

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Norton Primary Academy

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

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Michelle Randall-Harris. This school is part of Northern Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Rob Tarn, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Sanders. There is also a senior executive principal, Deb Murphy, who is responsible for this school and three others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Norton Primary Academy is a happy, focused place for pupils to learn. The school's values of 'respect, resilience and kindness' are known and understood by the school community. Pupils describe the school as 'fun, friendly and welcoming'. There is an air of positivity here.

Adults form superb relationships with pupils. They support and challenge them in equal measure. Pupils enjoy this. They say teachers are caring and helpful. Pupils are exceptionally polite and well-mannered. They are thoughtful and considerate with their friends. Unkind behaviour is rare. If it does happen, pupils say adults deal with this quickly and fairly.

The school's personal development provision is broad and exciting. Pupils enjoy the leadership roles they can apply for, such as eco-ambassador or school councillor. They see these roles as important. The school's 'iAspire' programme raises pupil's self-confidence through carefully chosen challenges.

The school has high expectations for pupils' engagement, achievement and behaviour. The well-designed, exciting curriculum supports pupils to learn effectively. Staff are ambitious for pupils' success. This can be seen through the strong outcomes pupils

achieve across the curriculum, including in national assessments. Pupils strive to always do their best. They are proud of their achievements. They are exceptionally well prepared for their next stages of education.

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

The school's ambitious curriculum supports pupils to learn exceptionally well. It is carefully designed to build learning over time, from children's first days in Nursery. The important knowledge that the school wants pupils to learn in each subject is clearly identified and grouped under 'big ideas' such as chronology in history, or location in geography. The curriculum is used effectively by teachers to design stimulating and interesting learning opportunities for pupils. Teachers have secure subject knowledge due to the regular and effective training they have. They ensure that resources are utilised well to engage and interest pupils. Lessons are fun and informative. Pupils enjoy the challenges that teachers present them with. They work collaboratively together to discuss their learning, share ideas and develop further knowledge about the curriculum's 'big ideas'. All subjects are given equal importance. The school seeks out passionate leaders who continuously enhance and improve their curriculum areas.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified and supported to achieve well at Norton. They are supported to learn alongside their peers through carefully planned steps in learning and the effective use of resources. The trust ensures that staff receive training to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum where they are needed. For pupils requiring a more bespoke curriculum, the school continuously seeks to ensure that this is done effectively and inclusively.

Reading is seen as essential. The school views pupils' ability to learn to read as crucial in supporting pupils to learn across all subjects. Pupils in key stage 2 talk about books and authors with confidence. Reading lessons are interactive, with pupils exploring what words mean through discussions with partners, in groups or acting them out. Pupils starting to learn to read benefit from the consistent approach the school takes to teaching phonics. Books are chosen carefully to contain sounds that children have learned. Staff are well trained, confident and consistent in following the phonics programme. Pupils who are finding learning to read more difficult are swiftly identified. Keep-up sessions are completed daily, along with additional phonics sessions where needed. These support pupils to quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to become confident, fluent readers.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptional at this school. Pupils say they love to learn here. However, despite the school focusing relentlessly on attendance, there are still a small minority of pupils who do not attend regularly enough.

Pupils' focus in lessons is exemplary. From the earliest days in Nursery and Reception, the school's high expectations are shared. Children play and learn together collaboratively. They follow routines and are kind to each other.

Pupils benefit from the school's carefully planned personal development provision. Central to this is raising pupils' aspirations. This is done through giving pupils a wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility, learn about the world beyond the school gates and understand how to be positive citizens. The school sees developing pupils' self-esteem, confidence and independence as the foundation on which all else will be built.

Northern Education Trust and Norton Primary Academy have a shared vision of excellence. They continuously seek ways to improve the school by working closely together. The trust and local academy council provide both challenge and support where needed. This results in a positive environment. The staff say that their thoughts and ideas are valued. They speak positively about the consideration leaders give to their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in April 2019.

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	140519
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10346532
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	336
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Sanders
CEO of the trust	Rob Tarn
Principal	Michelle Randall-Harris
Website	www.npa.northerneducationtrust.org
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Northern Education Trust.
- The school provides a breakfast club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal and other senior leaders. The inspector visited various lessons, some with the principal and other leaders of

specific subjects. The inspector also spoke with some pupils and reviewed samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector discussed the provision for pupils with SEND. The inspector also met with the designated safeguarding leads and the school's pastoral support team.
- Meetings were held with representatives from the trust. The inspector also had a telephone discussion with the vice-chair of trustees to discuss the school's journey since the last inspection.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document, safeguarding information, records and policies.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- Parents' views of the school were considered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The information from staff and pupil surveys was also considered.

Inspection team

Andrea Batley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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