

Inspection of North Star 240°

Long Cross, Lawrence Weston, Bristol BS11 0QA

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils face challenges in accessing learning because of their social, emotional and mental health needs. At North Star 240°, consistent routines and high expectations help pupils understand how to manage their anxieties and communication barriers. Staff are proud to work at the school. Their reward is seeing the strides that pupils make every day. The curriculum is well organised, and the lessons are interesting. Consequently, pupils work hard and try their best. An appropriate curriculum for careers guidance ensures that pupils plan relevant next steps.

Strong, trusting relationships exist between staff and pupils which means that pupils know that staff listen to and act on any concerns they might have. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are carefully structured so that pupils experience positive social times.

A caring, yet ambitious, ethos pervades the school. Whole-school assemblies create the sense of a large family, focused on empathy and a collective endeavour. Pupils feel safe to speak up and talk about how well they are achieving their goals. Staff patiently and kindly help pupils to recognise and own their targets. As a pupil described, 'Here, I can talk to staff. They help me when I struggle; they help me persevere.'

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

Trust leaders are active members of the school's leadership team. This has helped to secure continued improvement during recent challenging times. Leaders work with integrity and determination to ensure that the quality of learning continues to improve.

Most pupils arrive at the school with gaps in their knowledge, particularly in English and mathematics. Leaders adapt the curriculum and prioritise the most relevant subjects. There are strong systems in place to check the quality of the curriculum. Teachers have detailed, sequenced plans showing the precise content they need to teach. Subject leaders check how well pupils learn the planned curriculum.

Leaders have recently improved the quality of reading across the school. There has been a focus on promoting the enjoyment of reading through reading resources and opportunities for pupils to read each day. This has had a positive impact on pupils' views of the importance of reading. As a pupil eloquently described, 'Reading will get you somewhere in life.' Leaders are not complacent and have an accurate view of what still needs to improve. They are aware that a few pupils who are behind in reading do not have the consistently structured approach they need to catch up.

In most subjects, teachers check how well pupils understand new knowledge and use this to adapt future learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers design activities so that pupils gain a deeper understanding of important vocabulary. In some subjects,

assessment is less effective, and the curriculum is not adapted well. As a result, pupils continue to have misconceptions which slow their progress.

Staff help pupils to understand their next steps in managing their anxieties and improving their behaviour. They provide individualised visual prompts with targets for improvement. Everyone celebrates when there are small successes. This creates a positive environment where pupils thrive and look forward to their futures.

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum supports pupils to know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils gain a deep understanding of important themes, such as online sexual abuse. Leaders ensure that pupils who do not attend the school site receive similar curriculum content.

For a variety of reasons, many pupils are unable to attend school. The school works with local authorities, parents and carers to ensure that pupils have the support they need to access education. Making sure that these pupils come to school when they can is, rightly, a key focus for leaders. The impact of this work is that there are steady, gradual improvements to overall attendance. For those who are not able to attend, the school provides a relevant curriculum that meets pupils' needs. Staff visit some pupils for face-to-face learning. They provide remote, live and other online resources so that lessons parallel the provision in school whenever possible.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Governors fulfil their roles to oversee procedures and policies related to safeguarding, including recruitment. Safeguarding leaders ensure that staff identify pupils who are at risk of abuse. Staff are vigilant and understand how to report concerns. Leaders work with appropriate partners so that pupils get the help they need.

The school has suitable policies in place to raise awareness among staff and parents about the dangers of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The weakest readers do not have the help they need to catch up with reading quickly. As a result, they do not make up lost ground as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that pupils who need to catch up with reading have the specific support they need.
- Assessment in key stage 3 is sometimes not used to adapt the curriculum. When this is the case, learning activities are not well matched to pupils' needs and their work does not improve as it should. Leaders must ensure that assessment is effective so that the curriculum supports pupils to learn and remember more.

- Some pupils do not attend school often enough. Leaders must ensure that pupils who can access school are supported to do so. In addition, they must ensure that pupils who cannot access the school site continue to receive a high-quality education.

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	148322
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10212005
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Hornsby
Headteacher	Jo Grayson
Website	ns240.northstar-academy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- North Star 240° is a school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and associated learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- North Star 240° converted to become an academy special school in January 2021. When its predecessor school, Bristol Gateway School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The academy is part of a multi-academy trust, North Star Academy Trust.
- The school uses one registered and four unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors had meetings with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the trust and with other trust leaders. An inspector met with the chair of the trustees, the chair of the governing body and a parent governor. An inspector had a telephone call with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, catering and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to pupils, staff, governors and parents and carers. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Recruitment procedures were scrutinised and a range of documents relating to safeguarding were considered.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone to some parents of pupils who do not attend the school site. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online survey Ofsted Parent View, including the text responses, and the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Hilary Goddard	Ofsted Inspector

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