

# Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy

Woodland Street, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 6LW

**Inspection dates** 4–5 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b> <b>1</b>
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Since opening the academy, the Principal, head of school, directors and school committee members have been exceptionally effective in creating an environment in which anything less than outstanding is not acceptable.
- Rapid improvement has been secured in all areas of the academy's work since it opened. Inspection evidence shows improvement is set to continue.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They make outstanding progress in all areas of learning and are prepared exceptionally well to move to Year 1.
- All pupils are making rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well. Because standards were low when the academy opened, attainment is still only as expected for pupils' ages, but standards are rising quickly.
- Teaching is of a consistent high quality across the academy. Teachers set interesting and demanding tasks that inspire pupils to learn and which move learning on very quickly.
- Teachers constantly check on how well individual pupils are learning. They move pupils onto the next levels as soon as they are ready or provide immediate support for any who are in danger of falling behind.
- Pupils behave extremely well at all times. They are very polite and courteous and show exceptional levels of care and consideration for each other. This creates an environment in which pupils feel safe and which supports outstanding learning.
- Pupils are kept very safe at all times. They enjoy school and attendance has improved greatly so it is now above average.
- Regular checks on teaching by senior leaders ensure that high quality teaching is sustained throughout the school and pupils make the best possible progress.
- Members of the Board of Directors and the School Committee keep very close contact with the academy. They know about its effectiveness very well through regular, detailed checks on pupils' achievements. They set aspirational targets for the work of senior leaders and hence for teachers' work. They play a central role in planning for the academy's development and improvement.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in seven lessons. Five of the observations were carried out jointly with the Principal or the head of school.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and looked at the work in pupils' books.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the data it collects on pupils' progress. Documents detailing the school's arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed and discussed.
- Meetings were held with members of the Board of Directors, members of the School Committee, senior leaders, subject leaders, classroom support assistants and pupils.
- Questionnaire responses from 15 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspector took account of 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. He also met with two parents who came into school to give their views in more detail and considered three letters received from parents.

## Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2013. When its predecessor school, English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The academy is a member of the Newman Catholic Collegiate, a multi academy company (MAC) consisting of eight Catholic primary schools and one Catholic secondary school.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Children attend Nursery part time and Reception full time.
- Almost all pupils are White British. None speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average.
- The small number of pupils in Year 6 means that it is not possible to comment on whether government's floor standards, the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, have been met.
- There is a breakfast club before school each morning and after-school care. These are managed by the governors and were included in the inspection.
- The Principal is also headteacher at St Mary's Catholic Academy, another member of the Newman Catholic Collegiate. He is a Local Leader of Education.
- The Principal and Head of School were new to the academy when it opened. All teachers and three of the seven classroom support staff have joined the academy since opening. The school committee reformed and there is now a joint committee serving both Our Lady of Grace and St Mary's Catholic Academies.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify and address any remaining weaknesses in pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, so pupils at all levels of attainment can achieve the highest levels they are capable of reaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal of the academy, with excellent collaboration from directors and members of the school committee has very quickly created a learning environment in which adults and pupils alike can achieve their very best. Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy is a small school, but highly effective links with other effective schools, and in particular St Mary's Catholic Academy, have enabled the Principal to staff the school with highly effective teachers and classroom support staff. The academy has rapidly become outstanding in its effectiveness and continues to improve.
- Senior and subject leaders make very careful checks on the quality of teaching to check that high quality teaching is sustained so pupils achieve exceptionally well. They observe lessons, check the work in pupils' books and make detailed checks on the progress of each individual pupil and of different groups. They use this information exceptionally well to help teachers and teaching assistants maintain high quality in their work.
- Leadership at all levels is outstanding. Although small in number, the staff cover most key areas of the school's work very effectively. Where appropriate, staff lead specific areas, such as inclusion, across Our Lady of Grace and St Mary's academies. Leaders lead by example, and training provided from within and across the MAC is highly effective in keeping adults' knowledge up to date and relevant to this school.
- The school places a high priority on treating all pupils equally and giving all pupils excellent opportunities to make the most of their individual talents. There is no discrimination of any kind and pupils with a wide range of specific learning and emotional needs are welcomed. Because of the school's approach to valuing difference, pupils have developed an extraordinarily strong understanding and appreciation of disability and diversity. All pupils are included in all activities. Pupils from all backgrounds and of all abilities make outstanding academic progress and develop very positive attitudes to learning, so they all are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages of their education.
- Excellent use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils has ensured any gaps between the attainment of these pupils and other pupils nationally have closed. Qualifying pupils are supported ably in small groups or through one-to-one support to help them catch up. Opportunities for them to be included in all school events are assured.
- Leaders spend the primary school sports funding exceptionally well. All schools within the MAC contribute to employing a specialist physical education teacher to work with teachers across all academies. Consequently teachers' skills in teaching physical education have improved. The school has checked the fitness of each pupil and monitors the impact of increased physical activity, particularly on those pupils not in the 'most-fit' category. There has been a substantial increase in the number of pupils attending sports clubs.
- The school gives a very high priority to safeguarding. Careful checks are made on all adults coming into contact with pupils and records kept. Staff are vigilant in child protection matters. Thorough safety checks are ongoing.
- The curriculum is excellent and has a strong impact on pupils' interest in learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through different subjects and through everyday school life. Assemblies are used very effectively to reward pupils' best academic, sporting, musical and personal achievements. Pupils are encouraged to strive for high standards in everything they do. Pupils are brought up to respect and value others, whatever their differences. This clearly shows in the way pupils work and play together harmoniously. Pupils are encouraged to use their highly developed understanding of right and wrong to make sensible choices.
- The school promotes British values exceptionally well throughout the curriculum and through school life in general. Pupils contribute to life in school, for example through the school council and through their ideas in forming the school's playground rules. They gain an understanding of how Britain has become the country it is today through special curriculum days focusing on British values, including an annual visit to the Houses of Parliament. They understand the need for laws and rules and how these protect an

individual's liberty by enabling people to be part of a safe community. Pupils learn respect for each other and for the world's major faiths in assemblies and religious education lessons. The school prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain.

- The Newman Collegiate Board of Directors provides excellent support and challenge for the leaders of the academy. Directors ensure that policies are effective and meet current requirements. They check closely teachers' assessments of pupils' progress and use the outcomes to help set the MAC's and individual academy's priorities for improvement. Central to the work of the directors is establishing a vision of excellence. The Board of Directors has a strong influence on the work of the academy and has successfully helped staff achieve excellence.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is very effective. The School Committee works in close partnership with senior leaders and the Board of Directors to monitor the quality of education provided. Its members are well informed through regular visits to see what is happening in the academy. They have made an important contribution to the academy's improvement.
  - Excellent knowledge of the school and professional expertise place school committee members in a strong position to challenge senior leaders over improvement. They have a clear understanding of the information on how well pupils are doing academically and use this effectively to ask leading questions about the effectiveness of teaching. As a result they have a very clear idea of its quality. They understand fully how much and why Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy has improved.
  - They set clear targets in managing the performance of the Principal and make sure pay increases are linked to competence.
  - Governors ensure that all requirements are met, and that safeguarding arrangements are highly effective.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Parents, staff and pupils agree that behaviour is of a high quality and pupils speak very positively about behaviour in lessons and around school. All agree that behaviour has improved tremendously since the academy opened. There are notable examples of how the school has supported pupils with specific behavioural difficulties and changed their behaviour patterns for the better.
- Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are of the highest quality. This helps create a calm and welcoming atmosphere in school so pupils enjoy being there. Pupils work hard in lessons and, take care to present their work very neatly and tidily.
- Pupils of all ages and of all abilities have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. They attempt new work with confidence and set out to do their very best. Older pupils are very good at checking the quality of their own and others' work and identify accurately, ways in which they could improve. This contributes significantly to their learning and to their excellent achievement.
- Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities. They take their jobs, such as school councillors, playground buddies and sports leaders very seriously. They do their jobs extremely well and help create a safe and calm environment in which pupils feel safe and happy.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the academy opened. It is now above average and pupils come to school on time.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are very safe in school. They see school as a safe place and say they could always find help if they ever need it. Pupils describe the school as a family. They look after each other very well and take their roles in supporting each other as school council members, playground buddies and sports or dance leaders seriously.

- Pupils develop a thorough understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet through the school's e-safety presentations. They are aware of the many ways young people can be bullied and know what to do to avoid difficulties in or out of school. The school council make regular anti-bullying presentations in school assemblies to raise awareness. Pupils say there is no bullying in school but they know what to do should it ever happen. Parents feel strongly that their children are safe in school.
- Safeguarding training for staff and governors is up to date. Adults are knowledgeable about child protection and apply procedures diligently. They are vigilant and intervene if they recognise that any child may be at risk.
- Pupils are very well cared for in the breakfast and after-school clubs. These have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school, ability to socialise, attendance and punctuality.

### **The quality of teaching** is outstanding

- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and set challenging work that motivates pupils to try their very best. Teachers quickly recognise when pupils are ready to move on to the next steps or need some extra support. They adapt the pace at which pupils learn to match pupil's individual needs.
- Outstanding teaching of reading, writing, and mathematics shows in the excellent progress pupils make from the early years onwards. Regular guided reading sessions and many opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure help pupils develop a love of reading and learn the skills to become capable readers. Pupils have many opportunities to solve problems in mathematics that deepens their understanding. Opportunities to write are numerous and cross over different subjects so pupils become competent writers.
- Teachers recognise when pupils are finding difficulties due to weaknesses in basic skills carried through from previous weaker teaching. They effectively strengthen pupils' basic knowledge so pupils can proceed to harder work confidently.
- Teachers work in close partnership with the skilled and effective classroom and teacher support assistants. All are competent through extensive training to improve their teaching and increase their impact on learning. This highly effective partnership is an important factor in the rapid progress pupils make.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. Comments provide targeted feedback so pupils know exactly how to improve their work. Pupils invariably respond to the valuable comments in 'fix it time' so any mistakes in their learning are soon corrected.
- Teachers use questions very skilfully. Questions are graded in difficulty and targeted to pupils at different levels of attainment. Teachers encourage pupils to take a significant part in class discussions and work things out for themselves. Questions on work sheets are carefully designed to make pupils think and to take them onto more difficult and challenging work.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported exceptionally well. Early identification of their needs means support is provided promptly. There are a number of examples where excellent support has enabled pupils to deal with their personal situations and achieve exceptionally well academically.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is checked very carefully. Qualifying pupils are taught very effectively through focused support in small groups or through one-to-one support.

### **The achievement of pupils** is outstanding

- Many children enter school with skills and abilities below that typical for their age. Weak areas cover most of the areas of learning but are weakest in Literacy. Children make outstanding progress in both Nursery and Reception and in 2014, an average proportion of children reached a good level of development by the

end of Reception. This proportion is steadily increasing and this year, attainment is above average.

- Achievement at Key Stage 1 is outstanding. Attainment was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. Current tracking information shows pupils are again set to achieve average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. The academy's assessment data for the current Years 1 and 2 show excellent levels of achievement over time from previously low starting points. Inspection evidence, including observations of pupils learning in class, a scrutiny of work-books and listening to pupils read, supports the academy's data. The proportions of pupils achieving levels expected for their age are much higher now than they were when these pupils joined Year 1, showing excellent progress over the key stage.
- Pupils in Year 1 build very well on the excellent start made in early years in learning early reading skills. The results of the most recent Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening were above average.
- Achievement through Key Stage 2 has improved considerably year on year and is now outstanding. In 2014, attainment was below average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing. This was due to a high proportion (20%) of pupils joining the already small cohort shortly before the end of key stage tests took place. The attainment of pupils who had been at the academy since it opened was broadly average in reading and mathematics and above in writing. The academy's own assessment data shows that pupils who completed the Year 6 made excellent progress during the academic year 2013 – 2014.
- Current attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups in Key Stage 2 is at least in line and often above that expected for pupils' ages. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach above average attainment at the end of this year. From their starting points from when the academy opened, achievement is outstanding. Pupils' books, current school assessment data and lesson observations show steadily improving standards and excellent progress across all year groups.
- Even though attainment in English and mathematics is rising rapidly, some pupils at Key Stage 2 particularly, are carrying through weaker basic skills from previous weak teaching. Teachers do their very best to identify and strengthen weaker areas, but some still remain. Weaknesses such as limited instant recall of number bonds or limited knowledge of phonics affecting spelling, sometimes slow progress of some pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make excellent progress. They achieve very well in reading, writing and mathematics as a result of the high quality individual support they receive which meets their individual needs exceptionally well.
- Disadvantaged pupils did well in 2014. Achievement of disadvantaged pupils was the same as other pupils in reading but better overall and in writing and mathematics. This managed to close any gaps in attainment with other pupils. The small numbers of pupils supported by the pupil premium in Year 6 means it is not possible to compare their attainment with other pupils.
- The most-able are making excellent progress but, because of past underachievement, they did not attain as highly as they might have in 2014. The percentages who reached the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 were below average. Things have improved greatly this with half of the current Year 6 on track to reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

### **The early years provision**

### **is outstanding**

- Outstanding leadership and management of the early years are creating an environment in which children can grow and learn very effectively. From starting points that are typically below those expected for this age, children achieve exceptionally well to attain above average standards at the end of the Reception Year this year. Children are very well prepared to start Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding Adults are fully aware of what each child knows and what they are

capable of doing. They plan activities that challenge and extend children's knowledge and understanding very effectively. Activities that carry high levels of interest, for example the baby clinic or the potting shed where children grow plants, increase children's knowledge and understanding in the 'growth' topic. Staff provide many opportunities inside and out of doors for children to explore, investigate and find things out for themselves.

- Adults help children to develop very secure basic skills. Reading, writing and mathematics are taught particularly well so that children's progress is rapid in these areas. Already the attainment of the majority of Reception children places them in line with or above the expected levels for the end of the key stage.
- Adults talk with children a lot to extend vocabulary and encourage curiosity. This is particularly useful in developing children's speech, which is one of the weak areas on entry to school. Children engage in role-play really well. They took on roles of doctors, nurses, receptionists and parents in the baby clinic. Activities such as answering the phone, discussing symptoms and writing prescriptions made a significant contribution to the development of children's early skills in language and mathematics.
- Children behave very well. They get on extremely well with each other and work very effectively in groups, sharing ideas and equipment willingly. Children interact well with adults, listen carefully and concentrate. They remain focused for lengthy periods. Children respond to requests quickly, listen politely to adults and each other. Adults are vigilant in making sure that children are safe and secure during their learning and play 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140129
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	450332

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Simon Edge
<b>Principal</b>	Ian Beardmore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 512644
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