

# Norton College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121683
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314081
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Cathryn Kirby HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	636
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Hudson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Tony Rawdin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Langton Road Norton Malton North Yorkshire YO17 9PT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01653 693296
<b>Fax number</b>	01653 693338

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; curriculum; teaching and learning; and care and guidance. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Norton College is a smaller than average secondary school situated in a small town in rural North Yorkshire. The college has specialist status in technology and vocational education. The socio-economic backgrounds of students are varied, but overall the pattern is similar to the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.

The college leads the Ryedale Education Improvement Partnership across four schools and ROOSE (Ryedale Out of School Education). A new, purpose built sixth form centre, serving the Ryedale 14 to 19 Area Learning partnership is scheduled to open on the college site in September 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

At the heart of Norton College is a strong commitment to enable all students to achieve their potential and develop as responsible young people who are well equipped for the next stage in their lives. Visitors to the college are quickly struck by the welcoming atmosphere and strong sense of community. All staff, including senior managers, know their students well. One student echoed the views of many in saying, 'What I like about this school is it's more of a family. The teachers talk to you as if you are an adult. They put you first before themselves.'

Overall the standards are good. The progress made by students in relation to their prior attainment has placed the college in the top 15% of secondary schools nationally for the last three years at both key stages. A well-managed, innovative curriculum and outstanding teaching, enable all students to make significant gains in their learning. A factor contributing to the students' outstanding achievement is the consistency of impressive performance across a broad range of subjects, including science, English literature, two modern foreign languages, physical education (PE) and vocational courses. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and, as a result, make exceptional progress. The college's specialist status in technology makes a strong contribution to this positive picture with outstanding achievement in design technology at GCSE. The more recently acquired second specialism in vocational provision has extended the choice of study pathways considerably. The impact of curriculum is encapsulated in this comment from a student, 'It is good here because you don't need to be academically brilliant to succeed. There are enough courses inside and outside of school for those who prefer to do other things.'

The headteacher's vision for the future has set a clear strategic direction for the college. He has been influential in building the capacity of leaders and managers at all levels. Senior leaders work well together. Their energies are firmly focussed on ensuring high quality learning and on shaping an outstanding curriculum which leads to exceptional outcomes for young people. Senior leaders know the many strengths of the college, but are not complacent. Reflective self-evaluation, good use of data and rigorous monitoring inform leaders and managers of the next steps to take. For example, the school is aware that the literacy skills of some pupils, particularly in relation to reading and writing, could be developed further to better support their learning across the curriculum. Appropriate action is being taken.

The majority of parents are highly satisfied with the standard of education the college provides for their children. However, a significant minority of those who responded to the questionnaire felt that the college could do more to take their views into account. A small minority expressed some concerns over behaviour, although inspectors found this to be good in lessons and around the college. Relationships between students and staff are good and founded on mutual respect. The majority of students display a mature approach to their work and readily take responsibility for their learning in response to the imaginative tasks set by many teachers. They are well mannered and have good social skills. In lessons, students were willing to discuss with inspectors their work and their views of college.

The college has made good improvements since the time of the last inspection. An innovative approach to home learning, using the college website, Internet and email has increased the amount of private study students do outside lessons and successfully engaged the more reluctant learners. Lunch-time and after school access to information and communication technology (ICT), further supports the college's commitment to develop the ICT skills demanded by many

employers. Project-based home learning tasks enables younger pupils to consolidate their learning successfully in humanities subjects.

Constructive partnership working has been a key factor in enabling the college to secure outstanding provision and outcomes for students. Well established links with other providers greatly extend the opportunities for work-related education and training. The headteacher and governors have been proactive in establishing and leading a collaborative partnership between four schools. This initiative has been successful in developing a coherent post-16 framework to widen the participation of young people, including the current Year 11 students, in further education and training through easily accessible local provision. That achievement and standards have continued to improve at a time when the headteacher and governors have been actively involved in this considerable task is testament to the high quality of leadership and management at all levels. The college has played a lead role in establishing the Ryedale Out of School Education service to support vulnerable young people and those at risk of exclusion.

Students are carefully guided to choose from vocational courses such as land based studies and animal care, motor vehicle maintenance, hairdressing, construction and engineering to complement a more academic curriculum. The college's own farm and purpose built drama studio are used, together with specialist facilities of partner institutions, to support work-related training. Both French and Spanish are offered at each key stage. The college's outstanding PE department leads a collaborative partnership with other secondary schools to deliver vocational sports courses and coaching awards, as well as enriching the wider curriculum with after school sports opportunities. This exceptional range of high quality courses provides a firm platform from which students can progress into the new sixth form in September 2008. The college provides a varied choice of lunch-time and after school clubs to enrich students' experience.

Senior leaders have created a culture of continuing improvement in classroom practice. Established structures at whole-college and faculty level encourage the sharing of good practice and stimulate high quality debate about learning and teaching. The impact of this work is evident in lessons where students demonstrate a real enthusiasm for learning and make good gains in their knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. Teachers plan lessons well to ensure that the work set reflects the range of skills and abilities in the class. The focus is very much upon learning, often through imaginative tasks that engage and sustain the students' interest. Many students are developing good independent study skills as a result of teachers setting tasks which enable them to take some responsibility for their own and others' learning.

The college has been very successful in making effective links between pastoral and learning support. A firm commitment to inclusion and well established multi-agency links have created a safe and nurturing environment in which all, including the most vulnerable students, thrive.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Take action to ensure that all parents feel that their views are listened to and valued.
- Embed the initiatives taken to support the development of the literacy skills of all pupils to further raise standards.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your college recently. We are very pleased to be able to share our findings with you.

We spoke to a number of you and to the headteacher and many of your teachers. We observed lessons, looked at some of your work, reviewed the college's examination results over the last three years and looked at other areas of the college's work.

Overall we judged Norton College to be outstanding. Congratulations!

You have all played an important part in helping college gain this top grade and can be rightly proud of this achievement. The vast majority of you work hard in lessons and respond well to the interesting and challenging tasks your teachers provide to help you learn. For a smaller than average secondary school, the choice of courses on offer at Norton College is exceptional. There is something for everyone. This exciting curriculum, and teachers who work very hard, means many of you make outstanding progress between the ages of 11 and 16. The college provides a caring and supportive environment, of which you are appreciative, and in which you all thrive.

Many of you are excited about the new sixth form and rightly so. Norton College is leading the way to provide high quality courses in state-of-the-art facilities right on your doorstep!

Even though the college has been judged outstanding, the headteacher, your teachers and governors are always seeking to improve further. We have suggested, and they agree that:

- they will look at ways to take your parents' views more into account by listening more carefully to what they have to say.
- they will make sure that the work the college is doing to help some of you develop your reading and writing skills is successful in helping you better manage your work in all subjects.