



Norton Canes High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124395
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292982
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Cook HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Burntwood Road
School category	Community		Norton Canes
Age range of pupils	11–18		Cannock WS11 3SP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01543 514400
Number on roll (school)	609	Fax number	01543 514430
Number on roll (6th form)	40		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	T Ellis
		Headteacher	Paul Fell
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	29–30 November 2006	292982

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In terms of pupil numbers Norton Canes is a much smaller than average school. The school's sixth form is part of a consortium which is made up of three secondary schools and has links with a local college. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is just below average whereas the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. There are very few pupils who are from minority ethnic groups. There are also very few pupils who do not speak English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement especially in English and the sixth form, and to areas of leadership and management.

The amount of progress pupils make from Year 7 to Year 11 has improved over the last successive four years. This is proof that the school has the capacity to improve. However, there remain areas of the school where too many pupils have not made adequate progress. In these areas the senior leadership team has yet to ensure that its agenda for improvement produces the desired results. The senior leadership team knows what still needs to be done and confidently talks about the clear direction in which it is taking the school.

Most pupils enjoy school and their satisfactory personal development and well-being provide a sound base to ensure their learning improves. Pupils show a good level of concern for each other and the care they receive in school is satisfactory. The school effectively promotes healthy lifestyles and this is having a positive impact on pupils. The school council is active and makes a positive contribution to the running of the school. The school has good provision for disaffected pupils to help them gain skills that will assist them in the future. For most other pupils, preparation for further study or work when they leave school is satisfactory.

Standards in the school are rising and there are a number of success stories, for example in mathematics, religious education and art. Overall GCSE examination results in 2006 were a little below the national average. However, pupils do not make enough progress in all areas they study, especially in English and in the sixth form. More effective academic guidance is required to address this. In the past, both girls and boys made inadequate progress by the end of Year 11. Girls now make better progress than boys. Teaching is improving but more needs to be done to ensure that it is all at least satisfactory and to increase the proportion of good teaching. The curriculum is developing and there have been some good steps in making it more relevant to pupils' needs.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

Results over the last three years have been well below predictions based on students' prior attainment. In 2006, the achievement of most of the Year 13 students taking A levels was well below what could be expected and results at AS level showed a similar pattern. This puts the school in the bottom 25% of schools nationally in terms of students' progress and eventual attainment. Despite being part of a local consortium offering a wide range of courses, too many students are following academic subjects that are beyond their capabilities.

In lessons, the quality of teaching is generally satisfactory but students receive insufficient guidance and feedback on their work. In some subjects when homework was set there was evidence that it was marked by the students themselves in lessons with very little work being submitted for detailed marking by the teacher. This lack of feedback hinders students' progress. Students also say that lessons are often cancelled at short notice. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 is not monitored and evaluated by the school and since subjects are often shared between the schools in the consortium no one is held accountable when students fail to gain the grades predicted from their prior attainment. Students say that they are often neglected and their requests for changes are usually ignored. They feel there is insufficient monitoring of their academic progress. This was also highlighted in the February 2006 student survey of all consortium students where the response to 'My work is assessed helpfully so that I can see how to improve it' was that 36% of students disagreed or disagreed strongly. Similarly for 'I had helpful advice on what I should study in 6th Form' 40% disagreed or disagreed strongly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and guidance in the sixth form so that students make better progress.
- Ensure that all levels of leadership and management are effective in improving learners' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 4

The school recognises that there is underachievement in many subjects across the school and especially in English. Underachievement also exists in the sixth form where many students fail to make enough progress from low starting points.

The 2006 national tests showed that the standards Year 9 pupils achieved in English, mathematics and science were broadly average; this was an improvement since 2005 when standards for science were below average. Although the progress pupils made in these subjects was satisfactory the school's own evaluations show that a significant minority of pupils underachieve in other subjects. The progress pupils make in Key Stage 4 is very patchy. In the recent past the progress pupils have made from broadly average starting points has been inadequate. The school itself judges achievement in Key Stage 4 to be inadequate in a number of subjects including English and English literature. However, the school is also correct in pointing out that pupils make good progress in mathematics, religious education and art. The success in these subjects has significantly added to the overall improvement in standards seen in the 2006 GCSE results where the percentage of pupils achieving five A*– C grades has risen to just below average. Although these better results prove that the school is going in the right direction in improving standards, they mask continued insufficient progress made

by boys and underachievement by most pupils in English. The school is aware that the underachievement in English results in pupils' weak literacy skills which in turn impede the progress they make in other subject areas.

The school is confident that the improved teaching and the changes they have made in the courses pupils follow, for example, in information and communication technology (ICT) will result in better standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school and attendance is very good. When lessons are interesting and stimulating pupils are keen to learn and make good progress in their learning. The inconsistent quality in teaching affects both pupils' attitudes and the quality of their learning. Pupils feel that the school is a safe environment, bullying is uncommon, and staff deal effectively and quickly with any reported incidents. Relationships between pupils are good in that they generally listen well to each other's contributions in lessons and treat each other with respect around the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most subjects make a contribution towards pupils' social and moral development. Religious education is a high performing subject within the school and pupils are encouraged to think about spirituality in its various forms. However, there are relatively few opportunities outside of this. The school has recognised in its school improvement plan that the provision for multicultural education is underdeveloped.

Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and most appreciate the commitment of the school to offering healthy food choices. There is a range of extra-curricular activities available and the take up is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the community with a programme of charitable activities. The development of work place skills is satisfactory. The provision for ensuring that disaffected pupils stay in education and gain the skills necessary to prepare them for the world of work is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although there is some effective and outstanding teaching, it is inconsistent across the school and too often not good enough to raise standards. The best lessons are carefully planned, with the aims for learning being made clear to the pupils at the outset. The pupils are motivated when they are given interesting and demanding work that involves them actively. This

was illustrated well in a Year 7 physical education lesson where the pupils were developing their rugby skills. Levels of enjoyment were high and their levels of confidence and skill improved significantly. However, in some lessons, pupils lose interest in their work because it is not matched well to their learning needs nor is it challenging enough. It is particularly the case in some English lessons where the quality of teaching is sometimes inadequate. The management of the pupils' behaviour is inconsistent across the school. Pupils told inspectors that this slows their progress, especially in a few lessons where teachers cannot adequately control the class.

Marking is generally up to date, but often does not indicate clearly how pupils can make improvements. The assessment of the pupils' attainment is reasonably accurate but does not occur frequently enough to identify underachievement at an early stage. A better system for tracking pupils' progress has been implemented recently; it is being used by all staff with increasing effectiveness. The recently introduced system of regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons has already led to clear improvement. Teachers whose performance is inconsistent are provided with good support, and the 'Toolkit for learning' folder, which outlines expectations for teaching, is a very helpful document.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress. There has been an increase in the number of pupils who arrive in Year 7 with low reading ages and effective strategies have been put in place to remedy this. Access plans have been introduced recently for all pupils on the SEN register which gives guidance to teachers to set appropriate targets for pupils. However, planning of lessons that includes addressing the specific needs of these pupils is variable and this creates difficulties for them unless they are supported by a teaching assistant.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good elements. It is broad and balanced and offers a range of vocational GCSE subjects. In addition, an alternative curriculum, involving National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses in local colleges and work placements, has been implemented successfully for pupils in Years 10 and 11 for whom the normal curriculum is inappropriate. These pupils are often disenchanted with school and can create problems for others in lessons. Since this alternative curriculum has been introduced attendance levels have risen and the number of exclusions has been halved.

Since the last year, the school has made a substantial investment in ICT and all rooms now have data projectors installed. However, only a minority of teachers use these on a regular basis to enhance their teaching. The school provides all Year 10 pupils with the opportunity to undertake a work experience placement. The pupils' understanding of the workplace is developed further through events like business simulations, led by visiting speakers and theatre groups. Pupils are appreciative of the range of lunchtime and after school activities, which are well attended. Many spoke excitedly about their involvement in dance and drama productions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The level of care, guidance and support pupils receive is satisfactory overall but inadequate in the sixth form. Particular strengths lie in the pastoral care that pupils receive which promotes their personal development and well-being. Year 7 pupils have settled in well and most pupils say they feel safe and valued in school; this is reflected in the good attendance levels and good relationships. The post holder for health and safety has recently left the school and interim arrangements are currently in place. Child protection procedures on a day-to-day basis are secure, widely understood and regularly reviewed.

The school has developed good links with external agencies and receives multi-agency support particularly for vulnerable students and those at risk. Tracking of pupils' progress based on assessment data helps staff identify pupils failing to make adequate progress. However, the quality of support that identified pupils receive varies and the senior leadership team does not have sufficient systems in place to monitor this provision. Pupils say they know what their individual targets are but not all are clear about what they mean and how to improve their work further. Marking of work is often unhelpful and does not contain information on how work can be improved or the standard pupils have achieved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 4

Although the leadership and management of the school have begun to address some key issues concerning teaching and learning there remain significant areas within the school where leadership and management are not effective. In these areas, for example in the English department and in the sixth form, the senior leadership team has not yet brought about the changes required to ensure provision is at an adequate level. The senior leadership team knows what needs to be done but inadequate provision has been tolerated for too long.

Governors have not held the school to account in a way that has brought about change fast enough. The chair of governors has been in post for one year and is now leading the governors to question and challenge the school more directly.

The senior leadership team's evaluation of what needs to be done is accurate. However, it is based on monitoring and evaluation that varies in its rigour. Evaluation has been too generous in terms of the progress pupils make. There is also a lack of evidence collated to make secure judgements about the sixth form. For example, no observations of teaching and learning have been made in this area of the school's work and during the inspection the senior leadership team found inaccuracies in data.

Having said this, the school has come some way in making the school more effective and there is sound evidence that the senior leadership team has the capacity to improve further. For example, the drive on improving teaching and learning is having a positive affect. Well led departments have begun to share good practice with less effective departments although much of this work has not been in place long enough to bring about the improvement needed. For example, the good practice of monitoring teaching and having robust systems for identifying underachievement found in the leadership and management of the mathematics department has yet to be transferred to the English department. Overall, it is a lack of consistency in improvement that is preventing the school from raising the achievement of all pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	4

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

our recent visit to your school I am writing to inform you of our findings. First, may I thank those who spoke with inspectors helping us to build up a picture of how well your school is doing. Your views were well expressed and it is clear that you appreciate the good aspects of your school whilst also knowing where improvements need to be made. Having evaluated the work of the school the inspection team agreed that the school should be given a Notice to Improve. This means that the school needs to work on some areas to improve the standards of education it provides. However, the Notice to Improve also means that we have recognised that your school has made some recent changes for the better that prove the school has the means to continue the good work. Some of the positive things we found in your school were:

- Standards are improving and more pupils got five A*– C grades in the 2006 GCSE examinations.
- Your attendance is very good.
- The quality of teaching is improving as a result of the helpful advice teachers are given through their 'Toolkit for learning'.
- National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses and work placements for Years 10 and 11 are giving a number of pupils a chance to achieve well in their studies.

To ensure your school continues to improve, we have asked your teachers to make sure that:

- More of you achieve better in all of the subjects you study and especially in English.
- Students in the sixth form get improved teaching and guidance so that you achieve better.
- All staff with responsibilities in school focus their work on helping you to achieve.