

St Peter's Academy

Queen's Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 7LG

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although examination results will be better in 2013 than 2012, the attainment of students is still lower than it should be. The progress that some students make from their starting points is less than similar students make nationally.
- Not enough teaching is good or outstanding. Many teachers are developing new and better ways to ensure students make better progress, but they are not yet all sufficiently skilled in using these approaches well. Not enough allowance is made for the differing needs of students in each class.
- Although work is marked regularly, most teachers do not insist that it is followed up with corrections or responses.
- Not all members of staff are using the academy policies to manage behaviour consistently. Some low-level disruption in lessons is not properly dealt with. Some teachers have expectations about behaviour, attitude to work and homework which are too low.
- There are still some students whose attendance is poor, to the extent that it damages the progress that they are making.
- Leaders and managers are working hard to improve the academy, but many of the initiatives and approaches being used have not yet had time to show that they will bring about the necessary improvements.

The academy has the following strengths

- The current principal and his team have managed the challenging merger of two quite different schools, some distance apart, very effectively. Many potential areas of conflict and difficulty have been overcome and the academy is well placed to make rapid progress once it moves into the new building in September 2013.
- There are many good and outstanding teachers in the academy, and evidence that the overall quality of teaching is improving.
- Inadequate teaching is being effectively challenged.
- The individual care, guidance and support of students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and disabled students or students with special educational needs, is good.
- The Christian ethos of the academy also welcomes and includes those with other faiths or none and is beginning to show impact in the work of the whole academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 37 lessons, taught by 36 teachers. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed the conduct of students around the academy and at break and lunchtime.
- Interviews were held with the principal, other senior leaders and middle leaders such as the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders. Teachers, members of the academy council and the Chief Officer of the Woodard Academy Trust were also interviewed.
- The academy's improvement plan and self-evaluation were scrutinised, as were records of visits and support from the Woodard Academy Trust.
- Formal and informal meetings were held with several groups of students from all year groups. Some students completed questionnaires about aspects of their academy experience.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work and academy documents, including minutes of academy council and academy trust board meetings, policies, assessment information and students' records.
- The inspection took into account the views of 53 parents who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) and comments received from parents by telephone and email.
- The views of the 37 staff who completed questionnaires or wrote comments about the academy were also considered.

Inspection team

John Peckham, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Latham

Additional Inspector

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Full report

Information about this academy

- The academy was created in September 2011 from the merger of the former St Peter's High School (Penkhull Site) and Berry Hill High School (Bucknall Site). The sites of these schools are 4.7 miles apart across the city. The academy is jointly sponsored by the Woodard Academy Trust and the Diocese of Lichfield.
- There was initially some turbulence in leadership, and the present principal was appointed with effect from 1 January 2012.
- Currently all Year 7 and Year 8 students are taught on the Bucknall Site, and all Year 10 on the Penkhull Site. Year 9 students remain on the site they started at in Year 7, approximately 60 at Bucknall and 150 at Penkhull.
- The academy will move to new, purpose-built premises in Fenton in September 2013.
- The academy is a similar size to most secondary schools, with a slightly higher proportion of girls than the average.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or whose parents are in the armed services) is above average.
- The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups are above average, as is the proportion of students whose first language is not English.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported at school action level is average. The proportion supported at school action plus level or who have a statement of special educational needs is much higher than in most schools.
- A very small number of Key Stage 4 students are enrolled with REACH, a local authority alternative to permanent exclusion, and with Project Management Ltd, a local training provider. Three students are currently dual-registered with MERIT, the local provision for students with medical conditions.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The statutory governing body of the academy is the Woodard Academy Trust Board, which also governs the other academies of the Trust. The local Academy Council has a largely advisory role.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - enabling a systematic sharing of the excellent practice shown by some teachers, so that all teachers become more skilled in using approaches that enable students to make faster progress
 - developing more strategies to promote independent learning and enquiry so that students become more engaged, enthused and excited about their work
 - ensuring that lesson planning includes a focus on the progress of all students in each class, including the most and least able and those who have specific learning difficulties
 - ensuring that teachers mark students' work so that they are clear about how to improve and are given time and opportunity to act on and respond to the marking.
- Continue to raise achievement so that, by August 2014, students from all levels of prior attainment are making progress that is close to the national rates, through:
 - implementing an effective whole-academy approach to raise standards of literacy

- improving the understanding of teachers, students and parents about the progress that students should be expected to make, in lessons and over time
 - ensuring all students attend school as regularly as possible
 - raising the expectations of teachers and parents about the quality of presentation and quantity of work and homework that should be expected of students, so that there is a stronger work and achievement ethos across the academy.
- Ensure leaders and managers prepare carefully to take full advantage of the move to the new site in consolidating and improving behaviour, by checking that:
- all staff make consistent use of the academy policies to encourage good behaviour
 - middle and senior leaders are active and visible in promoting this consistency and supporting staff.
- Clarify which responsibilities of the Academy Trust Board (the statutory governing body) have been delegated to the Academy Council (the local governing body) so that there are no uncertainties or ambiguities.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The results obtained by students at the end of Year 11 in 2012, the academy's first set of examination results, included students who had been taught at both St Peter's High School and Berry Hill High School. The staff turbulence caused by the merger has had a big impact, especially on the Bucknall Site, where the results were much lower than previously.
- Nearly all groups of students made less progress than they should have done but it was particularly noticeable amongst boys, students eligible for the pupil premium, students who joined the school with low attainment and students with special educational needs supported at school action plus level. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds also made less progress than White British students, but those whose first language was not English did much better.
- The attainment of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium in 2012 was about half a grade lower per subject than for other students, but this gap was slightly smaller than the national gap in performance between these groups of students. The academy has used the funding flexibly and, in some cases, in a highly personal way to support the progress of students eligible for the pupil premium; however, these students remain more affected than others by teaching and expectations that are not good enough.
- Overall outcomes in 2012 were well below the national average for students who joined their respective schools with prior attainment that was only slightly below average. A number of students, mostly based at the Bucknall site, did not achieve a grade in English or mathematics, mostly as a result of poor attendance or very challenging personal circumstances. The academy has recognised and is tackling this legacy of underachievement, and has already made some significant improvements.
- Students with special educational needs have high-quality individual education plans that are reviewed twice each year with the student and parents. The progress made by these students is improving but, overall, it still lags behind that of the rest. In 2012 the gap in performance between students supported at school action plus and those with no special educational needs was larger than that found nationally. Students supported at school action or with a statement of special educational needs performed slightly better than similar students elsewhere in the country.
- Many students lack some key skills in literacy and do not write well. Standards of presentation seen by inspectors were often poor. The academy has recently reviewed its approach to the teaching of literacy skills and is about to launch a new whole-school strategy. Students' numeracy skills are broadly in line with their achievement in other subjects.
- Most students who left the academy in 2012 gained suitable places in further education, employment or training. This was a considerable improvement on the previous year. The students placed with REACH are still underachieving in their subjects, but the link with training and employment is now providing support to help them in their next stage.
- Although many students clearly want to achieve well, there is not a strong enough culture of hard work in the academy. Homework is not always completed and older students spoken to described spending less time and effort on homework than would be the case in most schools. Student planners are not well used because teachers do not insist on this or check sufficiently well on their use.
- The results already known for 2013 and the academy's own records show that there will be a significant improvement this year. The proportions predicted to make expected progress in English and mathematics are above the national average. Inspectors were able to see evidence in lessons of better progress and the academy is able to carefully track the progress of all students and provide extra support if they fall behind.
- The academy makes extensive use of early entry to GCSE examinations but insists that students who do not achieve their target grade, even if higher than a C grade, resit. This helps to ensure that those capable of higher grades still reach them.

- Although achievement still requires improvement, there is now enough evidence to be confident that it is no longer inadequate.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over half the teaching seen by inspectors was good or better. Several strong and outstanding lessons were observed, with teaching in Key Stage 4 generally being better than in Key Stage 3. Overall, however, teaching requires improvement because it is too variable and in many lessons not all students are making good progress. A small proportion of the lessons observed by inspectors were inadequate.
- In the weaker lessons planning often does not take into account the needs of all the students. Although those with special educational needs or eligible for the pupil premium are identified, there is then frequently no plan for how they are to be given additional support or challenge. Because of this, while sometimes the majority are making progress, for others this progress is less than it should be.
- Sometimes teachers talk for too long about the lesson aims or the grade criteria, when students would do better if they were allowed to get on with the work. Planning is sometimes too rigid so that students' ideas and interests are not used well to generate excitement and enthusiasm for learning. On occasions, where teachers try to use some of the newer and more effective techniques they have been taught, a lack of skill and practice means that they do not always work as well as they should.
- Most books are marked regularly, but only a very few teachers make best use of the time they have spent in marking by insisting that students act on and make good use of the advice offered. Some parents said that students found it difficult with some teachers to get the help that they needed.
- In the better lessons teachers plan exciting and challenging activities that engage and enthral students. They are able to use questioning techniques that force students to think more deeply and often create activities where students talk to each other and assess one another's work in ways that help to extend understanding.
- In an outstanding science lesson with Year 10, for example, the teacher's excellent knowledge of the progress that students were making enabled a cleverly designed lesson that helped in the understanding of a particularly difficult idea. When a student asked a question about why the speed of free-fall slowed after a while, the teacher skilfully helped the student to work out the answer. The students were treated in a very adult way and responded with maturity and enthusiasm.
- In another example, this time Year 10 history, the teacher structured a carousel activity where students spent a few minutes exploring an item of evidence about the Hitler Bomb Plot in Nazi Germany, and discussing it, before moving to a different item. The teacher used excellent questioning skills to check the understanding of students, and the behaviour and motivation were outstanding. Because of this approach, all students were able to make good progress.
- A recently formed quality of teaching team is now bringing together the best practice in the academy. The members provide coaching and support to other teachers and are developing new whole-academy strategies to raise the overall quality of teaching and marking.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Most of the behaviour observed around the academy by inspectors was good. In lessons, students generally arrive ready to learn and respond well to the teacher. Overall, it still requires improvement, however, because there is some inconsistency among staff and because there are still too many students whose attendance is causing concern.
- Not all teachers, students or parents are confident that behaviour is well managed. Some

teachers observed by inspectors were not using the academy's policies to deal with minor misbehaviour. Some students spoken with explained that there was very little chance of them being told off for minor breaches of the rules such as wearing inappropriate jewellery or forgetting their planners.

- The number of students excluded for serious misbehaviour has dropped significantly from last year. The academy uses St Patrick's, a special additional 'chapter' (the model of 'schools within a school' in the academy), to work with students who have the most challenging behaviour. This has helped to reduce both the number of serious incidents and the time lost through exclusions.
- There is very little bullying and most students feel safe and confident that the academy will deal well with any that does occur. Although racist or homophobic behaviour was not a concern, many students did report that inappropriate language was quite regularly used.
- The overall attendance of students has improved slightly from last year but remains below the national average. Students with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium have much lower attendance than the remainder. There is a higher proportion of students whose attendance is below 85% than in most schools. The academy is aware of these problems and has taken action to bring about improvements, with some individual successes, but overall these actions have yet to show any significant impact.
- The academy's procedures for checking the suitability of staff and effectively safeguarding the care and well-being of its students meet all current requirements.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The present principal and the academy trust have brought stability and focus to the academy which has prevented what might otherwise have deteriorated much further. Without these actions many areas of the academy's work would be inadequate. Improvements have now been put in place, however, and there is a growing expectation of improvement. This has been accompanied by increased rigour; weak and inadequate teaching has been challenged and improved. Academy leaders have an accurate picture of its current strengths and weaknesses.
- The gaps that still exist between the performance of some groups and that of the majority mean that the academy's promotion of equality and its tackling of discrimination require improvement. There is evidence, however, that it has made some considerable progress in fostering good relations between students from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The difficulties of bringing together two quite different schools and creating a common set of rules and expectations have been overcome well. Most students now see themselves as members of the new academy rather than the predecessor schools and are excited about the possibilities that the new building will bring. Not all the staff have adapted as quickly, and the difficulties presented by a senior team being spread across two sites have slowed the development work required to fully integrate all staff into the new culture of the academy.
- There are, however, significant strengths in senior and middle leadership and evidence that improvements already made will soon have a much more noticeable impact on the outcomes for students. Performance management arrangements for teachers are now much more rigorous, and decisions about pay take into account the quality of teaching. A legacy remains, however, of some staff who have been promoted to the upper pay spine (intended for the best and most experienced teachers) in the past, whose teaching is not consistently good.
- Academy leaders and managers have an accurate picture of the overall quality of teaching and the strengths and weaknesses of each teacher. Teaching and students' books are now regularly checked. Professional development time has been well used to improve skills and teachers whose performance has not met the required standards have been provided with training, support and challenge to improve. Newly qualified teachers have been very well supported and have quickly gained in confidence and skills.
- The Woodard Academy Trust provides a high level of support and challenge. Reviews conducted each term by Woodard staff are thorough, include a systematic evaluation of the quality of

teaching and identify key issues for improvement. These are effectively checked and followed up on each visit. Training and development for leaders and staff provided by the academy trust are also beginning to show some impact.

- The curriculum was substantially reshaped by the current principal and his team in 2012. It now offers a broader choice of subjects than was available in either of the predecessor schools. Middle leaders are playing an increasingly important role in checking the quality of the delivery.
 - Effective links have been made with external partners, such as the fire service which supports the BTEC public services course, and between a local engineering company and the BTEC engineering programme. The academy restaurant provides an excellent resource for the students learning about hospitality and is appreciated by members of the community who dine there.
 - Wider opportunities to participate in sport, visits and career development activities such as trips to universities are also offered.
 - **The governance of the academy:**
 - The Woodard Academy Trust Board provides a professional governing body which ensures that all statutory functions are carried out. Governors ensure that reports from the academy's principal and external consultants are regular and incisive. The performance management of the principal is conducted directly by the chief officer of the academy trust.
 - The local academy council includes members with a good range of skill and experience. Records of their meetings indicate regular challenging questioning of the principal and other leaders. This includes, for example, demanding additional rigour from leaders in assessing the impact of pupil premium funding on the examination results of these students. Members of the council make regular visits to the academy and meet with staff and students. Their methods of gathering and analysing data about the progress of the academy are, however, too dependent on the principal and senior leaders.
 - The academy council submits regular reports to the trust board, but there is a lack of clarity about exactly which responsibilities of governance have been delegated to the council and which are held by the board. While this has not created any difficulties in practice, these structures have only been in place for a relatively short period of time and problems may arise in future unless this is resolved.
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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	136824
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	399839

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy - sponsor led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,000
Appropriate authority	The Woodard Academy Trust Board
Chair	Mrs Jan Richardson
Principal	Mr Joe Burns
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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