

Inspection of a good school: North Star 82°

Rectory Gardens, Henbury, Bristol, Avon BS10 7AH

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

North Star 82° continues to be a good school.

The head of school is James Wookey. This school is part of North Star Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kaye Palmer-Greene, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Hornsby.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils find sanctuary, safety and success at North Star 82°. Typically, pupils join following long periods of instability in their education. However, pupils benefit from skilled staff, who build strong, trusting relationships. Staff work hard to promote a sense of belonging. This helps engender a safe, and often calm, atmosphere. Learning is carefully planned to capture pupils' interest and help them to catch up. Consequently, pupils' experience of learning improves, and they quickly experience success.

Staff are well trained to manage sometimes complex behaviour and attitudes. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff follow established policies diligently. They secure positive relationships effectively. Discriminatory or unkind behaviour is not tolerated. Collectively, this helps to ensure that pupils' behaviour improves significantly and they develop more positive attitudes to learning and school.

Everyone agrees the school is a good place to be. Parents and carers are very positive about the difference the school makes for their children. However, despite relationships with parents being positive, more could be done to harness and involve them in their children's learning. This is reflected in pupils' individual plans, which are often too generalised.

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

The school has a clear rationale for the curriculum. Broadening pupils' experiences and improving their understanding of language are prioritised from the moment they arrive. Strong links between curriculum leadership and therapists ensure that pupils' individual

language needs are promoted in all lessons. This has been particularly useful in extending pupils' use of language and promoting their progress in reading and writing.

The school is continuously looking to improve. There are several subjects where actions to improve have been particularly effective. For example, the mathematics curriculum is carefully planned. Staff teach sequences of lessons that build on what pupils know and can do. As a result, pupils achieve well. The school has established useful ways to ensure that teachers assess pupils' knowledge with accuracy. This is more effective where teachers' subject planning is more established, for example in English, mathematics and physical education. Planning is newer in some subjects, and so in these areas, pupils' learning is less secure. For example, pupils have limited knowledge of the past and experiences that go beyond their immediate community. As a result, pupils are not able to make links across subjects to deepen their understanding.

Pupils' attitudes to reading are often transformed. The school ensures that reading is a top priority. Staff are well trained. They know how to support pupils who have developed negative views of reading. Pupils' reading abilities are assessed from the moment they start. Pupils are organised into groups so that they can learn alongside others who need to learn the same sounds. Pupils read books that are closely matched to what they are learning and already know. They read books with increasing independence and success. Consequently, pupils recognise they are getting better at reading, even though for many it is something they never believed they would do or enjoy.

The trust provides robust governance. There are effective systems and processes through which leaders report to the board of trustees and to their local governing body. Trustees are given useful and wide-ranging information about the strengths and areas for development of the school. They use this to support and challenge leaders well. This has helped ensure that the standard of education has been maintained, despite several significant changes across the past year.

Pupils' personal development is promoted throughout the school. Pupils benefit from a rounded and considered curriculum. Pupils discuss beliefs and other people's viewpoints in religious studies and personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils learn about fundamental British values. For example, they vote for members of the school council and contribute to the development of class rules.

Staff well-being is promoted effectively. Staff are positive about working in the school and the impact of different initiatives. They recognise that the strong team ethic enables them to work effectively. Everyone is proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum planning and teaching in some subjects is not as secure and consistent as in others. This means that pupils' learning is sometimes inhibited, because they cannot make key links between what they know in different subjects to enable them to achieve even more. Leaders need to ensure that pupils' learning is as coherent and at the same standard in all subjects.
- Pupils' individual plans are too general and difficult to measure impact. There is also a lack of opportunity for parents to make meaningful contributions to these. This means that the plans themselves do not add value to the strength of curriculum planning. Leaders should look to sharpen these plans so that identified targets are measurable and achievable and allow parents to support their children's learning in meaningful ways.

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 predecessor school, Woodstock School, to be good in April 2015.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and

pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 148296 |
| Local authority | Bristol City of |
| Inspection number | 10268571 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy special converter |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 58 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Stephen Hornsby |
| Head of school | James Wookey |
| Website | ns82.northstar-academy.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- North Star 82° converted to become an academy school in January 2021. When its predecessor school, Woodstock School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Since the predecessor school's last inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed. There are also several new teachers and support staff working at the school.
- The school is part of North Star Academy Trust.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional or mental health needs. There are also two classes specifically for pupils with autism.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the speech and language therapist, and the leads for school improvement, behaviour and safeguarding for the trust. They also spoke to a range of staff.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer from the trust. They met with two representatives from the local governing body, including the chair, and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard a selection of pupils read.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, including the free-text responses. They also reviewed responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluations of behaviour and attendance, minutes of the board of trustees, local governing body minutes and information about the school's curriculum.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tonwen Empson

Ofsted Inspector

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