

The de Ferrers Academy

St Mary's Drive, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE13 0LL

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are determined that all pupils should achieve as well as they can. Their relentless focus on improving teaching is the reason that standards of achievement have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Teaching and outcomes are now both outstanding.
- Senior and middle leaders form a united and effective team. The leadership of teaching and learning, pupil premium funding and of assessment are particularly strong. However, leaders' monitoring and evaluation in pastoral areas and the sixth form lack the sharpness that is evident elsewhere.
- Governors know the school well. They provide strong support and challenge to leaders in almost all areas of school life, including pupils' progress, teaching, the use of the pupil premium and safeguarding.
- Pupils make rapid progress from their starting points in all years and across almost all subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve the same high standards as their peers in almost all subjects. Their progress is better than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Achievement in science, which has historically been weak, is improving. However, standards still lag a little behind most other subjects.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They use their expert subject knowledge to question pupils skilfully. Consequently, pupils think hard and develop a deep understanding of their work.
- Teachers check carefully on pupils' understanding in lessons. They quickly spot when pupils are struggling and provide speedy and appropriate help to make sure they are not left behind.
- Teachers' impressive use of new technology enhances pupils' learning, especially in key stage 4 and the sixth form. Well-planned lessons place high-quality resources at pupils' fingertips.
- Most pupils enjoy school and attendance is higher than the national average for secondary schools. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower than that of other pupils, but is improving in key stage 3.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons, at breaktime and lunchtime and as they move around the school. The school is calm and orderly throughout the day on both sites.
- The sixth form provides the same very high standard of teaching as in the main school. Consequently, standards have risen steadily since the previous inspection and students make good progress from their starting points.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of achievement in science to match the high standards already evident in English and mathematics, by sharing the effective practice that exists within the science faculty and the school.
- Sharpen leadership by ensuring that leaders:
 - routinely analyse information about behaviour and attendance by pupil groups so that trends are identified and issues tackled speedily
 - carefully monitor sixth-form students' non-qualification activity to ensure that each has a high-quality study programme.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has improved since its previous inspection. Senior leaders' relentless focus on raising achievement has resulted in the outstanding teaching and outcomes now evident across the school.
- Senior and middle leaders form a coherent and united team, which is no mean feat in such a large school, split over two sites. All leaders understand that they are accountable for their areas of responsibility. Middle leaders appreciate senior leaders' direction. Teachers and support staff value both their middle and senior leaders. Almost all staff who responded to the online questionnaire said that they understand the school's aims and the great majority also said that the school is well led and managed.
- Leaders at all levels have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. Checks on teaching are meticulous and regular. Training is well targeted to individuals, faculties and issues. Leaders check that training has had the desired impact. Leaders set teachers annual targets that are clearly focused on maintaining high standards of teaching and on ensuring that pupils make excellent academic progress. Newly qualified teachers told inspectors that they value the training, guidance and support that colleagues are providing for them in their first year in the profession.
- The use of assessment information is a strength of the school. Teachers regularly assess pupils' attainment and leaders use this information to check that individuals and groups of pupils are making sufficient progress. Leaders and teachers provide extra support for any pupil who is beginning to fall behind their classmates, and this helps them catch up. Consequently, across all year groups and almost all subjects, pupils make consistently strong progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well because leaders carefully target the funds available through the pupil premium. Good-quality support ensures that disadvantaged pupils make the best possible progress. Leaders set them challenging targets, recognising their lower starting points on entry to the school. Teachers are encouraged to 'know your group' and to prioritise disadvantaged pupils when planning activities and providing feedback. Leaders meticulously track disadvantaged pupils' progress and quickly provide additional small-group support for any who need extra help.
- Leaders' monitoring of behaviour and attendance lacks the rigour of their monitoring of academic performance. They do not routinely analyse this information by pupil group. Consequently, actions to improve the behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils have been less successful. For example, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils lags behind that of other pupils, and has done so for some time. Similarly, although exclusions are not high, disadvantaged pupils are disproportionately represented in the school's fixed-term exclusions.
- Leaders use the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding well to support pupils who join the school with weak basic skills. Careful tracking and a wide variety of extra support mean that these pupils make rapid progress and catch up with their peers.

- The curriculum provides pupils with an appropriate range of subjects in all year groups. As pupils move from key stage 3 to key stage 4, they are guided into one of three pathways designed to meet their individual needs. Consequently, pupils in key stage 4 follow courses that are well matched to their ability and they are successful as a result. Leaders regularly evaluate the curriculum and make changes when necessary. For example, having identified that insufficient time was allocated for pupils to study science in key stage 4, leaders have made changes that are contributing to the rising standards in this subject. A broad range of academic and vocational subjects is offered in the sixth form and students' choices are well matched to their ability and aspirations. However, leaders' planning of non-qualification activity in the sixth form is less effective.
- A broad range of extra-curricular activities and visits supplement the formal taught curriculum. This includes annual adventure, challenge and education days that provide a variety of activities that enthuse pupils and develop their self-confidence. A well-planned careers, personal, social and health education (CPSHE) programme is complemented by regular assemblies and tutor times. These help pupils to understand many important British values, including tolerance of, and respect for, people who are different from them. The curriculum as a whole contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. High academic standards, effective careers education and a variety of extra-curricular opportunities mean that the school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Strong governance has played an important part in the school's improvement over recent years. Governors know the school very well. Leaders provide regular and detailed information about most areas of school life and governors robustly challenge leaders where they identify areas in need of improvement. For example, governors challenged leaders about the revised format of school reports when they felt that parents did not understand the information contained in them.
- Governors' scrutiny of the school's work is particularly thorough in the areas of teaching, pupils' progress and the impact of the pupil premium. For example, they scrutinise progress data by subject, year group and pupil group, asking challenging questions as a result. In this way, they ensure that additional funding, including the pupil premium and funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is having the maximum possible impact.
- Governors' scrutiny of some pastoral areas, including behaviour and attendance, lacks the detail and rigour seen elsewhere because the information provided by leaders is not quite of the same high quality. For example, governors keep a close eye on attendance, considering differences between year groups. However, they have not held leaders to account for the comparatively low attendance of disadvantaged pupils because leaders do not routinely present them with attendance information for different pupil groups.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Supported by the local authority, leaders completed a comprehensive review of safeguarding in July 2016. Leaders have responded quickly to the review's

recommendations and safeguarding arrangements have been strengthened as a result. For example, leaders have increased the number of staff trained to a high level in safeguarding from two to five. Similarly, all staff with a specific 'care and guidance' remit now meet regularly to discuss issues and concerns.

- In addition to reviewing safeguarding, leaders have also recently invested considerable resources into providing additional pastoral support for pupils experiencing difficulties. Pupils in Year 11 and sixth-form students told inspectors that they particularly valued the school's support in combating examination stress.
- All safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, fit for purpose and well understood by staff. Members of staff have been well trained and are alert to potential dangers. They readily pass on any concerns about pupils. Safeguarding records are stored securely and are well organised. Procedures to recruit staff safely are in place and used well.
- Almost all staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school, as did the great majority of parents who responded to Parent View. Through the free text facility in Parent View, a small number of parents expressed concerns about bullying in the school. Having considered all of the relevant inspection evidence, inspectors concluded that bullying is rare and is dealt with increasingly well by leaders. A small number of pupils raised concerns about security on the Dove campus because it borders a public right of way. Inspectors scrutinised the risk assessment that leaders have carried out in relation to this issue and judged there to be appropriate control measures in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is now of a consistently high quality across all key stages and almost all subjects. Its impact is evident in the outstanding progress that pupils make in the school.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality and quantity of work that pupils produce. They explain clearly and skilfully, asking questions that cause pupils to think about their work. When pupils offer brief or superficial answers, teachers tease out fuller and more detailed responses. Consequently, pupils understand their work deeply.
- Lessons are characterised by strong relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers know their pupils well. They regularly check pupils' understanding and are ready to provide extra help, or to change their plans, when the need arises. As result, little time is wasted in lessons because pupils are engaged in challenging tasks that stretch them.
- All pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form have been given electronic tablets as part of the school's technology programme. Teachers make very effective use of this technology when planning lessons and giving pupils feedback. Inspectors observed several examples of pupils accessing high-quality learning resources, producing their own notes and reports, and receiving timely feedback from their teachers, all using their tablets.
- Teachers' half-termly assessment of progress helps pupils to know how well they are

doing in each subject. Pupils are set realistic but challenging targets against which they and their teachers measure their progress. Inspectors spoke with many pupils who were clear about their targets, their progress towards those targets and specifically what they needed to do in order to achieve them.

- Teaching supports pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Consequently, these pupils make strong progress in all years. Teaching assistants provide just the right amount of help in lessons to make sure that pupils can do the tasks that they are set. Teachers and teaching assistants provide extra help at other times, for example with reading, to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not fall behind their peers.
- Teaching in the sixth form, across almost all subjects, shares all of the strengths of teaching in the main school. It is of the same outstanding standard.
- Some variability remains in the quality of teaching, for example, in science. Although teaching in science, and consequently pupils' progress, has improved in recent years, not all teachers' planning and expectations are of the same high standard. Some excellent practice exists in the faculty, but it is not evident across all science teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are typically articulate, conscientious and keen to do well. They are smartly dressed and proud of their school. The great majority of pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the school's many strengths including the wide range of opportunities that it provides for its pupils.
- A comprehensive programme of CPSHE effectively helps pupils to learn about health, well-being and how to stay safe online. Consequently, pupils know how to keep themselves safe from the risks that can arise when using the internet.
- The careers education element of the CPSHE curriculum runs from Year 7 to Year 13. It includes independent careers advice, support in developing interview skills, visits to colleges and universities and many visiting speakers from different businesses and professions. Consequently, pupils are well placed to make choices throughout their school life, from choosing GCSE options in Year 9, to choosing destinations at the end of Years 11 and 13.
- Pupils feel safe in school. The school's records indicate that bullying is rare, a fact confirmed by the great majority of pupils who spoke with inspectors. Most pupils told inspectors that they have confidence in the school's adults to deal with any bullying, or other issues that might arise. Pupils value the new online tool for reporting bullying which leaders introduced in September 2016. However, a very small number of pupils told inspectors that they do not believe that bullying is dealt with well in school.
- The school helps pupils to manage stress. Several members of staff have recently been trained in counselling techniques and all pupils are taught strategies to help them to deal with the stresses of teenage life. Pupils in Year 11 and sixth-form students told inspectors that they particularly valued this support as GCSE and A-level examinations

approached.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons, listening attentively to their teacher and each other. They work hard and are keen to do their best as they tackle the tasks set for them. Occasionally, a small number of pupils do drift off task and chat when they should be working, but they quickly refocus when their teacher admonishes them. Disruptive behaviour in lessons is rare.
- Both school sites are calm and orderly throughout the school day, including at breaktime, lunchtime and between lessons. Pupils are sensible, courteous and polite to each other and to adults. Inspectors observed an evacuation of the Trent campus following a fire alarm. Pupils left the building quickly and calmly, as they had been instructed to do.
- Attendance is consistently higher than the national average for secondary schools. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains below that of other pupils. Leaders' efforts to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is beginning to bear fruit in key stage 3, but is less effective in key stage 4.
- Leaders use exclusion appropriately as a sanction of last resort. Improved behaviour in recent years has seen the number of fixed-term exclusions fall to just below the national figure for secondary schools. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are excluded for a fixed term remains higher than for other pupils.
- In the sixth form, attendance and punctuality are excellent and students' behaviour is exemplary.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved, but a quarter of respondents did not. Most pupils who completed the online questionnaire, in common with those who spoke to inspectors, said that pupils behave well in lessons. However, a minority of pupils said that their lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils join the school with average prior attainment. They make rapid progress and finish Year 11 having achieved standards well above those seen nationally. For example, in 2016 76% of pupils achieved GCSEs in both English and mathematics at grades A* to C, compared with a national average of 62%.
- Standards at the end of key stage 4 are high in most subjects, and are particularly high in mathematics, English, art, geography, religious studies, French, physical education and drama. All prior-attainment groups of pupils, including the most able, make strong progress. Lower- and middle-ability pupils make especially strong progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar rapid progress as their classmates in most subjects including English, mathematics, French and geography. Leaders' clear focus on improving the achievement of these pupils has seen their progress improve considerably over recent years so that they now make better progress than non-

disadvantaged pupils nationally. The school's assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that this trajectory of improvement will continue in the coming years.

- Pupils from a Pakistani heritage make very strong progress across all subjects, including English, mathematics, French, history and geography.
- The school has comparatively low numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the proportion is higher in Years 7 and 8. These pupils receive effective support in lessons and at other times and consequently make similar progress to their peers.
- Leaders' twice-termly checks on attainment provide a wealth of information about pupils' progress. Leaders carefully analyse this information to check that all groups of pupils continue to make rapid progress. School assessment information, alongside inspectors' observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work, confirm that progress is equally strong across all year groups.
- Outcomes in science have historically been weak. However, they have improved steadily over the past three years and now pupils make similar progress in science as other pupils nationally, from their starting points. Despite this improvement, standards in science are still lower than in most other subjects across the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders ensure that the high expectations evident in the main school are equally apparent in the sixth form. An inclusive entry policy sees students joining the sixth form with a range of starting points. High-quality teaching ensures that most students make strong progress, especially those with comparatively low GCSE starting points.
- Sixth-form outcomes have improved steadily since the previous inspection. Students make particularly strong progress in vocational subjects, including computer use and health studies. Their progress in A-level subjects is a little more mixed.
- For example, in 2016, students made significantly better than average progress in English language, geography and information communication technology, but weaker progress in psychology and religious studies. Overall, students' progress in A-level subjects is a little better than that seen nationally.
- Attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attitudes to learning are all excellent in the sixth form. Students enjoy their studies and apply themselves well to their work. They are mature and provide excellent role models to pupils in lower year groups.
- All students who join the sixth form without having secured GCSEs in English and mathematics at grades A* to C are expected to study towards improving their grade. Current students have been very successful in this, with almost all such students achieving the A* to C benchmarks in November 2016.
- A broad range of academic and vocational options is offered in the sixth form. Effective careers advice and guidance in Year 11 ensure that students take subjects that are well matched to their ability and aspirations. High-quality ongoing support for students means that almost all complete the courses they start in Year 12. Equally effective careers guidance in Years 12 and 13 prepares students well for when they leave the

school. Consequently, the proportions of students who move on to university, apprenticeship or employment are consistently higher than the national figures.

- Students feel safe, and are safe, in the sixth form. They know how to live safe and healthy lifestyles because they understand the potential risks they might otherwise face.
- All requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are met. A wide range of non-qualification options is offered to students, including work experience, volunteering opportunities and extra-curricular activities. However, leaders do not systematically monitor students' participation in these activities. Consequently, leaders cannot be sure that all students are benefiting from a comprehensive, high-quality study programme that fully develops their personal, social and employability skills.

School details

Unique reference number	136414
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10000644

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 converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,098
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Mills
Principal	Nick Holmes
Telephone number	01283 239936
Website	www.deferrers.com
Email address	office@deferrers.com
Date of previous inspection	24–25 April 2012

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 a much larger than average secondary school. It is a member of the de Ferrers Trust.
- The principal took up his post in May 2016, when the previous principal became the

chief executive of the trust.

- The school operates on two sites approximately one kilometre apart. Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils are mainly based on the Dove campus and Years 10, 11 pupils and sixth-form students are based on the Trent campus.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is broadly average.
- The school has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and also of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Approximately 15% of pupils are from a Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress.
- A very small number of pupils attend Curzon Street Trade Skills for half a day each week. The body of this report does not refer to these pupils, as doing so would risk identifying them.
- The school provides support to several other local schools.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a serious incident involving a child who used to attend this school that had occurred since the previous inspection. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited tutor periods and two assemblies.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school, including teaching, behaviour and safety. They met with four focus groups of pupils. Inspectors observed pupils at morning and afternoon break, at lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered 158 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including 76 free text comments from parents. Inspectors also considered 124 responses to an online staff questionnaire and 80 responses to an online pupil questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders, other leaders and newly qualified teachers. The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust’s board of directors and the school’s local governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised several documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, its development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, and the school’s records about pupils’ behaviour, attendance and attainment and progress.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school’s policies and procedures related to safeguarding and pupil support and welfare, including child protection records, attendance procedures and risk assessments associated with the school’s sites.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
David Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Walters	Ofsted Inspector
Gwen Coates	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Adele Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Eddie Wilkes	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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