

Inspection of Norton College

Woodbury Lane, Norton, Worcestershire WR5 2BA

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 April 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at Norton College having experienced disruption to their education. Staff prioritise getting to know the pupils well. They quickly form positive relationships with them. This helps pupils to feel safe and settled. One pupil commented that the school is 'life-changing'. There is a positive, fresh start approach that builds pupils' self-belief. The school is highly ambitious for its pupils. Pupils reconnect with their education and, as a result, achieve well.

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils focus on their learning well. Pupils gain 'points' for positive achievements. Teachers calmly support any pupil who loses concentration and successfully help them regain focus. During social times, pupils mix with others in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils know who to talk to about any concerns they may have.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about developing independence and resilience. The school provides a range of opportunities to support community projects, including the local allotment. Pupils have created music and library spaces and were integral to deciding the new school values recently introduced. Most pupils choose to take part in daily enrichment activities, including sports, languages and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

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

The school continues to raise its ambition. Leaders have accurately identified the areas to focus on to keep improving the school. The school continues to raise expectations around learning, behaviour and attendance. In all classes, positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents and carers help pupils to be confident and happy.

The curriculum maps out precisely the knowledge and skills that pupils, and students in the sixth form, need to learn. This helps teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. New learning builds on what has been taught before. This helps pupils to make connections with what they have learned previously. The school emphasises the importance of linking knowledge in one subject with another. For example, learning includes discussions about mathematical calculations within science practical experiments. Most staff check what pupils have learned and adapt their teaching accordingly. This enables pupils to build on what they know and can do. However, pupils sometimes lack opportunities to extend their knowledge. This leads to some pupils not being challenged to deepen their subject knowledge and understanding.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff use detailed information about these needs to consider how the learning looks for each pupil. The school recognises the importance of reading to ensure pupils can learn the rest of the curriculum fully. Pupils who need support with reading begin learning phonics as soon as they join the school. The school's programme to support pupils' reading

skills is secure within the English curriculum. However, there are fewer opportunities for staff to model the teaching of reading, including reading fluency, in the wider curriculum. As a result, some pupils do not understand precisely the information to read and what the reading means. This impacts how well they can access their learning across the curriculum.

Some pupils, including students in the sixth form, do not attend school as often as they should, but this is significantly improving for the majority of pupils since they joined the school. Leaders work extensively with parents and professionals to tackle poor attendance. Leaders monitor and analyse attendance. This helps them to offer personalised plans to support pupils in attending school more often. These strategies are effective.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are at the heart of this school. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is very well designed and sequenced. Pupils learn about online dangers and positive relationships well. Visits to the train station, restaurants and mosques help develop pupils' detailed awareness of different social and cultural locations. All pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive impartial careers information. However, the school does not provide enough experiences for students to encounter the world of work or further study opportunities, including vocational pathways. This means that some students are not as well prepared for life beyond the school as they could be.

School leaders, with the support of the proprietor body, strive to continuously improve the school. They understand how every pupil is an individual. The school is determined to provide pupils with the best possible educational experience in a nurturing environment. To this end, the school has implemented a well-thought-out professional development programme. The school continues to review its staffing needs, consults staff well on policy changes and considers their workload carefully, both of which staff appreciate.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, as a suitable accessibility plan is in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Opportunities to model and explicitly teach reading, including fluency, are missed in the wider curriculum. This means that pupils and students who experience difficulties reading age-related texts and understanding their meaning, in subjects other than English, are not provided with sufficient opportunities to practise and develop reading fluency. Across the wider curriculum, the school should ensure

that all staff understand how to develop and model the teaching of reading, including fluency, to support students' understanding and enjoyment of reading.

- The school does not provide enough opportunities for students to encounter the world of work and further study opportunities, including vocational pathways. This means that some students are not as well prepared for life beyond the school as they could be. The school should ensure that all students are provided with a structured and systematic further study and vocational programme, including encounters with the world of work, to prepare them for life beyond the school.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136262 |
| DfE registration number | 885/6040 |
| Local authority | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number | 10374906 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent special school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 80 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 43 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 11 |
| Proprietor | Acorn Care |
| Chair | Richard Power |
| Headteacher | Rodney Goold |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £55,995 |
| Telephone number | 01905 359257 |
| Website | www.nortoncollege.org.uk |
| Email address | office@nortoncollege.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 21 to 23 June 2022 |

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs who have had a disrupted education. All the pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Most pupils are educated in the school building. However, some are educated at home, and some are also educated for part of their timetable at outdoor venues located nearby.
- Pupils have physical education lessons both at the school and at other local venues.
- The school uses three alternative provisions.
- The school's last standard inspection was in June 2022.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, PSHE and science. The inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, individually, about their learning and experiences at school.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour and attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. Inspectors also reviewed the school's website.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.

- The inspectors held meetings with the managing director as representative of the proprietor body, the regional director, the headteacher and other leaders, teachers and support staff. The inspectors also talked informally to pupils, staff, one parent and one ex-pupil to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. The lead inspector toured the premises to check their suitability against the relevant independent school standards.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Russell Hinton

Ofsted Inspector

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