

# University Primary Academy Kidsgrove

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

## Inspection dates

21–22 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Inadequate</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Until this academic year, there has been substantial staffing turbulence at all levels and weaknesses in teaching. The quality of teaching has been highly variable. As a result, pupils have not made enough progress in key stage 2.
- Many pupils in key stage 2 have made slow progress since they left key stage 1. Consequently, standards have declined. Often standards are below those expected in English and mathematics, particularly for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Standards in reading are low in key stage 2. Pupils lack the skills to understand what they have read. Consequently, they are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Too many pupils in key stage 2 lack basic skills in spelling, grammar, handwriting and mathematics. Teachers do not pick up basic errors in pupils' work. As a result, these weaknesses are not being eradicated fast enough.
- Despite some improvements, teachers still do not know enough about what pupils can achieve. This means that some pupils spend time completing work that they can already do. This slows their progress.
- Initially, the trust did not support the school well enough to secure strong leadership at all levels. Consequently, leaders in the school were not appropriately supported to improve the quality of teaching. This is now better.

### The school has the following strengths

- New leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are clear about what they need to do to improve the school. New initiatives are beginning to show impact, including on the quality of teaching.
- Phonics teaching has improved and standards at the end of Year 1 are now average.
- Children get a good start in pre-school and the early years.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Persistent absence is reducing.
- Behaviour has improved. Pupils are polite and courteous. They have a strong sense of tolerance and inclusion. They are keen to learn.
- Pupils are safe in school and they are well cared for.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in key stage 2, and thereby improve outcomes by ensuring that:
  - all teachers assess reading, writing and mathematics accurately to provide pupils with appropriately challenging work which builds on prior learning and engages their interest
  - all teachers check work completed during lessons so that they can move learning on in a timely way
  - all staff urgently address the basic errors that pupils frequently make in spelling, grammar and punctuation so that writing outcomes improve quickly
  - mathematical concepts are taught well and misconceptions are dealt with as they arise so that pupils secure understanding more quickly
  - pupils have opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and reasoning
  - teachers thoroughly check pupils' understanding of what they have read so that pupils quickly acquire and deepen their comprehension skills
  - all teachers insist that pupils work to the best of their ability.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - senior leaders have the necessary resources to drive the improvements in teaching and outcomes for pupils
  - middle leaders are supported to develop further the skills that they need to be effective in their role across the whole school
  - pupils who have gaps in their learning are helped to catch up quickly
  - monitoring focuses on pupils' outcomes rather than compliance with school policies and procedures
  - evidence to support self-evaluation is gathered through a rigorous monitoring programme supported by an objective, external view.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The school has been through a number of significant changes at senior leadership level. There have been difficulties recruiting and retaining quality teaching staff. This situation has had a negative impact on the school's effectiveness. It is the reason why outcomes for pupils have declined.
- In the early days of the trust being established, the University of Chester Academies Trust (UCAT) did not support or challenge leaders well enough. Consequently, standards declined, particularly for pupils in key stage 2. However, their support over the past year is more focused and the school is better placed to improve.
- UCAT appointed a permanent head of school in January 2017. A skilled, knowledgeable and experienced middle leader was promoted to deputy head of school. This, together with the recent appointment of a key stage 2 leader, has strengthened leadership considerably.
- The head of school has demonstrated strong leadership from the outset. She is clear about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The head of school, together with the executive principal, have halted the decline in the quality of teaching and begun to improve it. Current teaching staff are held stringently to account and support plans are put in place where necessary. Effective professional development and coaching sessions are showing a positive impact. For example, questioning is improving, phonics teaching is now good and standards in phonics have risen.
- Although leaders are clear about the areas for improvement and can identify strengths in the school, some aspects of their self-evaluation are overgenerous. This is because the focus of monitoring has been on compliance with school policies and procedures to ensure a consistent approach rather than on the direct impact on outcomes for pupils. This has been compounded by the lack of a rigorous external view beyond the trust to challenge leaders' perceptions. Consequently, leaders have not been well supported to make full and accurate judgements about the school.
- Middle leaders manage their areas of responsibility effectively. They are knowledgeable about their subject and determined to make a difference. They are beginning to develop stronger links with schools in the trust and those locally. This is helping to widen their perspective and deepen their understanding. However, they are not yet fully involved in holding others to account.
- Leaders demonstrate the capacity to sustain the improvements that have already been made and to expand on these further. Where action has been taken, impact can be seen. Over the last year, leaders have tackled many aspects of inadequate teaching. They have improved outcomes in the early years and phonics, as well as improving behaviour and raising levels of attendance for all groups of pupils. However, weaknesses remain.
- Leaders have carefully reviewed and revised the curriculum. Across the trust, a new mathematics scheme has been introduced and the literacy programme has been further developed within the school. There is a strong commitment to developing local knowledge and widening pupils' horizons through 'global goals'. These are positive

changes. However, it is too soon to measure the full impact of these developments.

- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported. The SEN coordinator knows pupils well. Interventions are timely and these pupils are making more rapid progress than they have done in the past.
- Additional funds for pupils who are disadvantaged are used effectively. There is a clear and relevant strategy in place and pupils' progress is closely tracked. There is a focus on early intervention. As a result, disadvantaged pupils have been supported to catch up and the gaps are closing in both key stages.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is used well. Working in partnership with an external provider, the school has increased participation in a range of sporting activities before, during and after school. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the sports that they play such as gymnastics, basketball and dodgeball.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and live this out through the school motto, 'Believe, Belong, Become'.
- The new head of school has dramatically improved relationships with parents. She is always available to see them. She meets and greets them each morning on the playground and organises events such as family learning weeks. The family support worker is also instrumental in this work. Parents speak positively of this new approach and appreciate the time that the head of school spends with them.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance is carried out effectively by the 'statement of action committee' (SOAC). Members have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience. Lines of accountability have been strengthened following a review of governance carried out since the last inspection. Members of the SOAC systematically challenge leaders and hold them to account. They ensure that all statutory duties are met.
- Governors are clear that outcomes are not good enough because teaching over time has been too variable. They acknowledge that there is still much to be done, in the words of the chair, 'We are not there yet.'
- The SOAC has actively sought to strengthen capacity to improve the school. It has forged links with local good and outstanding schools and an established multi-academy trust. Members recognise that, while their trust was developing, it did not have the capacity to drive the improvements needed. They state that this is much better now due to the closer links with the university and a greater focus on primary education across the trust.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are tenacious in their approach to keeping children safe. They ensure that the culture of safeguarding is strong throughout the school. They provide appropriate and regular training for all staff. Therefore, staff are vigilant and knowledgeable. They understand that safeguarding is their responsibility. Leaders insist that policies and

procedures are followed consistently. As a result, staff at all levels work effectively together. All know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Swift action is taken when necessary and leaders follow this up rigorously.

- The school works closely with the trust to ensure that the single central record meets requirements. Knowledgeable staff carry out systematic checks on the suitability of staff to work in school.
- The family support worker helps enormously with communication between home and school. This helps to ensure that information relating to pupils' safety and welfare is picked up and acted upon quickly.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Inadequate

- Difficulties in recruitment and substantial turbulence in staffing since the last inspection have contributed to inadequate teaching over time. As a result, pupils have not made enough progress. Consequently, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have declined in key stage 2.
- There is now a largely stable teaching team. However, the quality of teaching is not currently sufficiently strong across the school to address rapidly the significant underachievement of pupils in recent years, particularly for those in key stage 2.
- Day-to-day assessment is weak. Some teachers are not able to assess pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills accurately enough in order to provide pupils with appropriately challenging work that builds on their previous learning.
- Staff in key stage 2 do not check learning often enough during lessons, or by looking closely enough at pupils' work over time. As a result, many pupils in this key stage continue to be set work that is too easy for them. This slows their progress.
- Where teaching is weakest, adults do not make their expectations clear to pupils. This means that pupils waste learning time trying to find out what they need to do and how to do it successfully. This contributes to the lack of progress.
- In mathematics, many teachers do not address misconceptions quickly enough. Direct teaching of some mathematical concepts is limited and pupils do not have enough opportunities to reason and apply their skills. As a result, pupils continue to make the same mistakes and opportunities to develop their knowledge further are missed.
- High expectations are lacking from some staff. Basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not picked up by teachers often enough. Pupils' books show that they make the same mistakes repeatedly. As a result, pupils do not improve their writing and the development of their skills is limited.
- Where teaching is improving, the sequence of lessons are well structured. Teachers focus on the learning outcomes and additional adults support the learning effectively. This purposeful approach enables pupils to extend their knowledge and secure their skills more quickly.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. This is because all staff have good subject knowledge and have been well trained. They are confident in delivering lively, interactive lessons that meet the needs of the pupils in their group. Younger pupils use

their knowledge of sounds successfully when reading.

- Pupils read regularly both at home and at school. They enjoy reading and can talk about a range of favourite authors. However, the teaching of reading for understanding is less strong. As a result, pupils cannot easily understand and interpret deeper meanings in longer and more complex texts.
- Where teaching is strong, teachers have high expectations for the amount of effort pupils make as well as the quality of their outcomes. Lessons proceed in an orderly way as teachers manage the time well. Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils can do and need to learn next. Teachers closely question pupils and provide continuous feedback. This enables pupils to deepen their understanding and make more rapid progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those who need to catch up, are supported effectively. Interventions are appropriate and focused on what the pupils need to do next. For example, pupils supported by a writing intervention in Year 5 are beginning to write more fluently in a range of different subjects.
- Relationships are strong in all classes and pupils trust their teachers to support their learning.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good
- Pupils have a strong sense of tolerance and respect. They view everyone as being equal. They have a good understanding of democracy and what is fair and unfair. This helps them to understand each other and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils have a good understanding of various forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. They say that while bullying does happen in school, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by adults. Parents agree. For example, one parent said that she was amazed by how quickly the head of school had dealt with an issue she had raised.
- The school helps pupils to develop their leadership skills. Pupils are elected to represent their class on the school council, where they value the chance to make decisions about the school. Responsibilities, such as playground buddies or being a prefect, are taken seriously by pupils, who wear their badges with pride. Pupils talked with delight at being chosen to represent the school at a remembrance event.
- Pupils learn about staying safe and keeping healthy. The youngest children thought about Little Red Riding Hood talking to strangers and naughty Goldilocks going into someone's house without being asked. Older pupils can talk about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and are clear about the precautions they should take.
- Sports coaches support lunchtimes effectively. They develop pupils' leadership well through the play partner scheme and engage pupils from Reception to Year 6 in small-group games. This further develops physical and social skills. Pupils of all ages can be seen working well together.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils has improved and is now good.
- Pupils have good manners, and they are polite and helpful to adults. They are courteous and greet visitors with a smile. Pupils hold doors open and stand to one side to let adults pass.
- Pupils want to learn. Where teaching captures their imagination, they work well. Low-level disruption is rare. Where it does occur, it tends to be because the quality of teaching is not good enough and the pupils' needs are not being met. As a result, pupils lose focus on their work and it is not completed to a high standard.
- Across the school, staff consistently apply a behaviour system introduced since the last inspection. Pupils are clear about what is expected and understand the system well. They enjoy receiving rewards and recognition for positive behaviour. As a result, incidents of inappropriate behaviour have reduced significantly. Pupils and parents say that behaviour has improved.
- Pupils follow instructions well and respond positively to the clear structures and systems in place. Their conduct is good around school and they are calm and respectful. For example, on the way to and during assembly exemplary behaviour was observed.
- In less-structured situations, some pupils find it harder to manage their own behaviour. For instance, sometimes on the playground, when there is little equipment to play with, behaviour of some pupils becomes boisterous. However, pupils say that this is happening less and less. One pupil said, 'The school is better now and I have started learning again.'
- Attendance has improved for all groups of pupils and is now in line with the national average. Leaders monitor attendance well and quickly follow up any absences. They work closely with the University Academy Kidsgrove, the main receiving secondary school, to support families where attendance is an issue. As a result, levels of persistent absence are reducing.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Inadequate

- Standards in English and mathematics across key stage 2 are too low. This is a legacy of inadequate teaching over time. As pupils move through key stage 2 their progress declines. Current key stage 2 pupils are working at below age-related expectations in most year groups. Consequently, they are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The proportions of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were significantly below the national average in 2017.
- Reading outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are poor. Pupils' results in reading in the 2016 and 2017 national tests were below the national average. Too few pupils achieved a greater depth of understanding. As a result, they are not able to easily



access learning at key stage 3 when they transfer to secondary school.

- Mathematics standards declined further at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Progress in mathematics was in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally.
- The school's own assessment information shows that the progress of current pupils has been too slow in Years 4, 5 and 6. The work in their books shows that these pupils are achieving lower standards than might be expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards are low in key stage 2 because there are gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils' basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and mathematics are not secure. These gaps have not been filled quickly enough due to inadequate teaching in recent years. As a result, pupils do not reach standards that match their capabilities.
- Writing results at the end of key stage 2 improved in 2016 and 2017 and were above national. However, current pupils across key stage 2 are working below the standards expected for their age. This is because teaching has been too variable and expectations too low. For pupils in Years 5 and 6 there is much catching up to do if they are to reach the required standard before they start secondary school.
- Standards in key stage 1 are consistently stronger than in key stage 2. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 are in line with or above the national average. This is the result of good teaching in some classes in key stage 1.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 has improved over time and is now above that seen nationally.
- The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils was similar to that of other pupils in key stage 1 in 2017. In reading and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than other pupils at the end of key stage 2. However, fewer disadvantaged pupils attained at the higher levels.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Effective support and appropriate interventions enable these pupils to make more rapid progress than other pupils in the school. This is evident from the strong progress seen in the books of these pupils.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. A team of skilled and dedicated adults know the children well. They ensure that children's individual needs are met. As a result, outcomes for the youngest children have improved. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen and is now in line with the national average.
- Children enter school with skills and abilities in language and communication that are well below those typical for their age. Adults interact constantly with the children. They talk, describe and engage children in conversation. As a result, children make swift progress from their starting points, particularly the very youngest children. By the time that they leave Reception, children can explain what they are doing and share their opinions enthusiastically.
- There is strong, shared leadership across the early years. Leaders are ambitious for the



children and want every child to succeed. They know how young children grow and develop. Through regular observations, adults build up a picture of what each child can do. Evidence across all the areas of learning is recorded in children's learning journals. This information is regularly shared with parents.

- Classrooms are warm and welcoming with a good range of appropriate equipment that children can access independently. Adults plan activities that interest the children and encourage them to explore and play together. Consequently, levels of engagement and cooperation are high.
- The level of learning seen in the outdoor learning environment is not yet as strong as that seen indoors.
- Routines are well established. Staff repeat instructions and show children what to do. As a result, children know what is expected of them and behave well. They quickly develop independence. For example, before snack time the very youngest children line up, wash their hands and sit at the table ready to share the fruit provided.
- Relationships are very positive. Adults ensure that children are safe and well looked after. They encourage the children to have a go, make choices and explore. Children show the ability to concentrate for long periods of time. They persevere and work out how to do things for themselves. As a result, children grow in confidence and play happily with each other.
- Leaders ensure that vulnerable children, including those who are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities, receive help quickly when it is needed. They work closely with parents to arrange extra support either from school or from external agencies.
- Partnership with parents is strong. Regular events provide parents with the opportunity to come into school and learn alongside their child. Parents comment that staff are approachable, warm and caring.

## School details

Unique reference number	139949
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10037159

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The University of Chester Academies Trust
Chair	Reverend Charles Nevin
Head of School	Kelly Pope
Telephone number	01782 973970
Website	<a href="http://www.upakidsgrove.org">www.upakidsgrove.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@upakidsgrove.org">info@upakidsgrove.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	9–10 July 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with the Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school became part of the University of Chester Academies Trust in September 2013.
- University Primary Academy Kidsgrove is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans is below the national average.

- The school offers pre-school provision for two-year-olds as well as Nursery and Reception classes.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2016. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, the head of school, the deputy head of school and other key leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with four members of the statement of action committee, including the chair of that committee. The lead inspector also discussed the school with the new chief executive of the academy trust.
- Inspectors made visits to all classrooms on both days of the inspection. Some of these visits were undertaken jointly with the head of school and the deputy head of school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide selection of pupils' books with school leaders.
- Pupils were spoken to formally and informally. A group of pupils accompanied an inspector on a learning walk of the school. Inspectors heard pupils read and observed behaviour in classrooms, in corridors and outside on the playgrounds.
- Inspectors were unable to consider the eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as there were insufficient responses to generate a report. However, they did talk to parents on the first day of the inspection and took account of seven free-text comments from parents.
- Inspectors noted and analysed 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, anonymised information about managing teachers' performance and monitoring records. Minutes of the statement of action committee's meetings and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed and discussed with leaders.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and inspectors looked at published information on the school's website.

## Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sandy Hayes

Her Majesty's Inspector

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