

Inspection of Northstowe Secondary College

Stirling Road, Northstowe, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB24 1DJ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

The well-being of pupils is a priority at Northstowe Secondary College. Pupils are happy. If pupils have a problem, there is always an adult that they can turn to. Pupils feel they benefit from the reassurance staff offer and other strategies provided, such as access to Oscar the dog.

Expectations are high for both behaviour and how well pupils achieve. Pupils develop and deepen their knowledge because their teachers plan and explain new learning clearly. In lessons, pupils behave positively. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They are ready to work.

Pupils know how to behave. Their teachers deal with any rare instances of negative behaviour swiftly. Most pupils say that bullying is rare. When bullying occurs, pupils tell adults, and it is dealt with.

Pupils appreciate how teachers reward them for their achievements and conduct. This motivates them to do their best. Pupils are respectful to those who are different from them because they are taught important values. The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the quality of education the school provides.

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

Leaders have been determined to design an ambitious curriculum covering a broad range of subjects that meets the differing needs of pupils. Leaders identify the precise knowledge that pupils should learn over time in all subjects. Teachers break learning down further into smaller, progressive steps and ensure this is planned to build on pupils' prior learning. This means pupils have the opportunity to build a secure body of knowledge that grows in complexity as they progress through the school.

There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their learning. This helps them to remember it well. In most curriculum areas, teachers regularly check what pupils are learning. Teachers provide pupils with the precise help they need to get better and learn more. However, in a small number of curriculum areas, some teachers do not do this consistently well in lessons. Where this is the case, some pupils do not learn as much as they could.

Leaders know learning to read is important for pupils to be able to access the rest of the curriculum. Appropriate adaptations are made to support pupils who have fallen behind with their reading. Pupils receive effective additional support with their reading. This helps to close gaps in pupils' knowledge and ensures that pupils who struggle to read become confident and fluent readers.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of those pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders support staff well and provide them with specific strategies to enable pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. Teachers consistently

apply those strategies well. This ensures that the majority of pupils with SEND learn well.

Pupils understand how they need to behave to ensure they are able to learn well at school. Pupils are aware of how their behaviours and choices may affect others. They are respectful to each other and their teachers. Teachers use the behaviour systems effectively to ensure learning is not disrupted.

Leaders have chosen a personal development programme that ensures that pupils build an understanding of healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. A range of clubs and activities are available for all pupils. This enables them to hone new skills, such as learning Latin. They develop confidence by performing in the choir and explore their curiosity in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics club. Pupils understand other cultures and religions. They demonstrate positive attitudes to those who are different. Leaders are preparing pupils well for their future lives. This includes receiving clear guidance about the career and training options available to them.

Leaders carefully consider the well-being of their staff, and morale is high. Staff appreciate the support that leaders offer, such as high-quality professional development. Leaders have forged positive relationships with parents and the local community.

Governors, trustees and leaders are relentless in their desire to provide the very best education for pupils. They meticulously check how well the school is performing. Governors and trustees rigorously challenge leaders' decisions to ensure that all actions are in the best interests of pupils. This work is significantly contributing to the school's success.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture. Staff have had training and are vigilant. They know how to identify those pupils who are at risk of harm and report concerns swiftly. Leaders are relentless in ensuring that pupils who are at risk of harm are well supported. Leaders work well with external agencies so that vulnerable pupils receive the support that they need.

Leaders comprehensively check the suitability of adults who work at the school.

The content of the curriculum supports pupils to know how to stay safe. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and outside of school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, some teachers do not systematically check how well pupils are learning in lessons. As a result of this, teachers do not identify gaps in learning, and pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the secure expertise to consistently check for gaps in learning and for pupils' misunderstandings. This will help pupils to learn as well as they should.

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

Unique reference number	148128
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10268402
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	475
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shirley Jamieson
Headteacher	Carole Moss
Website	www.northstowesc.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Northstowe Secondary College opened in September 2019. It is part of the Meridian Trust.
- The school uses two alternative providers; one is registered and the other is unregistered.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders and groups of staff to explore provision across the school, including curriculum design and provision for children with SEND.
- Inspectors met with six members of the local governing body and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, art and design, and modern foreign languages. They met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors spoke to the staff with responsibility for pupils with SEND, behaviour, and personal development, including careers. They also reviewed a range of documentation in these areas.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils from Years 7 to 10 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and around the school site. The 154 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey were also taken into account.
- Inspectors held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils. There were 38 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 154 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. There were 143 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 101 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

Andrew Robinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Stainsby	His Majesty's Inspector

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