

Inspection of Norton College

Woodbury Lane, Norton, Worcestershire WR5 2BA

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 June 2022

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?

Norton College gives pupils another chance to succeed in education after having negative experiences previously. Most pupils have missed a significant amount of time from school. Staff try various approaches to re-engage pupils in learning. They get to know pupils' needs and what interests and motivates them. Staff use this information to develop the curriculum offer. Pupils also work towards a core of essential knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. Staff tailor the curriculum delivery to pupils' individual needs.

Pupils' personal development, particularly developing their character, is at the heart of everything the school does. Staff build up pupils' confidence and resilience through carefully considered programmes. They ensure that pupils' social skills are developed well. Pupils appreciate the varied ways this happens. This could be during sessions of Dungeons and Dragons, for example, or through water sports at local venues.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times and respect staff. Bullying is rare. When some pupils find situations challenging, staff are skilful in supporting pupils to manage their emotions and anxieties. The pupils spoken to say they feel safe. Many are much happier at this school than they were in previous settings.

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

There is a simple vision for the pupils at this school. Leaders, including the proprietor body, aim to ensure that pupils experience a positive pathway into adulthood. They make this happen for most pupils. Leaders have adopted a one to one and flexible approach to delivering the curriculum. For some, this involves tutoring pupils in their home and having twilight sessions at the school when the main school day has finished. For others, this combines time spent in the school with time spent at other providers, where they get to work with animals.

For all pupils, including those in the sixth form, there is an ambition to achieve academic qualifications. The curriculum in a range of subject areas is coherently designed to achieve this. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science identify clearly what pupils need to know and remember. Leaders have made reading a high priority. They have invested in a range of resources to support reading. Pupils have opportunities to read widely and often. For some pupils this has had a major impact so that they read confidently and fluently.

Pupils complete assessments when they join the school. This helps to identify appropriate starting points and gaps in their knowledge. Staff use this information and their knowledge of pupils' interests, to provide a bespoke curriculum for each individual pupil. For example, the key content in English could be delivered through a history unit for one pupil. For another, the unit could be based on a real-life adventurous activity.

In many subjects, including vocational subjects such as construction, staff have the subject expertise they need to deliver the curriculum well. Staff give clear explanations. Resources are of a high quality. Staff use them well to support pupils' understanding. This is a particular strength in science, where pupils watch relevant film clips and carry out practical experiments. This helps pupils to accurately make predictions and draw conclusions.

Staff are skilled in supporting pupils' behaviour. They are attuned to pupils' emotional state and know how to adapt their approach to suit the situation. They are also skilled at bringing pupils back to their learning. They support pupils to refocus on learning after they have been distracted.

All pupils at the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Staff understand how to meet pupils' emotional needs because of the effective training they have completed. However, staff's knowledge of how to meet some of the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not as strong.

Careers advice is an important part of the provision at the school. Pupils receive regular and impartial advice through their mentors and the assistant headteacher responsible for this area. When pupils express an interest in a particular career, leaders support this in many ways. They tailor the academic curriculum on offer. They also arrange, where possible, appropriate work experience or work visits.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is relatively new. Leaders have adopted a recognised scheme which they supplement with themes each week. Pupils respect and accept others' differences. They know about the fundamental British values. For example, democracy. In the past, pupils have visited places of worship for different faiths. In the new scheme, the exploration of other faiths and beliefs is not as in depth.

The proprietor body are well-informed about the school's work to keep pupils safe. They have a good understanding of the progress pupils make. They ensure they make spending decisions in pupils' best interests. Leaders, including the proprietor body, have ensured the school meets all the independent school standards.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff complete a range of suitable training to ensure they know how to identify if a pupil might be at risk. There are robust procedures in place to report anything of concern. Leaders act swiftly to any concerns raised. They work closely with parents and other agencies to get pupils the right support to keep them safe.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe because of the effective safety curriculum. This includes staying safe online. Mentors work closely with individuals to prepare them for staying safe in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Not all staff have the level of expertise needed to meet some of the specific SEND needs of the pupils who attend. As a result, adaptations to the curriculum are not always as effective as they could be. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the appropriate knowledge they need to meet the specific needs of all pupils.
- The new PSHE curriculum does not explore other faiths and beliefs in detail. This risks pupils not being well enough prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that the plans to supplement this subject are implemented immediately to ensure pupils have sufficient knowledge of other faiths and beliefs.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136262 |
| DfE registration number | 885/6040 |
| Local authority | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number | 10220406 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent 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 | 27 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Norton College (Worcester) Ltd |
| Chair | Edward Morris |
| Headteacher | Rodney Goold |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £43,033 |
| Telephone number | 01905 359257 |
| Website | www.nortoncollege.org.uk |
| Email address | office@nortoncollege.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 1 to 3 May 2018 |

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 EHC plan.
- Most pupils are educated in the school building. However, some are educated at home, and many 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 providers.

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.

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders including the executive headteacher, head of school, assistant headteachers and with the proprietor body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, design and technology, and PSHE. In these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at work and talked to staff.
- Inspectors also visited lessons for construction and science.
- The lead inspector toured the premises with the head of school to ensure that the school provides an appropriate environment for pupils. The lead inspector examined health and safety documentation.
- Inspectors examined several policies, schemes of work and plans, as well as documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during the inspection and considered the responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke to staff individually and considered the responses to the staff survey.

- The lead inspector spoke to parents on the telephone and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Helen Forrest, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Field

Ofsted Inspector

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