

Our Lady's Catholic Academy

Watkin Street, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 4NP

Inspection dates 28–29 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding		1
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Early years provision	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- School leaders and governors, with well-focused support from leaders within the multi-academy company, have brought significant improvement to all key areas of the school's work since conversion to academy status.
- The headteacher has been particularly influential in establishing a strong and highly committed leadership team and teaching force who have rapidly improved teaching and achievement.
- Provision for children in the early years is effective. Successful management ensures that children get a good start and achieve well by the end of Reception.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are proud of their school and have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel entirely safe in school and manage their personal behaviour extremely well. Their attendance is above average.
- The quality of teaching is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons because, they say, 'we are able to use our creativity'. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' good progress and learning. Pupils varying abilities are generally well provided for.
- Standards are improving in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, almost all pupils in Years 2 and 6 are working at standards expected for their age and significant proportions are working at higher levels.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve well from their individual starting points.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. They fully recognise the rapid improvement that has been made since the academy opened. They value the pastoral care that the school provides.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics is now good. However, standards throughout the school have not improved as rapidly as those in reading and writing. Teachers do not always set work that challenges all groups of pupils.
- In mathematics, pupils have not sufficiently developed the skills and depth of understanding needed to explain different ways of tackling problems across the curriculum.
- Teachers' marking in mathematics does not consistently help pupils to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed in a range of lessons throughout the school.
- Inspectors discussed the school's work with members of staff, pupils, representatives from the board of directors and the local authority, members of the governing body and a parents' group.
- Also taken into account were the views of 12 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by staff members.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; external reports and the school's own view of its work; minutes of governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gillian Hunter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British but a significant proportion are from different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Our Lady's Catholic Academy converted to become an academy on 1 November 2013. When its predecessor school, Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to require improvement overall.
- Our Lady's Catholic Academy is part of the All Saints Catholic Collegiate, a multi-academy company in the south of Stoke-on-Trent. It is governed by the board of directors of the collegiate and an academy committee which operates at local level.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- There have been a significant number of changes in teaching staff since the school became an academy.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standard. This is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Provision for children in the early years is full time in Nursery and Reception.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils during term time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and the rate of progress further in mathematics by:
 - ensuring there is always sufficient challenge in mathematics, especially for the most able pupils, in all classes
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems in different ways across the curriculum
 - deepening pupils' understanding of mathematics by encouraging them to explain their thinking and the methods used to solve problems
 - making sure that feedback always helps pupils to improve their work and that pupils do their corrections consistently.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The impact of the headteacher's leadership on school improvement has been enormous. Parents comment on the, 'transformation' that has been brought about in such a relatively short time, especially with regard to the way that school leaders listen to and act upon their views. Pupils also say the school is better than it was, and that they enjoy learning.
- The headteacher tackled the issues facing the school head-on. Expectations were quickly shared and the positive response has led to the rapid establishment of a welcoming learning environment, trusting relationships throughout the school community, outstanding behaviour and safety, and rapid progress in all classes.
- There is a very positive ethos in the school and a common understanding that good achievement is non-negotiable. For pupils, that is underpinned by the knowledge that no one is discriminated against for any reason and that everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve their best. Pupils learn in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect. Teaching is good and pupils' outstanding personal development is carefully nurtured.
- Well-focused sharing of resources within the multi-academy company (M.A.C.) enabled the school to tackle leadership and teaching issues successfully. The senior leadership team is strong. Senior members of staff communicate high expectations very clearly through their modelling of good practice and checking of the school's work.
- School leaders' work to improve teaching is central to the school's rapid improvement. Teaching that does not meet the current higher expectations is a thing of the past. Only a few weaker aspects in the teaching of mathematics remain to be tackled. There is a well-managed programme of professional training, including internal support for newly appointed teachers from within the M.A.C. This has strengthened overall performance. Assessment skills are greatly improved and expectations are high.
- The school has also benefited from effective local authority support, for example through leadership training for the new headteacher and senior leaders. Representatives from the local authority and the company's board of directors state firmly that the school is, 'unrecognisable', in terms of its improved capacity, since becoming an academy, to plan and lead further improvement.
- Middle managers, responsible for subjects and curriculum development, are an effective team. They know their subjects well and have adapted the new primary curriculum thoughtfully to ensure it both meets requirements and reflects what pupils want to learn. Learning is enhanced by a good range of interesting visits and activities including residential visits that are an effective contribution to pupils' personal development and the fostering of their excellent relationships. Leaders recognise the need to adjust the planning of mathematics to include a wider use of mathematics across the curriculum.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well so they are extremely well prepared to play their part in community life in modern British society. Pupils' strong moral values are a reflection of the Christian ethos in the school. They know right from wrong. They understand and are tolerant of others' different backgrounds and circumstances. Pupils manage their own excellent behaviour and set their own rules to make sure it is maintained. They understand how democracy works and the importance of exercising responsibility fairly.
- Leaders use the allocated sports funding well to improve the quality of physical education teaching, improve pupils' fitness and well-being and to encourage more pupils to enjoy sport. Teachers work alongside a team of skilful sports coaches who lead very active sessions, teaching new skills and techniques, for example in athletics and field events. Whole-school training in dance and gymnastics has boosted teachers' subject knowledge and skills. There are more competitive sports and the school has thriving boys' and girls' football teams. An interesting range of after-school clubs including fencing and archery and 'mad science' give pupils broader opportunities to develop their interests in sport and other areas.
- Pupil premium funding is managed effectively. It is overseen by a member of the governing body who is part of the school's pupil premium team. The representative holds the school to account for the impact of the pupil premium spending. This team understands the strategy, evaluation and impact of the pupil premium spend across the school. Within the collegiate, pupil premium data are compared across all schools. The underlying aim of governors is that the funding increases equality of opportunity for all pupils. Assessment data indicate that the aim is met and that attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are closing quickly.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and effective. All administrative requirements such as policies, training and checks on personnel are up to date. Guidelines for pupils and staff about safe use of the internet are clear. Attendance is checked rigorously and has risen to above average as a result of the

school's positive action.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance of the school is strong. It is made up of an academy committee, answerable to a board of directors of the company. The strengths and expertise within the company are fully shared. Governors have excellent understanding of national data and use them very effectively to measure the school's academic performance against that of other schools. Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and have set high standards for teaching and learning. They challenge the school vigorously over its results, while providing the necessary support and expertise the school needs to improve its performance. They know why a dip in standards occurred in 2014 and know equally well why standards are currently rising rapidly towards where they should be. Systems for performance management of teachers and its link to salary reviews are well established and clearly understood. Financial management is efficient. Governors ensure that additional funding for sports and disadvantaged pupils is used effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils start their day very well. They arrive on time, smartly dressed in uniform and ready to learn. There is always a friendly greeting. Pupils are invariably polite and extremely courteous.
- Attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and settle to work sensibly and quickly. They work very well together and help each other when they can. Pupils work hard and take very good care over the way they present their work.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well around the school. They are proud of their school and take very good care of it in the way they keep it tidy inside and in the playground. Pupils are always commended for their behaviour by visitors and people outside of school. Table manners at lunchtime are excellent and they justifiably judge their behaviour very highly.
- Respect is a key word in pupils' vocabulary and they are always very mindful of that in their dealings with adults and each other or when representing the school at outside events.
- Pupils contribute greatly to the everyday life and ethos of the school. They decide their own codes of conduct and manage their behaviour themselves. Peer mediators who are trained to negotiate, very successfully maintain a sense of fair play and record their success rate.
- The school council actively gathers pupils' views so they have a voice in school matters. Ideas for the design of a new garden, for example, were passed on to a landscape gardener to be used in the final plan.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding
- Parents express no concerns over their children's safety and welfare. They recognise how much it has improved. Parents also greatly appreciate the additional care and safety provided before school via the breakfast club. It is attended by a significant number of pupils and contributes to their much-improved punctuality and attendance.
- Pupils confirm parents' views. They have excellent understanding of what it means to stay safe and how to deal with potentially dangerous situations. Rules about internet safety are clearly understood throughout the school, and pupils are fully aware of the many types of bullying.
- Pupils say that they are very safe in school. Bullying and offensive name calling are extremely rare, and pupils are adamant that should they occur they will be dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils who are potentially the most vulnerable are cared for and supported extremely well. The school works very closely with these pupils and their families and has established excellent home–school working relationships.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and accounts for pupils' good progress.
- Strong support from senior leaders, along with well-planned training, motivates teaching staff well and strengthens their resolve and commitment to provide the best for pupils.

- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' good learning. They help to check pupils' progress in lessons by questioning them about their work, helping them to correct mistakes and moving them on to the next steps. These adults know pupils' particular needs well and deal sensitively with their difficulties.
- Teachers manage their pupils exceptionally well. They listen to pupils' ideas and use them as points for discussion. For example, during a lesson about plotting coordinates a pupil mentioned the term 'quadrilateral'. That changed the focus of the lesson for a time as the word was discussed and the meaning clarified so that all pupils benefited from an extra bit of new learning before continuing with the original plan. The pupils felt valued that this contribution was given some importance.
- English is taught well. Teachers ensure ample attention is given to teaching reading skills. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught successfully. Teachers provide a good range of literature for pupils to enjoy including in the school library.
- The teaching of writing is good. Teachers ensure there is a good measure of writing across the curriculum to allow pupils to put their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills to the test.
- In mathematics, teaching is generally effective especially in the focus on teaching number facts and investigating the way numbers work. Pupils get a good grasp of multiplication tables by the time they reach the upper junior classes. Pupils are not asked frequently enough to explain what they have done in order to deepen their understanding of mathematics. At times, teachers do not encourage pupils to talk through how they can apply what they know to find the correct solution.
- Expectations are high and there is generally good challenge in the work planned for pupils. Pupils' work shows that new learning takes place at a good pace. The most able pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the benefit of some additional specialist teaching in both English and mathematics and the higher challenges for them are evident in their work. In other classes the challenge in mathematics varies, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Assessment is accurate and used well to plan pupils' work. Training had been undertaken by all teachers, and pupils' work compared with that in other schools to ensure accuracy of judgements about standards. Local authority advisers have confirmed the current accuracy of assessments in Years 2 and 6.
- Feedback to pupils, particularly about their writing, effectively helps them to improve their work. They assess their own work regularly and generally respond promptly to teachers' marking. In mathematics, there is less consistency in the help pupils are given and the frequency that they do corrections.
- Pupils work is displayed attractively in classrooms and around the school. Displays such as writing prompts and reminders are helpful to pupils' learning and they use them well to help them with their work.
- Good work in art, science, history and physical education, for example, is indicative of good teaching across the curriculum and pupils spoke very enthusiastically about their music.
- Homework is given regularly. Parents appreciate the fact that it gives them a good guide to their children's learning in school and how well they are making progress.

The achievement of pupil **is good**

- Since becoming an academy the rate of pupils' progress has increased rapidly, particularly in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is good overall but the pace of improvement has been slower than in the other subjects. Standards have improved in Key Stage 2 and pupils achieve well.
- Progress in Years 1 and 2 builds well on the good start children make in the early years. In 2014, an above average proportion of Year 1 pupils reached the expected standards in phonics. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 currently at that stage is slightly higher. Their good start in phonics means that they tackle their early reading and writing confidently.
- Good progress continues in Year 2. All pupils reach at least an expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics and considerable proportions do better. Overall, standards at the end of Year 2 in 2014 were above average. Samples of pupils' work in reading and writing, and school assessments, indicate that similar levels are achieved this year.
- Pupils in Year 2 read well. They have many reading opportunities in school and at home and have read extensively over the year. They talk enthusiastically about favourite stories. Phonics skills are good and pupils use them well to work out new words.
- The school's results in national tests for Year 6 pupils were below average in 2014. This was partly due to some inaccuracy in the prior use of assessment that affected pupils' progress. More robust assessment systems, including thorough checking of the accuracy of assessments, have resolved this issue. The impact of current leadership bringing about stronger teaching has led to standards rising rapidly in all subjects. Currently, in Year 6 almost all pupils are set to reach the expected level and good proportions of

pupils are working at the higher Level 5 and some pupils at the highest Level 6 in mathematics.

- Pupils read fluently by the end of Year 6. They speak confidently about the books and authors they most enjoy and know why it is important to be able to read well for research in other subjects. Writing has improved and pupils write for a variety of purposes, including poetry.
- Leaders recognise that although mathematics is boosted in Year 6 and standards are rising as pupils leave school, throughout the school, standards have not kept pace with other subjects because of inconsistent challenges for pupils and insufficient emphasis on practical problem solving to broaden pupils' understanding.
- Progress in Years 3 to 6 is at least good and for some groups it is outstanding. In Year 6, for example, pupils from minority ethnic groups make outstanding progress in reading and writing compared with good progress for other pupils. There are other examples of outstanding progress for some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in Year 4 and disadvantaged pupils in Year 5.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well provided for and their learning is managed well. Pupils' specific needs are identified early and planning and support are put in place to ensure at least good progress from their starting points. Parents are fully informed of their child's progress and the school works well with outside agencies to ensure pupils get the help they need.
- The most able pupils in Years 5 and 6 receive additional support from well-qualified teachers in order to help them reach their potential and make good progress. Although at times the challenge in mathematics varies in some years and is not always sufficient overall they achieve well. Whereas no pupils achieved Level 6 in mathematics in 2014, several Year 6 pupils are working at that level currently.
- The 2014, national assessment data showed a difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils nationally. In terms of attainment disadvantaged pupils were about two terms behind others in reading and writing and a year behind in mathematics. Compared with others in the school disadvantaged pupils were about two terms behind, in all subjects.
- Current school data show that gaps have been closed significantly and that disadvantaged pupils reach similar levels of attainment and make similar good progress to others in the school.

The early years provision

is good

- Achievement in the early years is good. Children enter the Nursery with abilities below those typical for their age. They flourish in the Nursery, quickly adapting to routines and enjoying the rich variety of activities provided. They continue to learn well throughout Reception and most enter Year 1 well prepared, with typical knowledge and skills for their age. The proportion who reached a good level of development in 2014 was in line with the national average. That proportion is higher in the current year.
- There is a good range of resources for indoor and outdoor learning, including up-to-date technology to challenge pupils and speed up their progress. Teaching is good. Staff plan exciting activities and they work well in teams to ensure that children move on to the next steps when they are ready. Staff are very sensitive to the particular requirements of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Their learning and their welfare are nurtured well and they make good progress. The most able children in Reception have developed greater independence and are beginning to achieve goals in reading and writing that are above typical expectations. The teaching of phonics is good. Staff are particularly good at questioning children as they play to encourage them to think about what they are doing and decide what to do next.
- Learning is well focused on ensuring that children develop well both physically and emotionally. They are kept safe and feel secure and happy in school. Parents speak highly of the way they, too, are made to feel welcome. Children behave very well because that is what is expected. They learn to play harmoniously and respect others.
- The early years provision is managed effectively. The leader is skilled at fostering strong teamwork and is knowledgeable about early years work. She maintains high expectations of the early years team and ensures that children thrive under its care.

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	140287
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	462550

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	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Weatherby
Headteacher	Dawn Lee
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01782 235385
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