

Co-operative Academy of Stoke on Trent

Westport Road, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4LD

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students do well at school. They join in Year 7 with attainment that is significantly below national expectations for their age. From low starting points they make good progress.
- Good and better teaching underpins students' good progress and they enjoy learning, particularly in science. Only a minority of teaching in the school is less than good.
- The school ensures that students are safe and students say they feel very safe at school.
- Students cooperate well and their behaviour makes a strong contribution to the purposeful and calm atmosphere of the school.
- The staff, governors and the Principal drive improvement with a common purpose. Leadership and management, behaviour, teaching and achievement all provide a strong foundation for the new school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although students do well, higher-attaining students could do even better, particularly in vocational subjects and in gaining higher grades at GCSE.
- The standards that students reach are not as high as they could be in English and mathematics. Students do not yet practise their numeracy skills well in subjects other than mathematics.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- There is too much variability in the quality of the leadership of subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons. Three observations were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair and members of the governing body and a representative of the sponsors.
- Too few parents had responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to provide the inspection team with enough evidence to analyse. Inspectors took account of the two parents who spoke to the inspection team. The results of 44 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors analysed the 2012 and 2011 examination results. They analysed the school's data on the progress students had made from their starting points and their current progress. Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including minutes of meetings, curriculum plans, records relating to safeguarding and behaviour, and data on attendance and exclusions. They looked at the school's self-evaluation and the school's improvement plans.

Inspection team

Michelle Parker, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Leigh

Additional Inspector

David Woodhouse

Additional Inspector

Paul Latham

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Co-operative Academy of Stoke on Trent opened in September 2010 and moved into its new buildings in September 2012. It is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- The Academy's main sponsors are the Co-operative group, Staffordshire University and Stoke on Trent College of Further Education.
- Over half of the student population are from ethnic minority backgrounds; the majority of these are of Pakistani heritage.
- Almost half of the students speak English as an additional language. Many students are in the early stages of learning English.
- Almost double the national proportion of students receive additional support at school action or at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students eligible to receive the pupil premium is double the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy has a small number of students who are educated off site in the MERIT and REACH centres.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of all students in Key Stage 4 by:
 - ensuring that students' skills in mathematics are developed by applying them to solve problems in a range of situations so that students confidently tackle numerical challenges in other subjects
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning, and thus students' results, in those courses that lead to a qualification other than GCSE.
- Improve the proportion of students gaining higher grades at GCSE through improving the quality of teaching so that all is at least good and a greater proportion is outstanding by making sure that in all subjects teachers:
 - take full account of the prior learning of students in their planning to provide activities that effectively practise and extend students' skills and understanding
 - ask questions which prompt students to recall relevant knowledge and encourage them to apply their understanding to solve new problems
 - provide opportunities for students to review and discuss their learning at points during lessons and, as a result, improve their understanding through speaking as well as writing
 - share good practice in encouraging students to take more responsibility for their learning so that they improve their skills in working independently.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that leaders of all subjects:
 - share best practice and reduce the variability in the quality of leadership across the curriculum
 - set performance management targets for teachers to ensure higher-attaining students gain the highest grades at GCSE.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students do well. By the end of Year 11 the majority of students have made good progress. Attainment in both English and mathematics is improving strongly. Progress in mathematics is not as strong as that in English and science. Attainment in core science is better than the national average. In the majority of other subjects students' attainment is in line with the national average but too few students achieve the highest grades.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve as well as those nationally. All students are entered early for English and mathematics GCSEs and this is improving students' GCSE grades.
- Students who attend the off-site MERIT and REACH centres make good progress.
- Students develop skills in reading, writing and communication which enable them to express their ideas and progress their learning in all subjects. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to talk and write about their learning to accelerate the progress of all. Students' reading is improving fast because they read increasingly widely and have exciting opportunities to develop their reading through the outstanding support provided by the library. The good range of subjects and qualifications in Key Stage 4 helps ensure that students are well prepared for the next stage of learning or employment.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve equally well. Pakistani-heritage students make significantly better progress than those nationally.
- In the lessons observed inspectors could see that students acquire knowledge and understanding quickly and securely and this matches how well they do in examinations.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and always endeavour to help students to be successful. They use their subject knowledge to plan work which interests students. Good use is made of technical language and teachers ensure that work is well presented, accurately spelt, grammatically correct and punctuated. Thus, students have accurate and well ordered notes to support their review of work. Opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage students to talk about their work in order to consolidate their learning even more securely.
- The school has developed 'learning journals' which are effective in demonstrating students' understanding and what they know and can do. They are used well to encourage students to summarise their learning and set their own targets for improvement. Teachers use this information to plan activities with appropriate challenge and to correct any errors in pupils' understanding.
- Outstanding teaching was observed in a number of English lessons. In these lessons students took responsibility for their learning and made rapid progress in their understanding. They shared their interpretations of texts with each other and so collectively improved their understanding. They marked each other's and their own work and in so doing identified ways to improve their work.
- In lessons that required improvement the pace of learning was too slow and work did not sufficiently allow students to practise their skills or apply knowledge. Too often students were expected to write before they understood clearly. Where students had difficulty in expressing themselves in writing, teachers did not sufficiently help students to structure their ideas and use technical language.
- The school has correctly identified that there are too few opportunities for developing students' knowledge and understanding of mathematics across the curriculum. Work to improve their frequency and quality has begun.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave in a mature and calm fashion around the school and in lessons. They are respectful of each other and staff and this creates a caring and supportive environment for all. Staff supervision at breaks and lunchtimes is appropriately unobtrusive as students know how to behave. Incidents of racism and bullying are rare and are swiftly dealt with. Students feel safe at school.
- Students are well mannered and polite and extremely helpful and courteous to visitors.
- Exclusions have reduced significantly and attendance is now almost at the national average. Students are punctual to school and to lessons.
- Students who are known to face personal difficulties and challenges are given high-quality support through the i-zone. Parents are confident that their child is well supported and cared for by the school.
- The 'vertical' grouping of students in 'community groups' enables students in all year groups to value everyone. Leadership opportunities are encouraged and supported through the Co-operative Young Leaders. This initiative enables all students, especially younger ones, to gain valuable skills in talking to and working with a wide range of different people. Students are proud of their school.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has a clear and well communicated vision for the life of the school community and what he wants staff and students to achieve. This is based on his accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. He is ably supported by his governors and senior leadership team. As a result, the academy has improved each year. Morale is high and all staff are proud to work in the academy.
- Improvement plans are robustly based on a wealth of data. They have been enacted with a rigour that has enabled the academy to improve teaching. Similarly, well thought out policies have had a good impact on students' learning, noticeably in improving literacy skills.
- The capacity of academy leaders to improve the school further is good. All post holders are clear about their leadership responsibilities and line management systems hold them to account well.
- Performance management is carefully matched to the professional development of staff and the needs of the academy. However, opportunities have been missed in making sure performance targets are sharp enough to reflect the need to further raise attainment in all subjects in all year groups. All teachers' movement up the pay scales is appropriately dependent on evidence of their good or better teaching.
- Improvements in teaching have been brought about because of the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the performance of all staff. Middle managers understand their roles well and ensure that they provide examples of best practice and identify and share good practice. There is still too much variability across subjects in leadership and the quality of teaching. The school is beginning to address this. 'Gateway' groups of staff have been organised to share good teaching. Staff meetings encourage staff to work collaboratively in order to learn from each other.
- This is a very inclusive school. On starting school all students are given the academy uniform so that no student is disadvantaged and all students look smart. This attitude permeates all aspects of academy life and every group of students is supported to do well.
- The pupil premium is used to provide a good range of activities which improve learning, including extra support from adults to individuals and small groups. Those students eligible to receive this support achieve as well as other students.
- The range of subjects and courses available to students is outstanding. It ensures that learning pathways match students' ways of learning and their career ambitions. As a result of increased

student engagement, exclusion figures and absence have reduced as has the number of students who do not progress into further education, training or employment. The curriculum is well supported by partner organisations.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are rich and varied and arise from activities in and outside of lessons. The new building exemplifies the academy's approach to awe and wonder: students commented that it was 'like a university'. It reflects the appropriately high aspirations the academy has for all its students and the academy's motto 'to be the best'.
- Students' own rich cultural backgrounds are effectively drawn upon to enhance the cultural life of the school. Both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities promote cultural and artistic experiences.
- The school works well with parents. There is good evidence of the positive effect of the co-operative ethos in working effectively to build links with partner primary schools and the local community.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- The academy's sponsors actively support and enhance leadership at all levels throughout the academy. They support students through the Co-operative's Young Leaders course and broadening vocational opportunities, and staff through staff development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors robustly challenge senior leaders and effectively hold them to account for the improvement of the academy. They understand the academy's strengths and areas for development. Governors understand how performance management is linked to improving teaching and learning and the progress of students. They monitor how the pupil premium funding is spent and its impact on achievement.

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	136102
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	399818

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy Sponsor Led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Greenacre
Principal	Andrew Stanier
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01782 882300
Fax number	-
Email address	co-operativeacademy@cas.coop

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