

Star Academy, Sandyford

Burnaby Road, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST6 5PT

Inspection dates

14–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
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 for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Improvements in teaching have led to a significant rise in pupils' achievement over time. The quality of teaching is now good and makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning. This is because teachers and teaching assistants have improved through the good training and support opportunities available and because senior leaders rigorously hold them to account for the progress that their pupils make.
- Children in the early years progress quickly from low starting points and achieve almost the national average by the time they enter Year 1.
- Progress is at least good in Years 1 to 6. Many pupils in the current Year 6 have made better than expected progress since Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe in school.
- Pupils show a real enthusiasm about learning. A good range of exciting learning opportunities has resulted in a continued improvement in attendance and in the way pupils behave.
- The Principal and vice principal, ably supported by the trust and other leaders and managers, have been effective in raising achievement and improving teaching.
- The governing body makes a strong contribution to school improvement. Its members share the leaders' ambition and high expectations for the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of pupils attaining above average standards is not yet consistently high enough throughout the school, especially in reading.
- Teaching is not yet strong enough to ensure that all pupils make outstanding progress.
- There is a limited range of fiction and non-fiction books in the school which are not clearly displayed or easily accessible for pupils, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Some middle leaders are new to the role and are not yet fully involved in checking that all groups of pupils achieve the best they can in their area of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in many lessons and also made additional visits to observe parts of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the Principal and vice principal.
- Discussions were held with pupils about their work in lessons.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised in writing, mathematics and a range of subjects.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and middle leaders, members of the governing body, teaching and support staff, pupils and a member of the academy's trust board.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading in the Reception class, Year 3 and Year 5 and checked reading progress records.
- Pupils were observed during assembly, lunchtimes, break times and at the breakfast club.
- Inspectors were unable to access the small number of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but they considered the school's 90 responses from their most recent parent view survey. They also spoke informally to a number of individual parents at the start and end of the school day.
- Thirty-three staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Gillian Hunter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Williams

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Star Academy converted to become an academy school on 1st April 2013. When its predecessor school, Hollywall Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- More than one-fifth of pupils in the school are from minority ethnic groups, which is below the national average. A small proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language, which is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who are Traveller of Irish heritage, Gypsy or Roma backgrounds is very high compared to the national average.
- Children start school in the early years in the Nursery class and attend full time from age three.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The Principal and vice principal have been in post since the school converted to academy status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the achievement of all pupils, especially the most able, in reading and mathematics by:
 - strengthening the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils always do work that challenges them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable
 - improving the range of fiction and non-fiction books in the school and ensure that there is access to a greater choice of books that interests pupils and enables more of them to read fluently in any subject.
- Extend and further develop the work of middle leaders so that they have greater impact across the whole school by:
 - providing them with targeted leadership training and support, to enable them to contribute fully in improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school
 - ensuring that middle leaders support all staff to identify and work with all groups of pupils who are at risk of falling behind, and also the most able.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the school converted to an academy in April 2013, the Principal, vice principal and governing body have provided a clear and focused direction for the school. Leaders have worked successfully to accelerate pupils' progress and to ensure more teaching is consistently good or better.
- Staff, governors and parents are very positive about the direction the school is taking. All parents who were spoken to or who completed the recent school survey said they would recommend the school to others.
- The Principal provides strong leadership and is well supported by the vice principal. The improvements made to the quality of teaching are having a clear impact on pupils' rapidly improving progress. All staff who completed a questionnaire said they were proud to be working at the school.
- Subject leaders, and others with leadership responsibilities, are developing their roles well and receiving good support from the senior leaders to develop their leadership skills. However, there are some middle leaders who are still very new to their role and need further support to make sure that they are able to fully challenge and support staff to improve teaching to outstanding. The school's view of its successes and areas for improvement is accurate and leaders know what remains to be done to improve further. The planning for future improvement is detailed and contains the right priorities.
- Regular meetings are held with teachers to discuss pupils' progress with senior leaders and plans are drawn up to address any weaknesses. The assessments made of pupils' work have been checked by the school's own staff, and by the academy trust, to make sure they are accurate.
- Members of the academy trust have provided the school with effective challenge and support for senior leaders, staff and the governing body. They make regular visits to check on the improvements made and validate the school's judgements. In addition, the school has visited very effective schools, and received training from recognised experts, to help improve the school's practice.
- Funding available through the pupil premium is used effectively to help eligible pupils to take a full part in school life and benefit, where appropriate, from specific resources and additional help from adults. This has been successful in raising their achievement and their current progress is now better than expected. The good progress being made by these and other pupils is monitored closely by the Principal, the governing body and the academy trust.
- The funding available to promote physical education and sporting opportunities is used effectively. Staff are improving their teaching and coaching skills in this subject. Pupils are taking part in more sporting activities, and this is having a positive impact on their skills and well-being.
- The curriculum offered to pupils is good and is enhanced by many enrichment opportunities, such as residential trips. It contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, preparing them for secondary school and giving them opportunities and experiences for life in modern Britain. This promotes good achievement for pupils and contributes well to their learning.
- Discrimination is not tolerated at this school and all pupils have full and equal access to the learning activities provided. The school is making good progress in implementing new assessment and curriculum arrangements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the school converted to an academy, the governing body has undergone significant changes and has reviewed its work rigorously. Governors are having a strong impact on school improvement.
 - The governing body holds the school to account through a range of monitoring activities. Governors have very good systems for visiting the school regularly and because of this, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and of pupils' progress.
 - Decisions about teachers' pay are appropriately linked to performance and responsibilities. Where weaknesses have needed addressing, the governing body has been appropriately involved.
 - Governors track finances well and are fully involved in decisions about how to spend additional money, such as the pupil premium and sports funding. They ensure safeguarding procedures are in line with regulations in all aspects.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In all classes, including the early years, pupils work collaboratively with each other and behave sensibly in lessons, at break and at lunch times.
- The relationships between pupils, their teachers and other adults are positive and respectful. Pupils happily work with their classmates and help each other with their work. Their positive attitudes help them to make good progress. Occasionally, there is a little low-level disruption, but pupils respond quickly when asked to settle down.
- The school works hard to promote good attendance through effective communication with parents and concerted actions taken by school leaders and the school attendance officer. As a result, attendance has improved from well below average to just below average and is continually improving. Persistent absence has reduced considerably over the last year.
- The rates of exclusions, which were high, have reduced dramatically, as a result of the school's work to support children and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. They learn how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school through assemblies and the curriculum.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They understand what cyber-bullying is, and how to avoid it.
- Pupils say that bullying of any kind, including racist bullying, is rare and that on the occasions when it happens it is always dealt with quickly, and everyone soon gets on well again with each other afterwards.
- Pupils value the opportunities to take on responsibilities. They learn the principles of democracy, by candidates standing for the school parliament having to persuade their classmates to elect them to represent their class.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Good teaching is enabling pupils to make accelerated progress and address underachievement.
- Past weaknesses have been addressed and more teaching shows outstanding features. This matches the school's view, which is based on evidence from the rigorous monitoring procedures used by leaders.
- Leaders are committed to making sure that more teaching will be outstanding. The quality of teaching has been improved through staff training and support, which is appreciated by teachers and teaching assistants. There are good opportunities for staff to work alongside other schools locally and within the academy trust.
- The use of targets and effective questioning and guidance to pupils on how to improve has resulted in a consistent approach across the school, which is checked regularly by leaders.
- The teaching of basic skills, in order to raise standards has been a key priority. Teachers' expectations have increased and their good relationships with pupils have contributed to the good learning observed in most classrooms. Pupils are keen to respond and enjoy the interesting activities that teachers plan.
- Pupils have targets which set out what pupils need to do in their writing and mathematics to reach the next level in their work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and tell pupils how they can improve.
- Pupils' books show that pupils have opportunities to use their writing skills in subjects other than English and can make clear connections in having a reason to write for a variety of purposes.
- Pupils' understanding is assessed regularly and accurately. This information is used well to set work that is sufficiently challenging for different groups of pupils. For the most-able pupils, however, even the top level of work set is not always challenging enough to stretch them sufficiently to ensure that they make rapid progress.
- There are good improvements in the teaching of reading in the early years and Key Stage 1. A rigorous programme of learning letters and sounds (phonics) is well taught and recently purchased books and resources are used effectively to stimulate pupils to use these skills and make rapid progress in reading.
- There are still pupils in Key Stage 2 who did not benefit from the recent and rapid improvement in reading from Key Stage 1 and have missed out on basic early reading skills. The school has taken action to provide these pupils with additional support.
- Reading throughout Key Stage 2 is improving but not for the most-able pupils because there are too few

opportunities for these pupils to select and read from a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books that stimulate and interest them. Books are stored in classrooms and in shared spaces but they are not clearly displayed or organised for pupils to easily select books that are appropriate for their ages, abilities and interests. Teaching assistants contribute well in lessons and when working with individual pupils. They work effectively with class teachers, know the pupils' abilities well and deal sensitively with their particular needs.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement throughout the school is continually improving and there has been a distinct increase in the rate of pupils' progress over the last year.
- Children join the early years with skills that are low compared with those typical for their age. They progress quickly so that the proportion of pupils who reach age-related expectations is almost the same as that found nationally by end of the Reception Year.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening test has improved rapidly and almost reached the national average in 2014. This is helping pupils to read and write more confidently throughout Key Stage 1.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2014 improved significantly to average in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Many pupils in the current Year 6 have made excellent progress this year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils in the school who are reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is continuing to improve. Most pupils currently in the school are making good or better progress in all year groups in English and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils do not consistently make the rapid progress needed to reach the high standards of which they are capable, especially in reading and mathematics. This is because teachers do not always give these pupils work which challenges them sufficiently and too often they are expected to repeat work which they have already fully mastered.
- By the end of 2014, disadvantaged pupils were almost a year behind other pupils in the school in their academic work. Pupils' work, the school's performance information and inspectors' direct observations in lessons all provide convincing evidence that this group of pupils are now making good progress. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is closing rapidly so that they are now a term behind their class mates and other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and continuing to improve.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress overall. Teaching assistants work effectively with small groups. A variety of specialised approaches supports the learning of individual pupils.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups particularly those from Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy or Roma backgrounds make variable progress, although there is no particular pattern in any subject. The school's tracking data, affirmed during the inspection, show that the progress of all pupil groups is tracked rigorously and many pupils make good progress.
- Highly effective support is given to pupils who join part way through Key Stages 1 or 2, so that they settle quickly and make increasingly good progress.

The early years provision is good

- The early years provides a good start for children of all abilities with many practical and stimulating opportunities, which make learning exciting both in the classroom and outdoors. Children are taught well and engage in a wide variety of interesting activities covering all areas of learning. Teachers assess children's skills frequently and adapt their planning to meet their needs and interests. Adults are competently trained in teaching early reading skills.
- Children make good progress in their learning and development. Disabled children, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported and make similar good progress. Not enough of the most-able children, however, are helped to exceed age-related expectations by the time they enter Year 1.
- Adults have established high-quality relationships with the children and create a positive and stimulating environment in which they can learn and flourish. There are good systems to manage children's behaviour and help them to feel safe. The children feel safe, grow in confidence and relate extremely well to adults

and to other children. Their behaviour is very good.

- Parents are welcomed into school and have access to a range of information to support their child. Informal discussions with parents during the inspection confirmed their highly positive views of the care the school provides, which are also reflected in the school's most recent parental survey.
- The early years leader provides support and training for staff very effectively. There are accurate systems for assessing children's progress and the information is used well to plan the next steps of learning. Dialogue between staff and children is good so that children are challenged and helped to make good progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139226
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	449906

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Earl Richards
Headteacher	Nicky Broomhall
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01782 235055
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