

# University Academy Kidsgrove

Gloucester Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 4DL

## Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Recent improvements in the school have relied too heavily on a small number of senior leaders. Leadership below this level is underdeveloped and insufficiently utilised. Consequently, improvement in some areas has been too slow.
- By the end of Year 11, pupils have made slow progress in several subjects including mathematics, history, geography and food technology.
- Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than other pupils in the school and nationally. Attainment differences are diminishing, but inconsistently and too slowly.
- There remains too much variability in the quality of teaching across subjects, especially in the levels of challenge, teachers' expectations and the quality of feedback to pupils.
- Mathematics teaching is weak. It does not foster pupils' deep understanding and enjoyment of the subject. Pupils do not regularly use mathematics in other subjects.
- The curriculum does not effectively contribute to some aspects of pupils' personal development, especially their understanding of democracy and racial and religious diversity in Britain.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving because of the actions that senior leaders and governors have taken. Teaching, progress and behaviour are all improving.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support they are given.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy school and attendance is above average.
- Pupils feel safe, and are safe, in school. Bullying is rare and dealt with well by adults.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

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

- Improve teaching so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make consistently good progress in all subjects by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan activities that challenge pupils and make them think hard
  - have high expectations of the quality and quantity of work that pupils produce in lessons
  - apply the school's feedback policy consistently so that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that:
  - teachers' planning effectively takes into account what pupils already understand, know and can do
  - activities in lessons develop pupils' deep understanding of topics and the links between them
  - pupils are expected to use mathematics in other subjects.
- Improve leadership by:
  - developing subject leaders' expertise, so that future improvement is accelerated, sustainable and not over-reliant on a small number of senior leaders
  - establishing high-quality leadership of mathematics
  - ensuring that the curriculum effectively develops all pupils' understanding of democracy and racial and religious diversity in Britain
  - more sharply evaluating the impact of pupil premium spending, so that the progress of disadvantaged pupils accelerates.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The pace of improvement since the previous inspection in February 2015 has been too slow. Two changes of principal meant that no progress was made until September 2015, when the current principal took up his post. From this time, improvement accelerated rapidly, but has depended heavily upon a small number of senior leaders, each with a very wide remit. This has slowed the pace of improvement in some areas, including the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, improving pupils' literacy skills and improving some aspects of the curriculum.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with an appropriate range of subjects in all years. However, weaknesses remain in the personal, social and health (PSH) education curriculum. Consequently, some pupils' understanding of the democratic process and of multicultural Britain is limited. Recent changes to the PSH education curriculum have not had time to show impact yet. The curriculum's contribution to pupils' social and moral development is much more effective.
- A range of extra-curricular clubs, visits and activities supplements the formal, taught curriculum. These make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is very successful and, in Year 10, following a taster expedition, 75 pupils have enrolled on the programme.
- Leaders and governors have rightly made improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils one of the school's top priorities. A range of strategies funded by the pupil premium is improving their progress and diminishing the differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally. However, leaders do not carefully evaluate the impact of these strategies, some of which command considerable sums of money. Consequently, leaders do not know which strategies are being most effective and which need to be revised or discarded.
- Leaders and governors know the school well, including its strengths and weaknesses. They have accurately identified the most pressing areas for improvement, following the GCSE results for 2016. They are currently writing plans to address these. This process has been slowed by the school's limited senior leadership capacity.
- Subject and pastoral middle leaders form a dedicated group who are committed to seeing the school improve. Pastoral middle leaders are well established and have been fully involved in several areas of rapid improvement, including improved pupil punctuality and behaviour. Subject leaders are becoming more involved in leading improvements in their areas, but they still rely on senior leaders for guidance and direction. New leadership of mathematics has not had time to have an impact on teaching or standards in that subject.
- The principal and other senior leaders are relentless in their determination to see the school improve. They command the respect and confidence of members of staff and pupils. The school's staff are equally committed to seeing the school continue to improve.

- Leaders' use of assessment information has been transformed over the past 12 months. They now have regular, detailed and reliable assessment information at their fingertips and they are using it well to identify pupils and groups of pupils who are falling behind with their work. Leaders and governors now have confidence in teachers' assessments. For example, teachers' forecasts of pupils' attainment in the 2016 GCSE examinations were accurate in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the improving teaching across the school. They have put in place a comprehensive training programme that includes whole-school issues such as questioning, subject-specific training for departments and personalised support for individuals who need it. Teachers have precise targets that focus on their teaching and pupils' achievement. Many teachers who spoke with inspectors said that they value the training that leaders provide.
- The school's sponsor, the University of Chester Academies Trust (UCAT), provides a range of effective support for leaders and teachers. It facilitates networks for subject leaders of English and science and these have helped to improve teaching in these subjects. A similar network in mathematics has not been effective, but UCAT has now provided the school with specialist support for two days each week. It is too early to judge the impact of this support.

### **Governance of the school**

- Members of the statement of action committee (SOAC) bring considerable expertise and commitment to the school. They know the school well, regularly interrogate assessment information and challenge leaders in areas where the school needs to improve. They focus effectively on the impact that leaders' actions are having, rather than just checking that action is being taken.
- Statutory duties are carried out diligently. Governors ensure that arrangements for managing the performance of leaders and teachers focus well on raising standards and they ensure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are in place.
- SOAC members rightly prioritise improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in the school and regularly check progress in this area. However, they have failed to challenge leaders' lack of specific evaluation of high-cost, pupil-premium-funded strategies.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of this area is meticulous. All policies and procedures are in place, fit for purpose and well understood by staff. Staff are knowledgeable and vigilant to potential dangers because they receive regular training and updates. They are confident to pass on any concerns they might have, knowing that they will be taken seriously and that appropriate action will be taken. Procedures to recruit staff safely are in place and used well. The school's website contains much useful guidance for parents and pupils about how to stay safe when using the internet.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- Although the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, there remains too much variability in quality across teachers and subjects. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. They set tasks that are too easy and they are too ready to accept insufficient work or work of poor quality.
- Teachers do not apply the school's feedback policy consistently. Consequently, pupils too often do not know what they must do to improve their work. When teachers do provide feedback in line with the school's policy, pupils are keen to act upon their teacher's advice and their progress accelerates as a result.
- Teaching is weakest in mathematics and the department has experienced considerable turbulence in staffing and leadership in recent times. Tasks in lessons are often too easy or too hard because teachers have not taken into account what pupils already understand, know and can do. Having studied a skill or concept, teachers provide pupils with overly repetitive problems that do not deepen their understanding of the topic. Links between different areas of mathematics are not clear in the department's plans, so pupils do not understand that skills they have learned in one topic can and should be applied in others.
- An increasing proportion of teaching is effective in many subjects, including English, science, physical education, art, design technology and languages. Here, expectations are high and teachers challenge pupils to do their best. Pupils rise to the challenge and are making increasingly good progress as a result.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong across most of the school. Pupils like their teachers and they appreciate the help and support that they are given. Even where teaching is weaker, relationships are positive and respectful.
- Leaders' efforts to promote and improve literacy are slowly beginning to yield results. Teachers increasingly insist that pupils speak in full sentences and most teachers correct spelling and punctuation errors in pupils' work. Pupils read regularly in school and those who need extra help have additional timetabled literacy lessons and regular one-to-one sessions. However, there is no similar whole-school strategy to develop pupils' numeracy, and weak basic skills are not tackled outside mathematics lessons.
- Teaching assistants work well with teachers to provide effective support in lessons for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils value this additional help and make good progress as a result.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- The teaching of PSH education and religious education is not effective in helping pupils to understand some aspects of what it means to be a citizen in modern Britain. For example, although pupils have studied major religions, including Islam, some do not understand that you can be English and a Muslim. Similarly, some pupils have limited knowledge about the democratic process in Britain. Recent changes to the PSH education curriculum have begun to address these gaps and misconceptions.
- Other aspects of pupils' personal development are much stronger. Effective careers education in Years 9, 10 and 11 helps pupils make informed choices about what they will do when they leave school. All pupils who left the school in 2016 moved on to education, employment or training. Historically, there has been no careers education programme in Years 7 and 8, but leaders are introducing such provision this term.
- Pupils are smartly dressed and proud of their school. They are keen to do well and appreciative of the recent improvement in the quality of education they are receiving. They respond well to homework. Inspectors observed high-quality homework being handed in from all pupils in an English class, while in a history class, pupils had completed a project about a battle in the English civil war. One pupil had constructed a detailed model of the battle of Marston Moor.
- Pupils are safe in school. Inspectors spoke to many pupils during the inspection and all confirmed that they feel safe in school. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is very rare and most said that they have confidence in adults to deal with any that does occur. Pupils have a good understanding of the possible risks when using the internet, because this aspect of PSH education has been taught well.
- Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This successfully develops pupils' resilience, endurance and community involvement.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons. They are attentive and keen to do well. When teaching is strong, pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. For example, inspectors observed a Spanish lesson in which pupils were so engrossed in their work that they were very reluctant to leave when the lesson ended.
- The school is calm and orderly throughout the day. Pupils move around the narrow corridors sensibly. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults.
- Incidents of poor behaviour have reduced considerably over the past 18 months. A revised behaviour policy, consistently applied by teachers, combined with the high visibility of senior staff, has led to a halving of recorded incidents. The number of fixed-term exclusions, which rose last year because of higher expectations of behaviour, has fallen dramatically and is now low.
- Attendance has consistently been higher than the national average for secondary schools and it continues to improve. Effective work with the families of the school's small number of poor attenders is seeing their attendance improve further. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving at a faster rate than that of their peers, and so differences between their attendance and that of others are closing rapidly.

- In a small number of lessons, where teaching is weaker, pupils sometimes become distracted, talk over the teacher and do not focus well on their work.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress, although improving, is variable across subjects, groups of pupils and year groups. For example, GCSE results for 2016 showed pupils making slow progress in mathematics, history, geography and food technology. However, progress was stronger in other subjects, including English and science. Pupils who left the school in 2016 formed an academically weaker cohort than that of the previous year, but achieved similar standards and so made better progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils have, historically, made much less progress than others and differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally have grown. Improving teaching and better use of the pupil premium are beginning to see these differences diminish, but not yet consistently across subjects and year groups. Disadvantaged pupils who left the school in 2016 made better progress than previous cohorts.
- Pupils' progress remains variable across year groups, but is generally stronger in key stage 3. Older pupils, who have experienced more weak teaching, have made slower progress, but are catching up. The school's assessment information indicates that pupils currently in Year 11 are better placed to make good progress than those who were in Year 11 a year ago.
- Standards achieved by the most able pupils have been mixed over recent years. For example, the most able pupils made good progress in both English and mathematics in 2015. However, their progress dipped in 2016 and leaders have made stemming this decline a priority for the coming year. Inspectors' observations in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that the most able pupils are now making good progress in several subjects, including English, science, languages, art, design technology and physical education. However, their progress is slower in other subjects where teaching is less strong.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in all year groups make good progress. Adults provide high-quality support both in lessons and at other times of the day. Consequently, these pupils make good progress even when classroom teaching is weaker.

## School details

Unique reference number	139708
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10018082

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	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	449
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles Nevin
Principal	Andy Bygrave
Telephone number	01782 948250
Website	<a href="http://www.uakidsgrove.org">www.uakidsgrove.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:communications@uakidsgrove.org">communications@uakidsgrove.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	25 February 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of the University of Chester Academies Trust (UCAT).
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school has an average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.



- The overwhelming majority of pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been two changes of principal. The current principal took up his post in September 2015.
- The school's small sixth form closed in 2016.
- The school does not make any use of alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They met with four focus groups of pupils. Inspectors observed pupils at morning break and lunchtime and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to them about the books they enjoy.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, for these responses to be considered.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders, other leaders, the chair of the statement of action committee (SOAC), and a representative of the sponsor, UCAT.
- Inspectors scrutinised several documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of SOAC meetings, and the school’s records about pupils’ behaviour, attendance and attainment.

## Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Eddie Wilkes	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Bray	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Lunt	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Callaghan-Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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