

The Crescent Academy

Pinewood Crescent, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST3 6HZ

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

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.

- Pupils are at the heart of this caring school.
- Teaching is consistently good and pupils enjoy learning.
- Children get a good start to their education in the exciting Early Years Foundation Stage.
- In the past three years, the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 has been in the top seven percent of schools nationally.
- Pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.
- Teaching assistants consistently provide effective support for learning.
- Pupils are happy and proud of their school. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils have considerable confidence in the adults who look after them and have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe.
- The school provides pupils with an interesting range of subjects, topics and experiences which contribute strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher and head of school provide strong leadership. He has forged an effective team that has ensured good quality teaching and that pupils achieve well.
- Governors work closely with school leaders and provide good levels of support and challenge to support improvements effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school's approach to teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) is not consistent across the school and has resulted in slower progress for younger pupils.
- At Key Stage 1, the teaching of mathematics is not structured sufficiently well.
- Pupils do not get enough practice in writing at length in subjects other than English.
- Newly appointed leaders are not sufficiently skilled in checking and improving the quality of teaching.
- Some pupils do not attend regularly enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons, of which two observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and head of school. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to six pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils from Year 1 to Year 6, five governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and senior and middle leaders. A telephone discussion was held with an external consultant who works on behalf of the local authority and informal discussions were held with pupils at break times and lunch times.
- Discussions were also held with parents who brought their children to school at the start of the school day, because the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were too few to be meaningful.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the 40 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and scrutinised the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, the school's improvement plans, planning and monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings. Records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also considered.

Inspection team

Anthony Kingston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Addison

Additional Inspector

Diane Buckle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Crescent Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 August 2012. When its predecessor school, Crescent Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The Crescent Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly. Consequently, there have been many additions to the teaching and non-teaching staff.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those from service families and those looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The Crescent Academy holds the International Award and ECO Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to raise attainment in reading and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils' mathematical skills are developed in a step-by-step way
 - ensuring that phonics are taught consistently well throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to improve pupils' understanding of linking letters and sounds.
- Improve progress in writing at Key Stages 1 and 2 by providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Strengthen leadership and management and accelerate the rate at which the school improves by sharpening the skills of leaders at all levels to monitor the quality of teaching.
- Further raise rates of attendance by making it clear to pupils and families the link between good attendance and good achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The overwhelming majority of children start school with skills that are extremely low, particularly in speaking, reading, writing, mathematics and in their personal and social development. They make good progress throughout the Nursery and Reception classes because of the well-organised and exciting Early Years Foundation Stage learning areas and the motivated team of teachers and assistants. As a result of this good start, by the time children enter Year 1, standards are closer to, but still below, average.
- At Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been improving at a faster rate than those seen nationally. As a result, standards in writing are now broadly in line with the national average. Attainment in reading and mathematics however, remains below average. This is because in mathematics a few pupils lack confidence with their basic number and calculation skills. This limits their ability to complete more demanding mathematical tasks and to extend and develop their skills. In reading, pupils do not develop their understanding of the linking of letters and sounds (phonics) quickly or securely enough.
- Throughout Key Stage 2 progress is outstanding. For the past three years, the progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has been in the top seven percent of schools nationally. As a result, by the end of Year 6 standards in reading are above average and standards in mathematics are now securely in line with the national average. Attainment in writing is, however, below average. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their skills across a range of subjects other than English.
- Inspection evidence, including lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and a consideration of internal school performance data, shows that improvements in teaching are continuing to increase the rate at which pupils make progress throughout the school. As a result, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is continuing to improve rapidly.
- Reading is a priority throughout the school. However, the progress pupils make in their understanding of phonics throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 is limited because the resources available to teachers are not used well enough. Consequently, the proportion of six-year-olds who achieved the expected level in the 2013 phonics check, although much higher than in the previous year, was below average. The teaching of phonics improves in Year 2 and as a result, the proportion of pupils who in this year retook the check and met national expectations was well above average.
- As pupils move through the school, they develop a keen interest in reading. This was exemplified by one pupil who said, 'I enter the different worlds and become so absorbed in the characters' thoughts and feelings that I'm just as likely to cry as laugh.'
- The income received by the school to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium is spent judiciously, including on one-to-one tuition and employing additional teaching assistants. As a result, these pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make progress equal to, and sometimes better than that of their classmates. Consequently, although in 2013 they reached levels of attainment approximately two terms behind those of their classmates in reading, in writing and mathematics the gap is narrowing rapidly. Inspection evidence and the school's data show that the gap is set to close further in 2014.
- Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language generally make similar progress and attain standards similar to those of other pupils, demonstrating the school's success in tackling discrimination.
- The academy provides well for pupils of all abilities. The most able pupils are given work which is at the right level and are encouraged to do as well as they can. Consequently, they make good progress. Disabled pupils and those with a statement of special educational needs attain standards above those of their national counterparts and progress similar to that of their classmates. This is because of the highly effective support and guidance they receive from skilled teaching assistants and support workers.

- Pupils are proud of their achievements. However, they do not always present their work well, with their best handwriting.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and activities are often imaginative activities and excite and motivate pupils to succeed.
- Recently-appointed staff have brought new strengths that have added to the overall quality of teaching. This is accelerating pupils' progress.
- Encouraging relationships and enjoyment in learning characterise teaching throughout the school. The supportive atmosphere that surrounds the wide range of school activities, in and out of lessons, encourages pupils to contribute well to their learning.
- Good subject knowledge is shared well with pupils through clear, precise and lively explanations that capture pupils' interests and promote understanding. For example, in Year 3 animated and vivid descriptions and the use of an excellent range of resources of human and animal teeth captured pupils' imaginations. This resulted in pupils using and developing their vocabulary and relishing opportunities to predict and hypothesise about how the different shapes of teeth determined their function.
- Throughout the school, pupils are given interesting and imaginative opportunities to apply and develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills to real-life activities. However, they are not provided with enough opportunities to engage in extended pieces of writing in subjects other than English. This limits the opportunities some pupils have of reaching the standards in writing of which they are capable.
- Pupils make use of vibrant displays and examples of work on walls to support them as they work.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, some pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable in phonics because resources are not always used effectively to support learning. Although the teaching of mathematics ensures pupils have a good grounding in basic skills these are not always built on year by year because the sequence in which skills are taught is not always thought through sufficiently well.
- Pupils are invariably given opportunities to respond to teachers' rigorous and helpful marking.
- The school has invested in a good number of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning inside and outside the classroom. They work in excellent partnerships with teachers, providing effective support to ensure that the needs are met for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. They are often responsible for small-group and one-to-one tuition and these sessions boost pupils' learning, including those supported by the pupil premium.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are at the heart of this caring school. They feel valued and secure. In lessons, on the playground and when moving around the school, behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful. They are proud of their school and their responses make a good contribution to the atmosphere of mutual respect and consideration for others in this calm and happy school.
- Pupils are eager to learn and develop positive attitudes. This is reflected in the much valued role pupils play in the life of the school, such as being peer mentors who make a very positive contribution to the pupils' enjoyment of playtimes or the privilege of being one of the school's ambassadors who act as tour guides showing visitors around the school.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are high throughout the school. Teachers manage behaviour extremely well and resolve issues swiftly and quietly. Pupils are carefully nurtured as individuals and those with behavioural difficulties learn how to regulate their own behaviour. This was clearly illustrated by one pupil who said, 'I know what to do when I feel I'm going to burst and because of that I've got lots more friends and I'm happier than ever

before.’

- The importance of attending school regularly is given a high priority and robust systems are in place to support pupils’ attendance. A particular success has been the introduction of the ‘Happy Bus’. The headteacher and a wide range of skilled support staff have worked hard to liaise with parents and support them to get their children to school more frequently. As a result, attendance has improved from well below average in the last academic year to broadly average at the time of the inspection. In spite of this, a very small proportion of pupils’ attendance is still too infrequent.
- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe because they are well cared for by teachers and other adults and that if any unacceptable behaviour should occur they are confident that it will be quickly dealt with by staff.
- Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and its different forms, including physical, emotional, homophobic and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying very rarely occurs because they are taught to take full responsibility for their personal conduct and that everyone in the school is their friend. Virtually all parents who spoke with inspectors during the inspection agreed with these views.
- Pupils are aware of potentially dangerous situations and have been taught how to avoid these, for example, not talking to strangers or giving out personal information on the Internet.

The leadership and management are good

- Under the committed and caring leadership of the headteacher, governors and staff continuously strive for further improvement. The headteacher has successfully integrated new staff and developed a whole-school approach to change, focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement.
- Phase leaders and subject leaders play an increasingly successful role in checking the quality of teaching and helping colleagues to improve their practice through coaching, mentoring and sharing expertise. However, the skills of newly appointed leaders are not yet sufficiently developed to bring about increasingly more rapid improvements in teaching.
- The school’s system for checking on pupils’ progress is sharp and robust. It is used to provide support for pupils at risk of not making the progress expected of them and to hold teachers to account for the progress made by the pupils in their care. As a result, the progress of all pupils, especially boys, is beginning to quicken.
- Teachers’ performance is managed well. All teachers and teaching assistants have targets linked to priorities for school improvement and the progress pupils make. There are secure links between performance and pay awards. The school provides an effective range of training opportunities, including externally run courses, in-house training and personal coaching and mentoring. All staff say that they are proud to work at the school and feel well supported.
- The curriculum is exciting and now takes more account of pupils’ interests, especially for boys. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across a range of imaginatively planned subjects and topics at Key Stage 2 are not developed enough. Consequently, pupils’ attainment in writing in Key Stage 2 lags behind that of reading and mathematics.
- The curriculum and the range of events, visits, visitors, musical and sporting activities and the vast range of clubs make an excellent contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The new primary school sport funding to support sport and physical education is being used imaginatively to employ coaches to work alongside and develop the skills of school staff, to upgrade the school’s resources for a range of physical education activities and to increase the range of sports available. As a result, more pupils have access to a wider variety of after-school activities and thereby improve their health and well-being.
- The local authority provides light touch support to the school. It has an accurate understanding of the school’s performance and has confidence in its ability to improve further.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is a strength. Governors are extremely well informed about the quality of teaching and how well leaders are supporting and improving staff performance. They make sure teachers' pay and promotion are justified by pupils' progress and attainment. They are very clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses and how it performs compared with other schools nationally. Finances are well managed and governors are able to account for the way extra funding, such as the pupil premium and the primary school sport funding is spent, and their impact on pupils' performance. Safeguarding and child protection have a high priority and governors ensure that statutory requirements are met.

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	138551
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	440917

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	541
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Molloy
Headteacher	David Alston
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01782 318145
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