

Maple Court Academy

Beverley Drive, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST2 0QD

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Attainment at the end of both key stages in the academy's first year was below the national average. The progress of all groups of pupils was inadequate.
- At the end of their year in Reception, children were ill prepared for the learning expected in Year 1. Since September 2014, the early years leader has introduced effective systems to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate rates of children's progress.
- Teaching is not consistently good or better. There has been a recent high turnover of staff and current vacancies are covered by temporary staff.
- All pupils, including the most-able are not given sufficiently challenging tasks to make the progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that pupils made good progress. However, the current senior leaders are tackling these weaknesses decisively.
- The skills of middle leaders are developing so that they can better lead their subject areas and support teachers in raising standards for all pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed principal has driven change with determination, skill and resilience. Within weeks, improvements were evident. Pupils' success lies at the heart of his ambition.
- The relatively new leadership team has extensive experience and expertise. Since their arrival they have successfully turned round pupils' behaviour and significantly strengthened the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' high expectations, underpinned by subject knowledge and professional skill, have provided the academy staff with much needed support and direction.
- Governors are fully aware of the improvements the academy must demonstrate. They are ambitious for the academy, but realistic about the journey ahead.
- Detailed improvement plans, appropriate support for teaching staff and regular, careful checks by leaders are helping to improve pupils' progress speedily.
- Pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality have all improved. Pupils say they are well cared for and feel safe. The academy is an orderly community.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors considered a range of lessons or parts of lessons in all year groups. Some lessons were observed jointly with members of the leadership team. Inspectors watched small groups of pupils working, visited an assembly and observed pupils at breaks and lunchtimes. Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and held discussions with pupils of different ages.
- Meetings were held with the principal, other leaders, representatives of the governing body and the academy trust.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to allow inspectors to view the results. Inspectors spoke to parents who dropped off their children at the beginning of the day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation. These included: development plans and leaders' evaluations; records of lesson observations; minutes of governing body meetings; the academy's records of pupils' progress; policies; results from a staff questionnaire; safeguarding records and procedures; and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Deana Holdaway, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Bimlar Kumari

Additional Inspector

Sandra La Porta

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The academy is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The academy sponsor is The College Academies Trust.
- A new principal, vice-principal and assistant principal took up their posts in September 2014.
- The academy has had a recent high staff turnover. Vacancies are currently covered by temporary staff.
- Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The large majority of pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in care).
- Just over one fifth of the pupils is disabled or has special educational needs. This is above average. The proportion of those who have a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan is also above average.
- Children in the Reception year attend full time and are taught in two classes.
- The academy did not meet the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all pupils learn, practise and develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills so that they continue to make rapid progress
 - planning tasks which require pupils to apply their skills purposefully across all subjects
 - providing activities for Reception children to apply their early reading skills to spelling and writing
 - planning activities and tasks which are suitably challenging for pupils of different abilities, including the most able
 - providing stimulating and inviting reading areas in classrooms to inspire pupils' love of reading.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
 - recruiting good quality permanent staff as soon as possible
 - making sure teachers continue to build on and further develop their knowledge and skills in all subjects.
- Develop the skills of middle leaders to enable them to manage their subject areas effectively and support leaders and teachers in raising standards for all pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Although the overall effectiveness of the academy is inadequate, the new leaders have successfully demonstrated considerable improvements in a short period of time. Leaders are not complacent. They judge accurately and report honestly on the academy's successes, but remain clear about the next steps. They have proved to be a determined and resilient team. They have high expectations of all staff and pupils, and have eradicated a culture of excuses successfully.
 - The principal has focused strongly on making up for the historical legacy of underachievement since the academy opened in 2013. He has correctly driven improvements and challenged underperformance to increase pupils' rates of progress rapidly and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
 - Disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding did not receive effective support in the past. The support provided for them had little or no impact on their achievement. Leaders have quickly identified the specific needs of these pupils and relevant support is now provided by trained, skilled staff with appropriate expertise.
 - All developments have been led strongly by the senior leadership team to bring about rapid improvement. The roles and responsibilities of middle leaders in improving teaching are developing.
 - Pupils experience an appropriate range of subjects, but these are not consistently covered in sufficient depth to develop their knowledge and skills in each area. Pupils have recently completed a project where they recreated artwork in the style of famous artists. Their work showed good levels of observation and attention to detail.
 - The academy provides adequately for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils experience a range of opportunities to consider and understand the needs of others and easily socialise with adults, friends and visitors. They know about some of the cultures, traditions and beliefs found in modern Britain and practise democracy in their selection of prefects, head boy and head girl. Their moral development is exemplified in their good behaviour.
 - The additional sport premium is used to employ suitably qualified coaches so that teachers and pupils can learn physical education skills. Teachers' confidence and ability to lead lessons and activities has improved in a relatively short time. Pupils are increasingly able to take part in competitive sport events and there are plans to develop a range of after-school clubs and activities.
 - Leaders speedily identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching and its impact upon pupils' progress and behaviour. They provided the necessary training, support and expertise and checked all new initiatives rigorously. Their management of teachers' performance makes full use of rewards and sanctions, as a consequence the quality of teaching is improving.
 - Leaders check and track pupils' progress scrupulously and hold teachers accountable for pupils' achievements. Their considerable knowledge and expertise supports teachers and teaching assistants in delivering improvements effectively. They are working with other schools and academies to develop agreed approaches to assessment in the future.
 - Pupils who need additional help are identified quickly and appropriate support is provided. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective support and their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is improving. Everyone works hard to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. As a result, gaps are narrowing. Discrimination is not tolerated.
 - In the past, the sponsor, The College Academies Trust did not have a realistic view of the academy's vulnerability. The Trust did not have an accurate assessment of pupils' progress, the quality of teaching or the effectiveness of leadership. Since the appointment of the new principal, the Trust has gained a regular and accurate account of the difficulties encountered and the improvements achieved.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors know the academy well. They are suitably aware of the low standards and rates of pupils' progress and how the quality of teaching affects pupils' outcomes. They hold leaders accountable for the successes and rates of improvement. The governing body has a range of suitable expertise, but a programme of training has been planned to keep them up to date. Governors fulfilled their strategic role during a turbulent period and faced prolonged difficulties. Nevertheless, they are determined to build on recent successes, challenge any slow progress and analyse evidence for themselves.
 - Governors are fully aware of how the performance of teachers is managed, what is done to tackle weaknesses and how these actions inform teachers' salary progression.
 - They make sure that all statutory requirements and effective procedures for safeguarding are met.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Plentiful smiles and a willingness to help others are characteristics of Maple Court pupils. Pupils are well mannered with each other, adults and visitors. They move around the school in an orderly way, holding doors open for each other and keeping in line as they walk along corridors.
- During playtimes pupils remain calm and enjoy the conversations and company of adults and each other. They play games and join in activities enthusiastically. They are well supervised during lunchtime and other breaks, but they are increasingly able to manage their own behaviour.
- In lessons pupils are eager to work hard, listen attentively and respond to questions with careful thought. They are keen to please their teachers. Even after an exciting session with a theatrical group during the inspection, pupils were quick to settle in lessons and resume learning. During tasks, pupils concentrate and do not give up if they find their activities difficult.
- Records are kept of any incidents of misbehaviour. These records are used to analyse trends and causes. The behaviour director uses this analysis well to provide effective advice and support if needed, although incidents of poor behaviour are now rare. A small proportion of pupils have difficulty managing their emotions and reactions to events. These pupils are provided with special support for short, fixed periods of time in a safe, comfortable and calm area. As a consequence, they are showing improved progress in their work, because they no longer give up or become frustrated.
- Pupils are proud of their appearance in school uniforms. They are quick to show the photographs in corridors which capture them behaving in line with the academy's 'Golden Rules'. They feel valued by leaders because the academy has been redecorated. They are proud of their surroundings. They make sure there is no litter and tidy up after themselves.
- Pupils respect the school rules introduced in September and understand why they are needed. They appreciate the different levels of warning for inappropriate behaviour. Now that teachers expect and apply the rules consistently, pupils know that silly behaviour will be corrected and good behaviour will be recognised and rewarded. As a result, pupils choose to behave well.
- Attendance has improved rapidly since September and is now in line with national figures for primary schools. Absences are checked rigorously and recorded to identify any trends or patterns. Pupils' good attendance is rewarded in a variety of ways which are highly valued by pupils. Pupils and parents are keen to be punctual.
- Since the appointment of the new leadership team behaviour has improved dramatically. Pupils and adults are quick to provide an account for the change and how the academy has improved as a result. The quick and substantial turnaround is impressive.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils speak openly about what it was like to be at an unruly academy and are quick to explain that with clear rules, consistent expectations and improved behaviour, they now feel safe to come to school.
- The academy takes care to ensure that it has effective arrangements for safeguarding its pupils and for children in the early years. All statutory requirements in this respect are met.
- Suitable checks are made on all visitors before they are allowed access to the academy. The building and premises are secure. Pupils explained that the locked gates, key pads on doors and visitor badges helped them feel safe.
- Pupils refer often to the 'Golden Rules' as the reasons for a lack of bullying in the academy and how the rules help their understanding about being good citizens. They understand there are different forms of bullying, including racist or derogatory language, but they are confident that they know what to do if such events occur. Incidents of bullying are rare.
- Staff training in child protection is up to date and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from harm. Staff are fully aware of potential risks to pupils' safety and well-being, how they can be identified and what action to take. Pupils spoke confidently and knowledgeably about the safe use of computers and mobile phones.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and eradicate weaknesses that had developed since the academy opened in June 2013. As a result, pupils are now making quicker progress, as evidenced in their work books, due to the much stronger quality of teaching.
- Pupils of all ages are at an early stage of development in writing for a range of purposes and styles. Teachers have introduced daily handwriting and spelling practice. Significant improvement in the quality, quantity and accuracy of pupils' presentation is evident in their books. Pupils routinely correct errors in their work so that mistakes are not repeated over time. Appropriate and specific support is provided for those pupils who have fallen behind or who have particular difficulties, for example, in spelling.
- Adults hear pupils reading regularly and additional support is given when necessary. Every classroom has a reading area but they are not all inviting or inspiring. New reading resources have been purchased and the library is being reorganised so that pupils can develop reading for enjoyment and interest. Pupils' previous lack of confidence and accuracy are now being addressed.
- Pupils' books provide evidence of a good range of mathematical topics. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to solve problems in different situations. In lessons, teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves and explain their reasoning using appropriate mathematical language. Levels of challenge are appropriate for the pupils' understanding and errors are quickly picked up by teachers.
- Teachers check on pupils' understanding during lessons, provide helpful, clear, written feedback in pupils' books and set additional tasks for pupils to try. They are suitably aware of gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Teachers assess pupils' achievements with increasing accuracy. They use such information to plan lessons which develop pupils' skills and knowledge step by step.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Published data clearly indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 were below the national average in almost all subjects in the 2014 tests. An average proportion of Year 6 pupils achieved the expected standard for their age in reading.
- During the first year of the academy's opening, pupils did not make sufficient progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of most-able pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was below average in all subjects in the 2014 tests.
- At the end of Year 2, boys were two terms behind girls in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6 boys were a year behind girls in most subjects. The academy's records show that these weaknesses are no longer the case and gaps are closing quickly.
- The large majority of pupils at Maple Court are disadvantaged. By the end of Year 6 in 2014, they achieved standards about a year behind other pupils nationally in writing, mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Their rates of progress were inadequate in all subjects. Disadvantaged pupils achieved standards similar to or better than those of other pupils in the academy, but did not perform so well in reading. However, there are clear improvements for this group of pupils currently in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs failed to make expected progress from their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below that of most schools. Just under half of the disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs did not meet the standard.
- The new leadership team quickly identified the reasons for the low standards and inadequate rates of progress. They immediately introduced new methods of teaching, refused to accept excuses and began frequent checks on pupils' progress. By December 2014, 12 out of 15 classes demonstrated accelerated progress in all subjects. Pupils who lack confidence in their learning are supported skilfully. Their raised confidence, combined with carefully developed skills for learning, has also led to marked improvements in a short time.
- Pupils' books show they are covering an appropriate breadth of topics in writing and mathematics. Continued improvement during the autumn term is evident in both the quality and quantity of pupils' work.
- Despite recent improvements, rates of progress are not yet consistent across all subjects or in all classes. There is a history of underperformance to overturn.

The early years provision**requires improvement**

- Last year, less than half of the Reception children achieved well in reading and writing. As a result, they were not provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare them for Year 1 in September 2014. There were no marked differences between the achievement of groups of pupils, for example, boys and girls.
- The majority of children started in the current Reception class unable to name common objects, such as spoons, parts of the body, numbers or days of the week. Many were unable to share, take turns or hold simple conversations. They did not know traditional nursery rhymes or stories.
- Children's strengths and weaknesses were identified within three weeks of entering the Reception classes. All learning is planned so that children build on the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences systematically. There is ample evidence in children's work and in the academy's detailed records that children are now making quickened progress successfully in most areas of learning. Nevertheless, not all activities stretch the most-able children for them to make accelerated progress across all areas of learning.
- Children are making good progress in speaking, writing and mathematics. They can now structure simple sentences using descriptive words, for example when describing a model of a castle, 'It has a tall tower' and 'it has a deep moat.' Children can count, recognise numbers and write their own names.
- Children make slower progress in reading. They are able to recognise letters and pronounce them accurately, but they do not practise these skills often enough.
- Children know the daily routines well and move calmly to and from different activities. They are polite to each other and adults and show genuine interest in lessons and activities. They are enthusiastic about all areas of learning and sustain concentration when completing tasks.
- The early years leader has introduced accurate systems to assess children on entry, track children's progress over time and identify quickly those children who are in danger of falling behind. The results of assessments are checked thoroughly by leaders and independent sources. Children who need extra help are supported effectively in small groups to help them catch up.
- Parents told inspectors that children are supported well and happy. Staff visit children and parents at home before the children start in Reception. The inclusion director works closely with a local nursery so that children who are known to have special education needs or specific difficulties are supported appropriately on entry to the Reception class. Parents would like more frequent communication with members of staff other than at the beginning and end of the day.
- The early years leader is working hard to bring about the necessary improvements speedily, implement new ways of working and embed successes. Historical weaknesses in teaching have been removed. Teachers are receptive to new ideas and eagerly try new ways of working. Teaching assistants have developed their own skills quickly to support children in groups and activities.

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	139228
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	453492

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Townshend
Headteacher	Jonathan Baddeley
Date of previous school inspection	16 July 2013
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