils talk animatedly about being part of the school council. They relish opportunities to plan and deliver assemblies about important topics.

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

Leaders have not ensured that all pupils study a well-organised and ambitious curriculum. In key stage 3, pupils learn a wide range of subjects in Years 7 and 8 before they move into key stage 4. However, in most subjects in key stage 3, the curriculum is not defined clearly enough. For example, in geography and design and technology, leaders have not

identified and organised precisely the important knowledge that pupils need to learn step by step and over time. Pupils do not make links in their learning and do not acquire the depth of subject knowledge that they need to know well. As a result, pupils do not achieve consistently well across all subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They carefully tailor activities to help pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), embed new knowledge securely. Staff accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Those who need it receive high-quality support and progress through the curriculum at the same rate as their peers.

Pupils have responded well to teachers' recent focus on developing strategies to help pupils revise and make links in the concepts taught. They enjoy learning and have positive attitudes to their studies. Pupils discuss their ideas thoughtfully and listen avidly to teachers' explanations of increasingly complex concepts.

Reading is a priority. Leaders ensure that weaker readers are supported to develop their fluency and comprehension skills confidently. The English department has been instrumental in developing pupils' interests in diverse texts. Pupils develop a love and appreciation of reading as they move through the year groups. The school library is a hub of activity where pupils develop a voracious appetite for different types of literature.

Leaders promote pupils' wider development effectively. Leaders have designed an impartial careers education programme that informs pupils about what is possible in their future careers. Pupils look forward to finding out about apprenticeships, university applications and work opportunities. They develop their leadership and social skills well. For example, the recently introduced 'Knatchbull Bacc' challenges pupils to reflect and record their progress in aspects such as 'community and leadership'.

Leaders have designed a well-thought-through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Pupils develop a deep understanding of inclusivity and diversity. Sixth-form students participate fully in PSHE and some contribute to how different topics are tackled. For example, students in Year 12 delivered a well-received assembly about respectful behaviour and consent.

Leaders' high-quality training helps staff develop their knowledge and skills. Staff love working at the school. Leaders are considerate and supportive of staff's workload and well-being. Staff appreciate this and engage positively with leaders when they are consulted on any new initiatives.

Leaders do not check sufficiently well on the impact of their actions and the extent to which these are benefiting pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Their assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses is not always rigorous. This means that trustees and governors are not informed well enough about where the school needs to improve.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong safeguarding culture. Staff are well trained in safeguarding, and they understand their responsibilities, including how to report concerns they have or spot signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Safeguarding records are well kept and appropriate actions are recorded precisely when safeguarding concerns are reported. When necessary, leaders arrange specialist support for pupils.

Leaders work positively with a variety of external agencies, such as social services, the specialist teaching service and the police. Leaders are quick to follow up with external agencies if they do not get timely help from them.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The key stage 3 curriculum is not well structured. As a result, pupils do not achieve consistently well across the curriculum. Leaders need to make sure that the curriculum in key stage 3 identifies the important knowledge pupils should learn and the order in which it should be taught so that pupils deepen their knowledge across all subjects.
- Leaders, trustees and governors do not have an accurate view of the quality of education. They have not acted quickly enough to improve the key stage 3 curriculum. Consequently, pupils do not deepen their knowledge as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that they strengthen their monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's work so that pupils achieve consistently well in all subjects in key stage 3.

## **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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2012.

## **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.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138019
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10226863
<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,257
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	250
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Andrew Judd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ben Greene
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.nks.kent.sch.uk">www.nks.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 April 2017 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2019.
- The school do not use any alternative provisions.
- 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.

## 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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, governors and trustees.
- On the first day of the inspection, inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, art, design and technology and geography. This meant that in each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 69 staff who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's safeguarding culture by reviewing safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff, scrutinising the school's website and policies and talking to staff, governors, trustees and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils from meetings and informal conversations and from the 203 pupils who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of 190 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire and 117 parents who provided free-text comments.

### **Inspection team**

Harry Ingham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julia Mortimore

Ofsted Inspector

Rupert Prutton

Ofsted Inspector

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