

Norton Canes Primary Academy

School Road, Norton Canes, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 9SQ

Inspection dates

12 to 13 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher's drive and high expectations have been central to the recent improvements of the school. Effective support from the multi-academy trust and leaders from the partner school have secured improvements in the quality of teaching.
- An inclusive and nurturing ethos pervades the school. Staff are attentive and support pupils' emotional well-being effectively. Pupils who have complex needs are managed superbly.
- Since July 2018, outcomes have risen. Pupils' starting points on entry to school are typically low. Good teaching enables pupils to progress well.
- Leaders are developing the curriculum. This is particularly the case in history, geography and music, where pupils' knowledge and understanding develop well.
- The teaching of reading is having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment. Pupils develop their skills through a wide range of texts, and their progress is carefully monitored by staff.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. However, the level of challenge provided is inconsistent in key stage 2.
- Pupils enjoy writing at length and across a range of genres. Handwriting skills are not used consistently and neatly in pupils' writing.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Early years is well led. Staff in Nursery and Reception manage children's emotions and behaviour very well. Activities provided enable children to make good progress. Too few opportunities are provided that enable children to think more deeply when engaged in play.
- The pupil premium funding is put to good use. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the school's strategies.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium has been effective. Pupils receive a broad range of physical and sport-related opportunities both within and after the school day.
- The local governing body now provides appropriate challenge to school leaders. School improvement support provided by the multi-academy trust has been effective, particularly in relation to developing the quality of teaching.
- The safeguarding culture in school is good. Staff take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure children in the early years have regular opportunities to play, explore and engage in critical thinking.
- Sustain improvements in the teaching of writing and mathematics by ensuring that pupils:
 - join their handwriting consistently and neatly in all subjects as they progress through the school, achieving a high standard of presentation by the end of key stage 2
 - in key stage 2 are moved on more quickly to the more challenging activities in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the appointment of a new regional director and deputy regional director of the multi-academy trust 18 months ago, charged with supporting Norton Canes Primary Academy, they have played a pivotal role in improving the school. They and the new headteacher make a strong team and have a firm and thorough understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. Other leaders, although some are new to post, such as the early years leader and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), clearly show potential. They know their areas of responsibility well and are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes through developing the curriculum further.
- Leaders have created a positive culture of support through working with their partner school in Warwickshire. The headteacher has a clear sense of direction and a desire to get the best out of pupils, both academically and socially. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel that they are being developed through a range of coaching and mentoring opportunities.
- Teachers are closely involved in the evaluation of teaching. Some of the observations of lessons and checks on the quality of work in pupils' books are done jointly with leaders. This helps hold teachers to account in a collaborative and professional way.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and focused. Leaders use the thorough standardised scores and information they have about pupils' progress to identify strengths and put in place relevant priorities for improvement. Actions to address these priorities are successfully being addressed through the school's improvement plan, for example the drive to reduce absenteeism has been highly successful.
- Leaders and staff provide very good support to vulnerable pupils and those who have complex needs. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils are well catered for in class and through additional support. The SENCo is new to the post, but already has a clear view of the quality of provision and what needs to be improved.
- Leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils well. Funding helps to subsidise school trips and music lessons and to pay for training to support specific pupils. This has had a significant impact on the improvement of pupils' behaviour.
- The PE and sport premium funding is utilised well. The range of extra-curricular, physical activity and sports clubs is extensive and often oversubscribed.

Governance of the school

- Governors now feel that they receive clear and accurate information about the performance of different groups of pupils. This has enabled them to ask challenging questions of leaders when outcomes for pupils have been low. Governors are now able to hold leaders appropriately to account.

- School improvement support commissioned by the trust from the partner school in Warwickshire has provided high-quality challenge and support for all staff, particularly around the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Procedures for checking the suitability of visitors and staff recruitment are secure. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children appropriately.
- Leaders ensure that all staff and governors are well trained and skilled in safeguarding matters. There are regular training sessions to keep staff informed and up to date.
- Leaders maintain a culture in the school where staff show a clear understanding of their responsibilities and of the processes used to keep pupils safe. As a result, staff promptly identify and appropriately support potentially vulnerable pupils. They also engage effectively and tenaciously with outside agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. A thoughtful curriculum and assembly programme enable pupils to learn about different aspects of safety on a regular basis. Pupils receive a comprehensive drugs and solvent abuse programme. They know how to stay safe on the internet and are aware of 'stranger danger'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has steadily improved since July 2018, when a programme of monitoring and support was put in place by the trust. Teachers' questioning is a noticeable strength. The use of consistent classroom approaches leads to a purposeful and efficient working atmosphere. Pupils are settled and work hard.
- The quality of recent staff training has had a positive effect on classroom practice. Swift strategies are put in place to support weaker teaching. Teaching assistants play an important role in pupils' learning. They achieve a good balance of guiding pupils, while also encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Reading is taught effectively. Pupils progress well and, most importantly, they enjoy reading. Staff's good subject knowledge and teaching of phonics provide pupils with the skills to use their understanding of letter sounds to read new words efficiently in the early part of their school life. In key stage 2, the whole-class book approach captures pupils' attention and helps all pupils to access age-appropriate texts. Follow-up activities successfully develop pupils' comprehension skills.
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to write across a range of genres. Most pupils make good progress, but the development of handwriting skills is inconsistent across the school. How to join letters is not taught precisely enough and pupils sometimes get into bad habits with their writing.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved over the last year. Teachers provide more opportunities to demonstrate pupils' understanding, using pictures and pieces of apparatus. Their reasoning skills are starting to develop in some year groups. However,

they are not challenged consistently well. When this occurs, pupils continue to do work that comes easily to them, rather than applying understanding to more difficult tasks.

- A specialist music teacher means that music lessons are interesting and pupils really enjoy the subject. Throughout their school life, pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a range of instruments, including steel drums. Year 6 pupils achieved the London College of Music Level 3 qualification for their 'ensemble' music performance. Pupils' knowledge and skills in other subjects, such as history, geography and religious education, develop well over time.
- Some buildings and parts of buildings are in a poor state of repair. Despite this, teachers make the learning environments as attractive as they can for pupils.
- In-class support for pupils with SEND is effective and helps them to make good progress. Staff are sensitive to their needs, especially where pupils have complex social and emotional needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff have created a nurturing ethos in which pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Staff respond sensitively to pupils, particularly those who have specific emotional needs. Mutual respect is prevalent between staff and pupils.
- Leaders recognise that pupils would benefit from learning about other cultures beyond their own experiences. This is an area currently under development.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. A thorough programme of assemblies and activities teaches pupils about danger.
- The PE and sports premium funding is used effectively. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves healthy and engage in a wide range of activities, including dodge ball, dance and gymnastics. The school achieved the 'Gold Mark' sports award in 2018.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times is good. They move around school sensibly and respond well to instructions from staff. A positive focus on rewards ensures that pupils who behave well receive appropriate praise.
- There are some pupils who have very complex emotional and behavioural needs. These pupils are managed well by staff. The school's nurture programme and use of emotional coaching has helped to secure improvements to behaviour since the Autumn term.
- The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions has reduced over the last year, and since the appointment of the new headteacher there have been no exclusions.

- Procedures for managing and analysing absence are well organised. Staff responsible for this have very positive relationships with parents and families and are quick to make telephone calls when pupils have not arrived at school. Attendance figures have improved over the last year and incidents of absence and persistent absence have been significantly reduced in the same period.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the last inspection, outcomes have improved across the school. A relatively high number of pupils enter school with skills below a level that is typical for their age. Good teaching enables pupils to progress well as they move through the school.
- In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was above the national average. In 2018, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics dipped slightly. However, the majority of current Year 1 pupils are on track to meet the expected standard.
- Outcomes in key stage 1 are strong. The proportions of pupils attaining average and higher attainment have been broadly in line or above national figures for three years. In 2018, attainment in writing dipped slightly, but current Year 2 pupils are on track to meet the expected standard.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well across the school. The school's assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils generally make good progress.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have been below the national average for the last three years. However, while historically attainment has been low, it has shown a consistent year-on-year improvement. While attainment in mathematics is improving, there is still not a consistent level of challenge provided in lessons.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 2 in grammar, punctuation and spelling has been below the national average for three years. While pupils' English books show that they make good progress, their handwriting skills are not applied consistently in their writing.
- Work in pupils' creative curriculum books shows that their knowledge and skills are developing well in other subjects. This is particularly the case in history, geography and music.

Early years provision

Good

- Relationships between staff and children in early years are a strength. Staff are attentive and meet children's emotional needs very well. In the Nursery, children are very well settled into the start of their life at the school.
- Children are encouraged to have good manners and behave well. Staff model their expectations and put in place consistent routines so that children are clear about their responsibilities. There is a calm and productive learning environment.
- A high number of children enter early years with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below the levels typical for their age. Strong subject knowledge and good

teaching from both teachers and teaching assistants enable children to progress well across the different areas of learning. Basic skills, such as phonics, are taught well.

- Staff are constantly seeking ways to develop children's language and communication skills. Vocabulary is provided to support children with their writing. Furthermore, adults are good at sharing new words and using questioning to extend children's vocabulary. Children with SEND receive one-to-one support from staff for speech and language activities where children's individual needs require this.
- Learning activities are interesting and varied. However, there is a greater need for pupils to be challenged more deeply through play activities led by the children's own interests. The opportunities for children to engage in open-ended activities that challenge their thinking were limited.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of the provision. She supports other staff well and has a clear view of the progress the children need to make. There are positive relationships with parents that further support children's development.
- Children make good progress, with the proportion of children achieving a good level of development rising from 2017 to 2018. While still slightly below national averages, work in books and the school's assessment information show that children make good progress from their starting points.
- All the statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	140489
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10088504

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jeremy King
Executive Headteacher	Geraldine Crofts
Telephone number	01543 279 402
Website	www.nortoncanesacademy.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@nortoncanesacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 to 30 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- A large majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The school has a Nursery and it has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school is a sponsored academy and is part of REAch2 multi-academy trust. The trust is responsible for managing the school, with local decision-making delegated to the governing body and the headteacher. The school receives support from its partner school in Warwickshire, which is also led and managed by the headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all year groups. A number of these were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors scrutinised work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met with two groups of pupils to gain their views of the school. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times and at the end of the school day, as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, as well as other senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met with a governor and she also met with the regional director and deputy regional director of the multi-academy trust.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation. These included assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance, records of how teaching is monitored and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered free-text comments from parents. One inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Heather Phillips, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Stone

Ofsted Inspector

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