

St Mary's Catholic Academy

Cruso Street, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 8BW

Inspection dates	28–29 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good academy

- The academy is well led and managed. Academy leaders have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development and they are taking effective action to improve the academy further.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the directors, the multi-academy trust, senior leaders and other staff, has built on the academy's strengths and is addressing the areas for development in a strategic way.
- There is some outstanding teaching in the academy which has led to outstanding outcomes for a number of pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress in the academy. Most of them achieve better outcomes than other pupils nationally.
- Pupils behave extremely well. They are polite, considerate and keen to learn.
- Academy leaders promote outstanding personal development and welfare. Pupils are safe and most pupils have excellent attendance.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely effectively. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school and life in modern Britain.
- Academy leaders work well with parents and families. The vast majority of parents are extremely supportive of the work of the academy.
- Children settle into the nursery provision well and make rapid progress in the Reception class.

It is not yet an outstanding academy because

- Teaching is not consistently of the highest quality. This means that pupils in some year groups do not make as much progress as others.
- Outcomes in mathematics are not as strong as those in English. Teaching in mathematics is not yet promoting a deep understanding by developing reasoning skills.
- Pupils, particularly the most able, are not developing their writing skills as rapidly as they are able. This is because they are given few opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum.
- Some of the new systems and practices introduced by the headteacher have not had enough time to impact fully on the quality of teaching and outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take action to achieve rapid progress for all pupils by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching in all year groups is of the highest standard
 - teachers develop pupils' reasoning skills and promote a deeper understanding of mathematics
 - pupils are given opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum
 - new systems for improving teaching and outcomes are fully embedded.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- All leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and they are taking effective action to improve the academy.
- The headteacher, supported by senior leaders and other staff, the directors and the multi-academy trust, has built on the academy's strong features and prioritised action to address the areas for development. These actions have led to improvements in all areas of the academy's work but some, for example those to secure outstanding teaching and outcomes in mathematics, have not had time to impact fully.
- Leaders and managers have sustained and developed further the ambitious culture within the academy. They have high expectations of the staff and pupils and, as a result, all aspects of the academy's work are either outstanding or strongly good.
- Pupils are expected to conduct themselves well and, as a result, relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary.
- Leaders and directors are committed to improving outcomes for all pupils. Consequently, all make good progress and the outcomes for some are outstanding. Disadvantaged pupils make particularly strong progress in the academy.
- The management of teachers' performance is used well to reward high quality teaching and secure improvement. Staff value the training and support that they receive in the academy, through the Trust and teaching school and beyond. As a result, teaching is highly effective in most areas of the academy and action is being taken to secure improvements where required.
- Newly qualified teachers speak highly of the support that they receive from their mentor, other leaders and the academy staff. They also benefit from high quality support from within the Trust and teaching school so their practice has improved and all plan to continue in the profession.
- The broad and balanced curriculum helps pupils to learn effectively. A range of subjects are delivered to allow pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding in areas such as English, mathematics, science, humanities, languages, religious education, technology, the arts, music and physical education. Learning in the classroom is complemented by a number of extra-curricular activities such as dance, choir and visits, including residential opportunities.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the academy. Activities, including pupils from different year groups working together on theme days, help to promote tolerance, respect and independence. British values are also developed through elections in the academy and by overtly teaching right from wrong. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity exceptionally well. For example, many different cultural themes and religions, such as African art and Judaism, are covered in the curriculum. Leaders, staff and pupils do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour.
- Additional funding is used extremely well to improve the quality of education in the academy. The pupil premium has been used to fund educational visits, music lessons, before- and after-school care and additional support. This has helped to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress in the academy.
- Primary sports funding has been used to hire sports coaches, purchase equipment, mark out the playground and provide a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. Pupils take part in activities such as swimming, football, tag-rugby and gymnastics and use the playground equipment and markings well to play their own games. This has increased participation in a range of activities and encouraged pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. A sports coordinator from the Trust has arranged a number of competitions and, as outside coaches and a member of staff from the Trust are observed by teachers from the academy, this has increased their skills and confidence in delivering physical education and sport.
- Parents are very supportive of the work of leaders. Almost all, who made their views known, believe that the academy is well led and managed and an overwhelming majority would recommend the academy to other parents. They were full of praise for the way that the academy communicates with parents.
- The multi-academy trust provides effective support for the academy. Shared strategic development, which focuses on improving teaching and outcomes, is in place. All staff benefit from a range of appropriate and specific professional development opportunities and moderation has taken place among staff from within the Trust and beyond. Experienced leaders within the Trust have provided support for the headteacher, particularly when she was new to post, and the chief executive has a clear understanding of the academy's

strengths and areas for development.

■ **The governance of the academy**

- The board of directors offer effective support and challenge to academy leaders. They have the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to hold leaders to close account and ensure that their statutory duties are met. Their meetings cover all the relevant areas and they have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development.
- Directors visit the academy regularly. They are known to staff, parents and pupils and will seek their opinions to inform actions.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Up-to-date policies and procedures are in place and staff have received appropriate training and information. Consequently, they know what to do if they have any concerns about a child's well-being and prompt action is taken to keep children safe. Records are well kept and stored securely and academy leaders work well with outside agencies when required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- There is some outstanding teaching, learning and assessment in the academy. This is particularly evident in Reception and Years 5 and 6.
- Teaching is usually thoughtfully planned and well resourced. It is supported by very effective questioning and high quality marking and feedback. This, along with secure subject knowledge, leads to appropriate pace and challenge so pupils make at least good progress. Time in lessons is used productively as staff reinforce high expectations of conduct.
- Pupils enjoy learning. They work extremely well with staff and other pupils and opportunities to work with different partners in class help to enhance their progress.
- A range of subjects are taught well throughout the academy. Consequently, pupils make at least good progress in English, mathematics, science, humanities, languages, religious education, the arts, technology, music and physical education. Staff also take opportunities to promote equality of opportunity in their lessons.
- Staff develop pupils' reading, writing and communication skills. Pupils are encouraged to respond to tasks using appropriate language orally and in their written work. However, leaders are aware that teachers need to give pupils further opportunities to write at length in English and other subjects.
- Pupils read a range of texts to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. Many read for pleasure and weaker readers are able to use the sounds that letters make (phonics) to work out words.
- There is some highly effective teaching of mathematics in the academy, particularly in Year 6. However, the new scheme for teaching this subject is not fully embedded so some staff are missing opportunities to develop reasoning skills and embed a deep understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Teaching assistants support learning effectively. They work well with teachers to support the progress of individuals and groups.
- Teachers set appropriate homework, in line with the academy's policy, to consolidate learning and prepare pupils for work to come.
- Assessment is used effectively to establish what pupils know and what they need to learn. Consequently, teachers know how well pupils are progressing and what they need to do to improve further. This informs planning and is also communicated to pupils and parents. Parents are given a clear indication of how their children are doing in relation to the standards expected of them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding as pupils' physical and emotional well-being are promoted well. They are confident learners who take opportunities to enhance their personal development.
- Pupils have a high regard for their school work. Books are well looked after and pupils take great care with their presentation. They are keen to improve the quality of what they produce.

- Academy staff have an inclusive approach and pupils from different backgrounds are given opportunities to talk about their lives. Self-esteem and understanding are promoted as different cultures in the academy are celebrated.
- The strong Christian ethos of the academy promotes tolerance and respect and as other religious festivals, such as Diwali and Hanukkah, are covered in the curriculum pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Bullying is extremely rare and pupils will challenge any unkindness if it occurs. They are also confident that staff would help to resolve any problems if they arise.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe through a range of age-appropriate activities. They know how to stay safe when using the internet and they have a secure understanding of road safety and 'stranger danger'.
- All parents, staff and pupils who made their views known to inspectors said that pupils were safe in the academy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are kind, considerate, respectful and polite.
- Pupils' behaviour inside and outside of the classroom is of the highest standard. In lessons, they listen carefully to staff and each other and display self-discipline when working independently, in pairs, groups or as a whole class. During social time, children play sensibly together and behaviour observed by inspectors in the dining hall was exemplary.
- Staff have had appropriate training in behaviour management techniques but need to use them infrequently. Exclusions are extremely rare.
- Most pupils have excellent attendance and academy staff work well with pupils, families and outside agencies to improve the attendance of individuals. As a result of these successful strategies, pupils with higher absence rates have improved their attendance significantly.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Almost all pupils make at least good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects. Many make outstanding progress.
- Children in the early years provision make good progress. Many start Nursery below age-related expectation but a higher proportion than nationally leave Reception with the skills that they need to be ready for Year 1.
- Many younger pupils make rapid progress in developing their reading skills. Almost all Year 1 pupils reached the expected standard in the phonics screening test in 2015.
- Attainment at Key Stage 1 has been consistently above the national average for the last three years. Attainment in writing was particularly strong in 2015.
- Attainment at Key Stage 2 has been consistently above the national average since the academy formed. However, attainment in mathematics did not match that in reading and writing in 2015. Current outcomes in mathematics are also not as strong as those in English.
- In 2015, all Year 6 pupils made the progress expected of them in reading and writing and much greater proportions than nationally made rapid progress in these subjects. Almost all pupils made the progress expected of them in mathematics and a larger proportion than nationally made more than expected progress. However, the proportion was not as great as those in reading and writing.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups, those with English as an additional language, most-able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress from their starting points to other pupils in the academy.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in the academy. Greater proportions than other pupils nationally make expected and above expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Progress of pupils currently in the academy is good and in some year groups and some subjects it is outstanding. However, it is not yet consistently outstanding: Upper Key Stage 2 and religious education are particularly strong.
- As a result of good or outstanding outcomes, coupled with transition work throughout the Trust, pupils are well prepared for secondary education.

The early years provision

is good

- The early years leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the provision. This has allowed her to take action to make improvements such as developing mathematics teaching and introducing strategies to support children who are new to English. These have been successful in accelerating progress.
- Individuals and groups of children make good progress through the early years provision. Disadvantaged children, those with special educational needs, children from minority ethnic groups, those with English as an additional language and the most-able children make similar progress from their starting points.
- The large majority of children enter Nursery with skills which are below those typical for their age. However, strategies are in place for them to settle in quickly and begin to develop the skills that they require to be successful learners.
- Many children make rapid progress in the Reception class so, by the time that they move into Year 1, a large majority have reached a good level of development. Most children are prepared for accessing the Year 1 curriculum as a result of gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding being filled in Reception.
- Assessment is accurate and takes place regularly. Consequently, staff know what children can do and what they need to do to develop further.
- Teaching is good in the early years provision and it is particularly strong in the Reception class. Staff in Reception know their children well and use effective questioning to develop their understanding. However, children in the early years are given few opportunities to discuss things fully and they are not always encouraged to use full sentences. This restricts the progress that some children make.
- The curriculum provides a range of interesting experiences that help children make progress. However, the learning environment, particularly the outdoor area, adds little to the learning experience.
- Children behave extremely well in the early years provision; they listen carefully and respond quickly to instructions. They are respectful of staff, property and other children and they work well together.
- Communication with parents is of a high quality. They are involved in the assessment process and children are encouraged to practise skills at home. Many of them read to their parents.
- Successful professional development opportunities, undertaken through the teaching school, have helped to improve practice. Staff have been given the opportunity to work with other schools in the Trust to develop their provision.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective and statutory requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	138725
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10003407

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	209
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	John Pennington
Headteacher	Gillian Wretham
Telephone number	01538 483190
Website	www.st-marys-leek.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-marys-leek.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this academy

- The academy is an average-sized primary school.
- The predecessor school converted to become an academy in September 2012. It is part of the Painsley Catholic Multi-Academy Company.
- The academy receives and provides support through the Painsley Catholic Academy Teaching School Alliance. The Principal of Painsley Catholic Academy, who is also the chief executive of the company, is a national leader of education (NLE).
- The governance of the academy is provided by a board of directors. The chair of directors is a national leader of governance (NLG).
- The headteacher took up post in September 2015.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is average.
- More than a quarter of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups and one-fifth speak English as an additional language. These proportions are broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is average.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 17 parts of lessons. Most of these observations took place with the headteacher or the Chief Executive of the Trust.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other leaders, a group of staff, newly qualified teachers, and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the Chief Executive of the Trust and three directors, including the Chair of Directors.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information about current and recent achievement and records related behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. A range of pupils' work was also scrutinised.
- The views of parents were considered through 33 responses and six comments on Parent View (Ofsted's on-line questionnaire). Inspectors also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

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