

Inspection of Star Academy, Sandyford

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

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created a calm and inviting school, which is welcoming to all. Leaders make sure that they know their families and pupils and this creates a clear sense of community. Pupils feel safe and happy and they enjoy coming to school. Parents value this. Staff are proud to work here.

Pupils behave well. They recognise the value of kindness and are polite and respectful to others. Pupils form positive relationships with their friends and staff. Pupils know adults will help them sort out any fallouts, which means bullying is rare. Experiences such as visits to museums help pupils to remember their learning. In their learning, pupils reflect the school vision 'desire to learn, learn to achieve' when they talk about what they know. For example, pupils confidently explain their learning across different subjects.

Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They provide a broad curriculum, which extends to activities out of school time. Pupils enjoy attending these activities and speak positively about them. Staff encourage pupils to be independent and responsible. Pupils are encouraged to play a part in a wider school life. For example, the 'junior leaders' programme develops pupils' leadership skills.

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

Leaders make reading a high priority. Teachers choose and read books that support pupils in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of books. Support given to pupils at the early stages of reading enables them to make progress and catch up. A relatively new phonics curriculum is in place. Phonics teaching starts as soon as pupils start school. The sounds that pupils learn build on what they know. Where phonics teaching is effective, pupils make progress and build on the sounds that they know well. However, this is not the case for all pupils. Some staff do not teach the phonics programme fully in the way it is intended, and activities are not matched well enough to develop what pupils already know.

Some subject leaders are very new to their roles. They are yet to check in detail how well their subjects are being taught. As a result, some leaders have limited understanding of what is working well in subjects.

For most subjects, leaders identify knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Teachers use quizzes to check pupils' knowledge. In these subjects, pupils explain what they have learned and how it is helping them to learn more. For example, Year 6 pupils link history learning about the Roman empire in Year 3 to learning about the Second World War. In mathematics, pupils build successfully on prior learning. Support from the academy trust is in place, and as a result there is now a more consistent approach to how teachers deliver the mathematics curriculum.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. They then ensure that these pupils receive additional support to help them make progress. Leaders seek advice from a wide range of other professionals to ensure that pupils receive specialist support where needed. Staff consider how best to meet the needs of pupils with SEND across all areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Leaders track pupils' attendance and act when needed to support pupils to attend school. As a result, attendance is high. Staff model high expectations. As a result, pupils behave well and leaders are rightly proud. Staff support pupils who may need extra help managing their behaviour effectively. Pupils say their friends and staff are kind and this helps them to develop relationships. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that teachers help them to resolve any differences that may happen.

Leaders' work to develop pupils' personal development is a strength. Leaders are preparing pupils for life in modern Britain well. They involve pupils in all aspects of school life. For example, pupils take part in staff interviews. Right from the early years, staff encourage pupils' independence. For example, adults support pupils in early years to register themselves each morning. Pupils in the early years spoke to inspectors with confidence. They take turns and share. Pupils know how to celebrate similarities and differences. A high number of pupils take part in extra-curricular activities such as netball and art clubs.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have an accurate understanding of the school's areas for development. The trust, trustees and members of the local academy committee provide challenge and support where needed. All staff value support from the trust. The principal, supported by the multi-academy trust, has a clear vision, and the right priorities in place, to enable the school to make further progress.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding and this helps to keep pupils as safe as possible. Up-to-date training supports staff knowledge. Leaders are vigilant about pupils who may need support. Updates shared by the safeguarding team keep staff informed of risks in the local area. Staff raise concerns quickly. Leaders act on these concerns and involve wider services where needed. Leaders track concerns and frequently check that no further concerns are being raised.

Leaders use the information gained from their knowledge of safeguarding in the local area to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe from harm. Pupils know what a healthy relationship is and how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils feel safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A number of subject leaders are new to their post. They are still developing some aspects of their leadership skills, including checking how well their subject is being delivered and what actions are needed to improve the delivery of the curriculum further. Senior leaders should provide subject leaders with support and training to improve their skills in monitoring how well their subjects are being taught to identify how they could be developed further.
- While the teaching of phonics is effective, some staff are still developing their expertise in delivering the relatively new phonics scheme. Some activities are not matched well enough to the sounds pupils know and what they need to learn next. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could in learning to read. Leaders should ensure that all staff develop their skills and expertise in teaching the phonics programme to enable all pupils to make good progress in learning to read.

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	139226
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10241268
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Pat Beanland
Principal	Sara Bloor
Website	www.staracademy.attrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 – 8 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Academy Transformation Trust.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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 met with the principal and other senior leaders, including those responsible for governance and representatives from the Academy Transformation Trust. Inspectors also spoke with the chief executive officer. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the SEND coordinator. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- A range of documentation was also scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and the school website. Minutes from governance meetings were also reviewed.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors considered the school's safeguarding policy, and spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding. The lead inspector spoke with school leaders about how safeguarding concerns and incidents are reported.
- Inspectors took account of the parent comments and responses in Ofsted Parent View. Comments in pupil and staff surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Michelle Bishton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gill Turner

Ofsted Inspector

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