

# Norman Court School

Norman Court, West Tytherley, Hampshire SP5 1NH

**Inspection dates** 3–5 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school.

- Effective teaching ensures that Reception children achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Specialist teaching in music and physical education contributes well to the development of pupils' skills and their enjoyment.
- Teaching is mostly good, leading to good achievement.
- Pupils behave very well. Relationships are excellent. This is a warm, caring community where pupils learn and develop well.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They value the close family atmosphere.
- Links with parents and carers are a strength.
- The wide range of subjects contributes well to the effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has ensured that teaching and achievement are good.
- The trustees know the school well and make a significant contribution to driving improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- School leaders are not always rigorous enough in checking the quality of the school's work.
- Systems for the management of teachers' performance are not sufficiently thorough.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects other than in literacy.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Teachers' expectations are higher in literacy and numeracy than in other subjects.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils about their work does not always provide clear guidance about what they need to do to improve.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed six lessons taught by three different teachers.
- The inspector looked closely at pupils' written work for the current school year. He listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Trustees and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader.
- The inspector took account of the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 20 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement. He also considered documents relating to behaviour, attendance, parental complaints, health, safety and safeguarding and the systems for checking pupils' progress. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.

## Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Norman Court School is a small, non-selective, non-denominational, co-educational independent day school, in a rural setting.
- The school opened in September 2014, replacing a long-established boarding and day preparatory school on the same site which had closed in July 2012. A Montessori nursery, catering for children from 0 to 5 years, opened in September 2013 and shares its premises with the school. The Montessori nursery is registered and inspected separately and does not form part of the current inspection. The report can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>. Both the nursery and the school were established by a new not-for-profit company, Norman Court School Community Interest Company, administered by five trustees.
- The school occupies a small modern self-contained classroom block which had been part of the original school. However, it also has access to the specialist facilities of the former school, including a large art room, science laboratories, music room, library, modern sports hall, swimming pool, residential facilities and extensive, well-kept grounds. As the new school grows, leaders intend that it will progressively relocate to the main mansion building.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school is registered to admit 124 pupils, including the children in the Montessori nursery. Other than in Reception, all pupils joined the school from other schools in September 2014. Pupils are taught in two classes. There are currently eight pupils in Reception, four in Years 1 and 2 and nine in Years 3 to 5. There are no pupils in Year 6 in the current year. With increasing numbers it is intended to reorganise pupils into four classes from September 2015. In the early years, Reception children all attend full time.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has not identified any pupils as being disadvantaged.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2014. In this very small school the headteacher has an almost full-time teaching commitment.
- The school offers after-school and holiday care clubs. These are managed by the trustees and are open to pupils from other schools in the area.
- This is the school's first standard inspection since it opened in September 2014. The Montessori nursery provision was inspected by Ofsted in February 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the existing strengths of teaching and pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
  - all activities, particularly in subjects other than in literacy and in numeracy, challenge all pupils to gain a deeper understanding of their learning
  - pupils have more opportunities to develop their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum
  - feedback provided to pupils always helps them to know how they can improve their work.
- Further increase the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - developing the rigour and effectiveness of the school's evaluations of how well it is doing
  - ensuring there are rigorous and formal systems in place to manage the performance of teachers.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The effective leadership of the headteacher has underpinned the rapid progress made by this new school and has ensured that many aspects of the school's provision are already good. The headteacher promotes positive attitudes and strong values, and a culture of high expectations where teaching ensures pupils behave and achieve well.
- The current statutory safeguarding arrangements are securely in place and all of the independent school regulations are met. The headteacher recognises that there is still work to be done to ensure that the achievement of pupils is more consistently rapid; the school is now well placed to improve quickly.
- The school is too small and too recently established to have warranted a complex leadership structure. However, the employment of specialist teachers for subjects such as music and physical education has ensured that there is a growing core of expert practitioners, well prepared to take on greater subject responsibilities as opportunity allows.
- The development of formal monitoring structures and procedures for setting targets for teachers is at an early stage. However, the headteacher has a clear understanding of where the impact of teaching is greatest. Through links with other schools, opportunities exist even now for staff to build their confidence and expertise through observing other practitioners at work. The services of a professional business coach are employed to advise staff individually and collectively to help improve their professional practice.
- Staff teach a broad range of subjects and topics which engage pupils' interests. They take advantage of the rich local environment, in line with the revised National Curriculum. This provides good opportunities for outdoor learning and investigative activities. Over time, this will cover all expected subjects. The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and their personal development. Currently, coverage in subjects other than in English and in mathematics, as reflected in pupils' books, is sometimes limited. There have been relatively few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills through work in other subjects.
- The school initially evaluated new pupils' attainment in relation to their National Curriculum 'levels'. Subsequently, however, school leaders have accommodated current national changes. They are considering new ways of evaluating pupils' progress. They are aiming to implement a new system by September 2015.
- The school's evaluation of its effectiveness has until recently been focused too much on what it provides for its pupils, rather than what pupils achieve as a result; however, this has now started to happen.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is keen to promote Fundamental British values. Representatives of the fire service and police have visited the school. Parents come to speak to pupils about the jobs they do and their impact upon the community. The recent general election provided pupils with an insight into the democratic process. Pupils recently raised money for a local food bank and subsequently spent some time there preparing food parcels for those in difficult circumstances. Some work has been done to raise pupils' awareness of the expectations of religious and faith groups nationally. As a result, pupils recognise their rights and responsibilities as British citizens and are increasingly well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- School leaders have secured strong links with parents as the school has become more established. Good links have been negotiated with other schools to strengthen staff training opportunities.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance, although still developing, has emerging strengths. Trustees bring a range of relevant commercial and educational expertise and skills to their work. They are committed to doing the best for the school and for the wider community. They recognise the challenges of growing the school to a point where it is financially secure, while maintaining the intimacy which is valued by parents. They recognise that raising achievement continues to be a priority, although available data or comparative performance information remains limited. Consequently, it is difficult for them to take a view as to how well the school is doing in national terms. Overall, however, they are well informed about the school's work, including the quality of teaching, and they are closely involved in school improvement. They are working with the headteacher to implement effective systems for managing teachers' performance. The Chair of the Trustees spends a significant part of each week in the school. Trustees are increasingly effective in holding school leaders to account. Trustees ensure, alongside senior leaders, that all statutory duties and regulations are met, including those for keeping pupils safe.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All the relevant independent school standards are met. Pupils love school, enjoy the freedom of the spacious grounds and say that being in the school is like 'being part of one big family'. They treat each other with great courtesy and tolerance. They show positive attitudes to learning, particularly where activities really challenge them, and are committed in lessons. Their written work in literacy and in numeracy indicates that they mostly work hard. However, work in other subjects is not always produced to the same high standard. This is why behaviour is not yet outstanding.
- The school has set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour, supported by effective systems to manage and monitor how well pupils are behaving. Incidents are few, with no exclusions. Pupils feel behaviour is good and this is key to their enjoyment of school. There are no recorded incidents of racist behaviour.
- Attendance is closely monitored by staff and is above average. Pupils are keen not to miss school.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pastoral care is a strength. Pupils feel very safe in the knowledge that staff will deal with issues rapidly.
- Since opening, the school has implemented a raft of procedures to ensure that safeguarding procedures meet the independent school standards. A few minor procedural points were acted upon during the inspection to ensure that the school's systems are even more robust. All staff undergo full safeguarding checks prior to appointment. Additional training in fire safety has been included in the regular training programme for all staff.
- Through training in road safety and fire safety, the school helps pupils to protect themselves from these risks. Older pupils understand the risks relating to cyber-bullying, internet abuse and inappropriate usage.
- Pupils know that bullying may take many different forms. They feel that it is not an issue in this small community, but know what action to take if they have concerns.
- The school makes good provision in the after-school care club for pupils who need to stay late.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards for pupils' safety and well-being are met.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Good teaching enables pupils to learn rapidly and make good progress. All of the relevant independent school standards are met. Teachers mostly have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in the core areas of literacy and numeracy. They know their pupils very well and plan activities which engage pupils' interest well. Reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively through the school, so that pupils make good gains in their knowledge. Relationships are excellent, so that pupils enjoy their work and are comfortable in trying things out.
- In a recent topic on the First World War, pupils were able to handle and read an original letter from a family member of one of the pupils who had been involved in the war. They could then trace his family line through subsequent generations, thus bringing a reality to otherwise remote events.
- During the inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils were applying their mathematical knowledge to calculate the quantity of sandwiches needed to provide snacks for the whole-school den-building activity taking place in the afternoon. The planned activities were carefully matched to pupils' level of understanding, as were the teacher's questions. Pupils showed enthusiasm and persistence in tackling the problems presented and were keen to offer their ideas and opinions.
- Teaching is not outstanding because, in some lessons, the activities set do not take full account of the wide range of age and ability in each class so as to provide the right level of challenge.
- The few disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well. They receive good help and guidance from teachers and support staff to enable them to learn rapidly.
- The teaching of phonics (linking sounds to letters) is effective, so that pupils acquire good reading skills. The effective teaching of reading ensures that pupils have the necessary technical skills and understanding of language to become competent readers.
- The school has begun to implement effective systems to check and improve pupils' progress. However, teachers' feedback to pupils as to what they should do next is not always good enough, nor are pupils' targets always clear to them.
- Homework makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. However, some pupils say that the tasks are often too easy.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- The school has been established for just over two terms, with few pupils in any single year group, and none in Year 6. There is no external test data and limited information from progress tracking, other than in the early years, to provide accurate information on pupils' achievement. However, the school currently meets the independent school standards in relation to the quality and range of the experience it provides.
- Children in Reception achieve well. A greater proportion of children is likely to achieve a good level of development in 2015 than was the case nationally in 2014. Good teaching and well-planned activities ensure that children are well prepared to access the Year 1 curriculum.
- On the evidence of pupils' learning in lessons, and from their written work, achievement is good, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils currently in school have all had different educational experiences prior to joining, so that their starting points are very varied. However, regular teaching of phonics means pupils acquire good early reading skills. Across the school, pupils read well. They make good progress in writing in literacy lessons, but progress is variable in other subjects where some recorded work in, for example in history or science, lacks evidence of deep learning. At other times, particularly in outdoor learning, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing are missed.
- Pupils across the school are working at least at the expected level nationally, with some doing slightly better than this. Because of high quality specialist teaching, pupils achieve particularly well in music and physical education.
- The most able pupils benefit from the small numbers in each class and in each year group. This permits the delivery of a curriculum which is closely customised to the needs of individual pupils, including the most able.
- The school accurately identifies the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. With good adult support, these pupils make good progress, similar to that of their peers.

**The early years provision is good**

- Since the school opened, Reception children, some of whom had previously been in the school's Montessori provision, have been taught alongside those pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge at least typical for their age. Some are further advanced. Provision to support children's learning in Reception is good. Children achieve well because of good teaching, the low number of pupils and frequent engagement with articulate adults. Learning is moved on skilfully through effective questioning by adults, and productive opportunities for creative play. Staff track children's learning closely to ensure they make rapid progress in their basic skills, including their personal and social skills. There are no Reception children with identified special educational needs.
- Effective teaching of phonics ensures that children acquire a secure knowledge of sounds and letters, leading to rapid progress in reading.
- Reception children benefit, as do the others, from good quality specialist teaching in, for example, music and physical education.
- Children are well prepared for entry to Year 1. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is on track to be well above the 2014 national average in the current year.
- The balance between activities directly led by adults, in reading, writing and mathematics, and opportunities for children to choose from a wide range of other activities, is mostly good. Children have regular opportunities to access outdoor learning, so extending their knowledge of the world. However, current outdoor provision lacks any cover so that there are limitations on its use. The school plans to establish a dedicated early years class in September 2015, using an existing well-resourced classroom within the Montessori provision.
- Children behave well, showing good independence, positive attitudes to learning and a willingness to sustain attention for extended periods.
- Children are safe and well looked after. The school works well with parents, both prior to their children entering school and once their children are in school. Parents and carers are encouraged to play an active role in their children's education.
- Staff undertake detailed observations and maintain comprehensive records of children's progress.
- The leadership and management of the early years provision are good. All of the independent school standards for this aspect are met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141249
<b>Inspection number</b>	462905
<b>DfE registration number</b>	850/6091

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	21
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Norman Court School Community Interest Company
<b>Chair</b>	Susan Hartley-Raven
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hamish McKeown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,250 to £12,150
<b>Telephone number</b>	01980 863997
<b>Email address</b>	hello@norman-court.org



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