

Inspection of Norton Canes High School

Burntwood Road, Norton Canes, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 9SP

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small secondary school where staff get to know pupils well. Pupils value the individual care and support they receive, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has started to raise expectations for what pupils can achieve. This is beginning to make a difference.

Pupils' behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Generally, pupils behave well. In lessons, pupils usually focus on the work they are set and respond positively to what teachers ask of them. At social times, pupils are largely calm and orderly. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is dealt with swiftly. Currently, too many pupils are persistently absent from school.

The school has started to make improvements to the curriculum. Pupils have more opportunities to study different subjects at key stage 4. However, there remains variability in how well the curriculum is taught. As a result, pupils, and students in the sixth form, do not make enough progress in their learning.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to take part in. Several pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. There are also different clubs that take place at lunchtime and after school.

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

The school has made progress since the last inspection. Leaders have begun to tackle the underlying weaknesses of the school by implementing new policies and recruiting new staff. While some of this work is starting to show impact, other parts are still at an early stage, and there remains more to do.

The curriculum is now coherently structured and sequenced. Leaders have thought carefully about the order of topics and how knowledge and skills build over time. There have been some positive changes to the range of courses pupils can choose at key stage 4. Leaders have introduced subjects including biology, chemistry and physics for pupils to study separately.

The teaching of the curriculum remains inconsistent. In some lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to model activities and explain tasks. Where there is stronger practice, teachers check pupils' learning through well-targeted questioning. However, at other times, teachers do not routinely check whether pupils are secure in what they are learning. In some cases, activities are not well matched to pupils' needs and teachers do not have high-enough expectations of the work pupils produce. Consequently, gaps in knowledge are not picked up quickly, and pupils' work can be variable. This, collectively, stalls the progress that pupils make.

The provision for pupils with SEND is much improved. The school identifies pupils' needs accurately and regularly reviews their learning plans. Leaders have put in place 'pupil passports' that help staff to support pupils with SEND in the classroom.

Pupils with SEND, including those who attend the school's specially resourced provision base, are fully integrated into school life and follow an equally ambitious curriculum.

The school has implemented an effective programme of reading support. Pupils are regularly tested to identify what gaps they have in their literacy. For those who are still in the early stages of learning to read, the school provides targeted intervention. This includes any catch-up work pupils need with their phonics. As a result, pupils with weak reading skills are supported well.

The school has made attendance a high priority. Leaders promote the importance of good attendance with pupils and with parents and carers. Several strategies are in place to help improve attendance, including work with external agencies and the local authority. However, some of this work is at an early stage, and the number of pupils who are persistently absent remains high.

The school's personal aspiration, teamwork and health (PATH) curriculum is well designed. A dedicated team of staff deliver this to pupils, where they learn about important topics such as healthy relationships and how to stay safe online. Pupils enjoy their learning in these lessons and the opportunity to discuss and debate issues. Some of this curriculum is still in its infancy, and adaptations for pupils with SEND are not as effective as they could be.

The school's careers programme ensures that pupils are aware of the different pathways available to them, including apprenticeships. Pupils also have encounters with different employers and further education providers. Pupils in Year 10 and students in Year 12 benefit from undertaking work experience to learn first hand about the world of work.

Students in the sixth form are positive about the support and guidance they receive. Many feel well prepared for their examinations and their next steps into university or employment. However, the school's entry and induction process to the sixth form is not strong enough. This has led to some students dropping out of courses or not achieving as well as they should.

Governance of the school has improved significantly. Several new governors have been appointed, who have brought additional strength and expertise. Governors provide effective support and challenge to school leaders. They have a clear vision for how they want the school to move forward and are actively supporting leaders in this endeavour.

Staff are fully behind new leaders and the changes they are making. They appreciate the support they get with their workload and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not ensure that teachers consistently check pupils' learning. This means that gaps in knowledge go undetected and misconceptions and/or errors are not picked up quickly. The school should ensure that all teachers check pupils' learning effectively to help secure their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils are not always provided with work which is well matched to their ability, and the expectations of pupils are sometimes too low. This means that some pupils find work too difficult or easy and produce work that is not consistently of a high quality. The school should ensure that teachers carefully select work that enables all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. This does not help pupils to establish important routines and prepare them for later life. The school should continue to take action to ensure persistent absence is reduced.
- The school's induction and recruitment process to the sixth form is not rigorous enough. This has meant that students have ended up on courses that are not well matched to their needs, and some have underperformed in their examinations. The school should ensure that it provides effective support and guidance to students so that they opt for more appropriate courses and make better progress in their learning.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	124395
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322784
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	443
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David While
Headteacher	Sarah Diggory
Website	www.nortoncaneshighschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils with autism spectrum disorder attend the school's specially resourced provision, run by the local authority.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with six members of the governing body. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also looked at other subjects to check how they are planned and taught.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Reeves	Ofsted Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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