

Inspection of a good school: North Town Academy

Staplegrove Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 1DF

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 March 2023

Outcome

North Town Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at North Town Academy know that staff expect them to always try their best. They say that staff motivate and encourage them. One pupil commented: 'Teachers tell us "You can do this!"'

Pupils feel safe in school. They enjoy their lessons. They are proud of their learning and of their sporting achievements. Pupils are taught to care for one another. Pupil-led groups, like the 'Champions of Change', organise activities for other pupils. These activities support pupils' physical and mental health.

Staff lead by example. They demonstrate, through their actions, the high expectations that they have of pupils. Pupils behave well. They work hard. Pupils say that teachers treat them fairly. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any issues.

The school has close links with the local sixth-form college, which enhances pupils' experiences. For example, the school choir uses the college's recording studio.

Parents speak positively of staff. One parent said that staff deal with any issues with 'care, compassion and efficiency'. Every parent who responded to Ofsted Parent View agreed that their child does well at North Town.

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

From Nursery onwards, leaders have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. In most subjects, teachers use this guidance to provide learning that builds on what pupils already know. They use regular checks to make sure that pupils have understood. Teachers help pupils to remember what they have learned. However, in some subjects, teachers are not clear about the knowledge that leaders have identified. When this is the case, the learning that teachers provide, and the guidance that they give, does not help pupils to remember important knowledge over time.

Leaders have taken action to make sure that pupils learn to read well. They have introduced a new approach to teaching pupils the letters and sounds they need to be able to read. This begins from the start of children's time at school. Children quickly learn new sounds. They enjoy reading books that use these sounds. Staff check pupils' learning carefully. If pupils start to fall behind, well-trained staff provide the support they need to keep up. Older pupils discuss their reading, particularly the vocabulary they come across. They are able to answer questions about what their reading means. Pupils across the whole school enjoy the books that their teachers read to them each day. Pupils read with increasing accuracy, fluency and expression as they move through the school.

Pupils enjoy learning mathematics. Teachers design learning that builds on pupils' knowledge and skills. They explain new ideas carefully. Teachers provide a range of resources, which pupils use effectively. In classes, staff teach pupils the correct vocabulary to talk about mathematics. In Nursery, children learn words that describe position while they play with model trains. In Year 6, pupils correctly use the word 'integer' as they describe how to round numbers. Leaders regularly check that pupils learn mathematics well. If there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, teachers address these with extra support.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) take part in every aspect of school life. Leaders work closely with teachers, parents and external experts to identify pupils' needs. Leaders support staff so that they can meet these needs well. Pupils' plans are detailed. They are carefully reviewed and updated. Consequently, pupils with SEND access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Staff make sure that pupils understand how to behave. Staff respond to any difficulties quickly and efficiently. Pupils trust staff. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

Leaders provide high-quality opportunities to support the personal development of pupils. Staff teach pupils to understand their emotions. Pupils learn how they can relate positively to others. They respect people from other backgrounds and know to treat everyone equally.

Staff appreciate the care that leaders show. Staff say that that leaders have taken effective actions to help them manage their workload. Governors have a clear plan to improve the school further. They use their expertise to support and challenge leaders. The multi-academy trust provides strong support to staff and governors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff are well trained in safeguarding. As a result, staff know how to raise any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders take concerns seriously. They work closely with external agencies. Leaders form good relationships with families to keep pupils safe.

Leaders are clear about the particular risks for their pupils and community. In response, they have adapted their curriculum and staff training. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers are not clear about the knowledge that leaders have identified for pupils to know and remember. Where this is the case, pupils do not build knowledge well. Leaders must ensure that teachers have a common understanding of the school's curriculum and what it means for their practice.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137126
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10227162
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	495
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jade Renville
Headteacher	Mark Braund
Website	www.northtownschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Richard Huish multi-academy trust in 2019.
- The school has a nursery that offers places to two-year-old children.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, governors and representatives from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work in other subject areas.

- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- The inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. He reviewed how well the designated safeguarding leads act on concerns about pupils' welfare. The inspector talked to pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- The inspector considered the 60 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 42 free-text responses. He also considered the 46 responses to the staff survey and the 138 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Jonathan Gower, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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