

St George and St Martin's Catholic Academy

Boulton Street, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 2NQ

Inspection dates 6–7 May 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	Good	2
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.

- The Principal, the academy committee and directors of the Multi-Academy Company are united in their determination to ensure that all pupils achieve well and experience teaching of the highest quality.
- Since the academy opened, the rates of progress have improved for all pupils.
- Teaching is improving rapidly and is typically good, because teachers use the information about how well pupils are achieving to plan activities that meet their differing needs.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and work hard in their lessons. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good.
- Leaders have put in place very robust systems to make sure that pupils are safe in the academy. Pupils feel very well cared for.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress because their teachers get to know the children quickly and ensure that their needs are met.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress, because there are very good systems in place to check how well the support that these pupils receive is meeting their needs.
- The academy committee have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are doing. They hold leaders to account robustly for the performance of the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils make rapid progress to reach the higher National Curriculum levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not always check regularly enough on pupils' progress in lessons to ensure that work set is always deepening and extending their learning.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills and reasoning in subjects across the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes across the academy. Four lessons were observed jointly with the Principal. Shorter visits were made to classrooms to check on aspects of the academy's work, and inspectors looked at how pupils behave around the academy and on the playground.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, teachers, representatives of the academy committee (governing body) and the Newman Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Company.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of academy documentation, including safeguarding information, behaviour records, information about the progress pupils make, the academy's self-evaluation statement and improvement plan and records of the work of the academy council.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their work, heard them read and looked in detail at their books and other examples of work.
- Inspectors took account of 29 responses to the on-line parental questionnaire (Parent View), surveys of parents' opinions by the academy and also spoke with parents informally at the start of the day.
- Inspectors considered the responses from 22 members of staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mitchell Moore, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Howard Bousfield

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St George and St Martin's Catholic Academy is a similar size to the average-sized primary school.
- St George and St Martin's Catholic Academy converted to become an academy on 1 September 2013 as part of The Newman Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Company. When its predecessor school, St George and St Martin's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- Governance of the academy is undertaken by the academy committee, who take the role of the local governing body, with overarching responsibilities being held by directors of the Multi-Academy Company.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional funding which in this academy applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- Most pupils are White British, with proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language much lower than the national average.
- Children in the early years attend the Nursery and Reception classes full time.
- The academy is currently receiving support from the National Leader of Education (NLE) at the C2C Teaching Alliance.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that it is more frequently outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that teachers and support staff regularly check on pupils' work in lessons to identify opportunities to extend and deepen pupils' learning, especially those pupils who are capable of making rapid progress
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning and understanding through other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders' consistently high expectations have ensured that, since the academy opened, there have been considerable improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. The Principal and assistant Principals have worked closely with the academy committee and directors of the Multi-Academy Company to provide a very clear direction for continuous improvement. This has had a marked impact on improving outcomes for pupils and ensures that pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- Senior and subject leaders check on the quality of teaching rigorously. Teachers receive robust and timely support when improvements are needed and further checks are made to ensure that the support is having the desired impact. Through the appraisal procedures, senior and subject leaders hold teachers to account robustly, setting ambitious targets for the achievement of pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good and continues to improve.
- Teachers and other staff benefit from a very effective programme of professional development and training. Recent improvements in the teaching of writing and the accuracy of assessment exemplify the success of staff training. Teachers value the support that they receive from senior and subject leaders. For instance, one teacher told inspectors that she would not still be teaching if it was not for the support that she has received in improving her practice.
- The quality of the curriculum is good. The thematic topics have been well designed to motivate and engage pupils and to prepare them for life in modern Britain. The curriculum promotes a love of reading through having a high quality piece of children's literature embedded in each theme. Pupils are provided with a wealth of opportunities to practise and develop reading and writing in a range of curriculum areas. However, opportunities to develop mathematical skills and reasoning outside of mathematics lessons are limited.
- Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. The academy's ethos of 'growing, learning, loving' permeates all aspects of academy life. Pupils have a good understanding and respect for all faiths, religions, customs and cultures and, consequently, there are good relations and a lack of discrimination.
- Leaders ensure that there is equality of opportunity in the academy. Good support is provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and other pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This inclusive and proactive approach is successful in removing barriers to learning.
- The use of the pupil premium funding is effective. The additional support given to disadvantaged pupils is focused on what each pupil needs. Consequently, they make good progress.
- The primary physical education and sport funding is used very effectively. Through partnership working across the collegiate, specialist support is provided to teachers to build their confidence and skills in teaching physical education. Pupils experience an increasingly wide range of sporting activities. Leaders monitor the impact of the funding very effectively including through measuring the fitness levels of pupils at key points in the year. This has shown that the majority of pupils have improved their fitness over the year. Leaders work sensitively with those pupils who have not engaged with physical activities to develop bespoke opportunities for them too to improve their fitness.
- Staff are vigilant and effective in keeping pupils safe. Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet statutory requirements fully. Parents are pleased with the way that leaders and staff are committed to pupils' well-being and safety.
- Parents think highly of the academy. They particularly appreciate the way that academy staff are always ready to listen to their concerns and act on them. Parents also commented that leaders keep them informed about how well their children are doing.
- The support provided by the National Leader of Education, through the teaching school alliance, has been successful in bringing about improvements in assessment procedures and the achievement of pupils in writing. As a result of this effective support, the capacity of leaders to ensure that the academy continues to improve has been strengthened.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Multi-Academy Company knows the academy well. Directors of the company have brokered high quality training for the staff and make regular checks to ensure that the targets set for improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are met. Together, the company and academy committee provide the academy with good governance. They challenge and support it well and ensure that it is well led and managed.

- The academy committee have a very accurate view of the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. They receive good quality information from senior leaders and from their own visits to the academy. The academy committee use this information to challenge leaders to ensure that pupils are getting the very best provision.
- The performance of staff is linked clearly to pay progression. The academy committee receive regular updates about pupils' progress and use their good understanding of pupil performance data to challenge underperformance. Through this the academy committee have made sure that there is a strong link between pupil performance and the pay that teachers receive.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. They display very positive attitudes to their learning and apply themselves to their work enthusiastically. There is no low-level disruption in lessons, as pupils are conscientious and want to achieve well.
- All pupils are very smartly turned out in their uniforms. They take pride in their academy and this is reflected in the neat presentation of their work and the high quality displays in classrooms and corridors.
- Pupils and parents report that incidents of bullying are rare and that, on the few occasions that incidents occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. This is confirmed in the academy behaviour records. Leaders analyse the behaviour records effectively to look for any opportunities to make further improvements. For example, in response to some pupils reporting feeling unsafe when moving around the building, corridor prefects were introduced. This has eliminated the problem.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe in the academy, because they know that staff always look out for them. Parents are also very positive about the safety of their children which they feel is part of the ethos of the academy.
- Pupils have an awareness of a range of risks such as racism and cyber-bullying that they could be exposed to and are developing an understanding of how to protect themselves from these. The academy has recently introduced a programme to promote a greater understanding of the risks of extremism. Pupils are starting to develop a better understanding of these risks and how to keep themselves safe from them.
- Leaders have ensured that there are robust systems in place, which go beyond the statutory requirements, to ensure that pupils are kept safe. There are good partnerships with a range of agencies to support pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leaders are rigorous in following up referrals made to these agencies when there is any delay in responses.
- All staff of the academy have had thorough training in safeguarding and child protection. As a consequence, staff are very well informed about how to keep children safe.
- Attendance has improved since the academy opened and is now in line with the national average. Punctuality has also improved. This is as a result of better processes to check on attendance and punctuality and prompt communication with parents when attendance levels cause concern.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the academy opened. It is now consistently good and leads to pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers use the information that they have about pupils' achievement to plan lessons that are generally suitably demanding and engaging. Teachers plan activities that have an increasing level of challenge in all lessons and most pupils make appropriate choices about which level to attempt. Teachers monitor these choices but, occasionally, there are times where potentially more able pupils are not encouraged to attempt the more challenging tasks. This prevents them from making the accelerated progress of which

they are capable.

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and apply themselves enthusiastically in their lessons. They work hard and want to succeed. This is because pupils know that teachers have high expectations of them.
- Teachers are skilled at modelling how pupils should approach their work. For example, in mathematics, pupils are taught how to break down the stages of a problem and are encouraged to demonstrate the mathematical reasoning that sits behind each stage. As a result, pupils have a clear outline of how to approach the activities that have been set for them. This contributes to good progress in mathematics lessons. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their mathematical skills and reasoning in other curriculum subjects.
- Pupils make good use of the targets and measures of success that their teachers develop with them to improve their work. This is particularly effective in writing lessons. In a Year 5, lesson, pupils worked diligently to improve their writing which was inspired by reading their class novel *Kensuke's Kingdom*. They enjoyed the challenge of looking for opportunities to apply all of the measures of success and were rigorous in evaluating their own work and that of their peers.
- Reading is promoted well across the academy. A major piece of children's literature is integral to each of the curriculum themes. Year 6 pupils were engrossed in their reading of *War Horse* and teachers had used the text skilfully to provide opportunities to develop grammatical understanding.
- Teachers provide clear advice when marking pupils' books about what they have done well and how they could improve. These comments are linked to the pupils' learning targets. Teachers expect pupils to respond to their comments and check that they have done so. This contributes to the good progress that pupils make.
- Teaching assistants are a strength of the academy. There is a strong partnership between teachers and assistants which means that teaching assistants are very clear about their role in lessons. Teaching assistant are particularly skilled at providing focused support for groups of pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good support. These pupils are given carefully planned tasks that are designed to meet their specific needs. Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully so that they know what is working well.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The progress made by pupils in writing and mathematics has improved considerably during the lifetime of the academy. This reflects improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Achievement data from 2014, for pupils leaving at the end of Year 6 show that standards were above average in reading, but below in mathematics and particularly in writing. The progress made by pupils over the course of Key Stage 2 in writing and mathematics was also below average.
- The standards achieved by Year 2 pupils in 2014 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The standards of work seen during the inspection were consistent with the information on pupils' achievement collected by the academy. Pupils in Year 6 currently are matching the national proportions of pupils that make and exceed the rates of expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There is similar improvement evident in the work of the current Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, pupils' attainment in these subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2 shows they are currently on track to attain above the national average this year.
- The most able pupils are now making better progress. In 2014, the proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher National Curriculum level 5 or better in reading was similar to the national average, but far fewer pupils achieved similar levels in writing and mathematics. Assessments of the current Year 6 pupils show that the proportion achieving the higher National Curriculum levels is closer to national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This is replicated across other year groups where there is an increasing proportion of pupils making better than expected progress. Some pupils, particularly boys, do not make the accelerated progress that they should to achieve the higher National Curriculum levels in writing and mathematics, because the work they choose does not always challenge them sufficiently.
- The results of the phonics (the sounds that letters make) screening check for Year 1 pupils were in line with the national average for 2014. Pupils use their phonics skills effectively when reading and, from an early age, develop a love of reading.

- Disadvantaged pupils make at least expected progress from their different starting points, compared to other pupils nationally, and in reading many disadvantaged pupils make better than expected progress. In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was in line with other pupils in the academy in mathematics and a term ahead in reading and writing. When compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils in the academy were a term ahead in reading, half a term behind in writing and two terms behind in mathematics. Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the academy are narrowing in all year groups, because teachers plan activities that address the specific barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils have.
- Well-planned support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensures that these pupils make good progress. Leaders are scrupulous in checking that the support provided for these pupils is having the desired impact and are quick to adapt provision so that progress is accelerated and meets their needs well.

The early years provision

is good

- When they start at the academy, the vast majority of three- and four-year olds have skills and abilities below those typical for their age. This is particularly the case in communication skills where children are very reluctant to speak to adults or other children. Children also find it difficult initially to play and share with each other.
- Children make good progress in the early years so that, by the end of Reception, they are well prepared for Year 1. The proportion of children that have reached a good level of development by the end of Reception is higher than the national average. In the past, boys have not achieved as well as girls, particularly in writing. Leaders have identified this and now make sure that careful checks are made to ensure that boys' learning is suitably matched to their needs. As a result, boys are making better progress.
- Teaching in the early years is good. The learning environment, inside and outside, is varied and interesting and the activities provided for children promote their curiosity. Teachers use their detailed understanding of each child to ensure that individual needs are met. Daily phonics and number activities promote the development of basic skills effectively. Children are provided with many opportunities to write, inside and outside the classroom. The inspector was delighted to receive a beautifully presented invitation to a tea party in the home corner.
- Accurate initial assessments are made in the children's first weeks in Nursery, in close partnership with parents. Teachers monitor children's progress carefully as they move through the early years and use this information to plan appropriate learning activities. Children were proud to share the records of their progress with inspectors through 'My Special Book', which documents their learning journey.
- Children behave well in Nursery and Reception and quickly develop good attitudes to learning. Staff ensure that children are safe at all times and parents and children report that they feel very well cared for.
- Leadership and management in the early years are good. The early years leader has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement in the phase. Through systematic monitoring, she checks that teaching meets the needs of the children. For example, analysis of initial assessment information identified an increasing proportion of children with speech and language problems joining the academy. In response to this, leaders now employ a speech and language specialist to work with these children. This is effective in helping them to catch up with their peers.

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	140145
Inspection number	461602

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	P Weatherby
Principal	L Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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