

St Edward's Church of England Academy

Westwood Road, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 8DN

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Following a period of upheaval, leaders are yet to secure a good quality of teaching. Staffing difficulties have hampered progress.
- Middle leaders, some of whom are new to their posts, have not had sufficient opportunity to check on the quality of teaching and provide all the training and support that teachers need.
- Staff, pupils, parents and carers do not have a consistent and reliable view of what pupils can achieve and of their current progress.
- Pupils' current progress is variable and, in mathematics and science, it is typically below average.
- The quality of teaching varies considerably. Where it is weaker, teachers do not set tasks that enable all groups of pupils in the class to make good progress.
- Teachers often do not provide pupils with enough feedback on how to improve their work. When teachers do provide guidance, pupils commonly fail to follow it.
- Governors do not yet have the detailed information to allow them to check how effectively leaders spend money to boost the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy trust has taken decisive action to address declining academic standards and major weaknesses in leadership and governance.
- Current governors and the new principal have an accurate view of the school and have made appropriate plans for its improvement. These are well under way.
- The curriculum is well balanced and extra-curricular activities make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils rightly feel safe in school.
- Behaviour at social times and in the large majority of lessons is good. The rate of pupils' attendance is at the national average, and rising.
- Teachers plan some teaching very effectively, especially in English and in practical subjects. Teachers generally pay good attention to developing pupils' literacy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that teachers consistently set work which provides an appropriate level of challenge for all groups of pupils in the class, including the most able, the least able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that all teachers give pupils the opportunity to improve their work and that pupils make good use of that opportunity.
- Deepen the impact of leadership and management on pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers, pupils and parents are provided with reliable information about pupils' potential and ongoing achievement
 - all teachers have a secure understanding of a range of strategies for setting work for the most able pupils
 - effective teachers can share their practice with their colleagues
 - temporary teachers receive the guidance they need to contribute to a consistently good standard of teaching.
- Ensure that governors conduct effective checks on the expenditure of additional funds provided to support the achievement of particular groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Following the last inspection, standards in the school were allowed to drift and outcomes fell. In 2017, the academy trust took decisive action to halt the decline. The trust appointed a new principal and commissioned external reviews of the pupil premium, of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and of governance itself.
- Neither the quality of teaching nor pupils' progress is yet good. The gap between the best and the weakest teaching remains too wide. Leaders and governors have put in place new procedures and radically raised their expectations of staff and pupils. However, many beneficial changes are relatively recent and their impact on standards has been reduced somewhat by staff absence and difficulties in appointing permanent teachers.
- Although leaders have amended the arrangements for tracking pupils' progress, these do not yet provide staff, pupils and parents with a clear and reliable picture of how well pupils are learning. By January 2018, many pupils had achieved their targets in a particular subject for the end of the academic year. Governors are only now beginning to receive achievement information in a format that allows for easy interpretation.
- Staff speak highly of the quality of training that they have received and look forward to further opportunities to enhance their skills. However, there is a great deal of work still to do to embed leaders' new expectations. Temporary staff, in particular, do not have all the skills and guidance they require to play a full part in securing a consistently good standard of teaching.
- The principal has a thorough and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, he has been able to draw up well-judged and detailed plans for improvement. Middle leaders are perceptive and enthusiastic to play a full part in raising the quality of teaching. However, those who are new to post, in particular, have had limited opportunities to check on the work of their areas of responsibility and so effect the necessary changes.
- The school's taught curriculum is well balanced and pupils enjoy specialist teaching in a wide range of subjects. The impressive programme of extra-curricular activities is highly popular, with three quarters of pupils taking part in sporting or creative activities at lunchtime or after school. Leaders spend the physical education (PE) and sport premium very effectively to increase participation and raise standards.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Leaders place a consistent emphasis on the school's Christian values and ensure that pupils also understand different cultures and traditions. The principal has a strong commitment to diversity and does not tolerate discrimination.
- The school's recent establishment of a house system, run by non-teaching house leaders, has improved its ability to respond to behavioural incidents and pastoral needs. As a result, leaders have succeeded in improving both pupils' behaviour and their care.
- Leaders have rightly sought expertise from outside the school. The principal has

developed profitable links with both first and high schools, with a view to improving pupils' learning as they move through the three tiers of education.

Governance of the school

- Governors currently exercise effective governance of the school.
- In response to the review of governance, the members of the academy trust decided to change the structure of the governing body. Although the new arrangements are yet to receive final approval, the current core of governors are now fully focused on the quality of teaching and standards of achievement. They have ensured that they are well trained and understand their role.
- Governors ensure that leaders fulfil all their obligations to keep pupils safe. They check on how well the school protects those individual pupils who require additional support and how effectively leaders implement the school's agreed policies and procedures. Governors are aware of the particular risks which relate to the local community. They assess the safety of the school site and take appropriate action, for example to improve safe access to the school and to increase visibility.
- The governing body involves an external adviser in the management of the principal's performance so that its decisions on his role are fairly judged. Governors ensure that the school operates within its budget.
- The minutes of their recent meetings show that governors are highly effective in holding the principal to account for the school's progress. However, arrangements for the monitoring of the expenditure of the additional money that the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are not yet effective. This is because the information that leaders provide about these pupils' progress is currently limited.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a secure culture of safeguarding. Staff know pupils well and are fully committed to their protection. Staff are vigilant and know how to respond if they believe that any pupil is at risk. Leaders work well with parents and other agencies that help to keep children safe to protect those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. They are persistent and resourceful and will not rest until they know a child is safe. In those cases where other agencies withdraw their support, leaders continue to monitor the pupil's welfare closely.
- School policies reflect the latest requirements. Leaders make all the appropriate checks when staff are appointed. They have made sure that all staff are familiar with child protection guidance and have been trained to an appropriate level. Inspectors found, however, that some secondary records were not entirely accurate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it varies considerably. Although some teaching is good, other teaching has evident weaknesses, particularly that of temporary teachers. Too often in recent months, when the teacher has changed, the high expectations set by school leaders have not been maintained.
- The work set for the most able pupils, or the more able pupils in a particular group, is often insufficiently challenging for them to make strong progress. Sometimes, pupils have to complete too much routine work before commencing tasks which really make them think. On occasion during the inspection, the most able pupils did not start these tasks before the lesson ended.
- Conversely, some activities for less-able pupils or those who have SEN and/or disabilities are not securely based on their prior understanding. As a result, these pupils struggle. On occasion, teaching assistants endeavour to adapt work that is altogether too hard, so that pupils are too reliant on adult support.
- Workbooks commonly provide little evidence of pupils learning from their mistakes and improving their work. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics. Where teachers ask pupils to make corrections or add to their answers, they often do not check that this additional work has been completed. Thus, pupils do not get into the habit of reflecting on what they have learned and making sure that they have understood.
- Teachers' questioning is often effective in establishing how well pupils have understood the topic so that the teacher can adapt the lesson if necessary. Teachers use cards or mini-whiteboards well for the same purpose. On other occasions, however, teachers move on without checking how securely pupils have grasped the work.
- Teaching in English reflects a strong understanding of the different reading skills that pupils need to acquire, such as the ability to use inference or to identify important points in a text. Teachers have a good knowledge of grammatical terms and use these terms to help pupils to develop their writing effectively. Teaching in a number of other subjects contributes well to the development of pupils' literacy. In humanities, teachers pay careful attention to new vocabulary and provide good opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Most learning benefits from the strong relationships between pupils and adults, and between pupils themselves. Pupils are typically very willing to answer questions in class and collaborate well when asked to discuss a topic or work together. Teachers generally know their subjects well. Pupils reported that homework usually makes a good contribution to their learning.
- During the inspection, some teaching was very skilfully planned to challenge all pupils in the class. This strength was particularly evident in some practical subjects. In these circumstances, everyone was able to understand what they should do and set about it with enthusiasm. No time was wasted.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel entirely safe in school. Although a minority of parents have concerns about bullying, none of the pupils who spoke with inspectors shared them. They said that, on the rare occasions that bullying or aggressive behaviour occurs, pupils report it to their house tutor or their house leader, and staff resolve the matter promptly.
- The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe in a number of respects. Through assemblies, lessons in a wide range of subjects and teaching on days when the normal timetable is suspended, they learn, for example, about road safety, the dangers of substance abuse and how to keep themselves safe online. In discussion with inspectors, pupils could recall such guidance well.
- Pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities, typically in sport or the performing arts, makes a distinctive contribution to developing their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils also have the opportunity to take responsibility in other ways, for example by acting as prefects and raising money for charity.
- Teaching in religious education provides pupils with a good insight into a number of other cultures, religions and traditions. Those who spoke with inspectors understood the importance of tolerance and, in outline, how British democracy worked. Although leaders and governors recognise the need in Year 8 to begin discussions about pupils' future careers, pupils' recollection of this aspect of the school's work was hazy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Records held by the school show that it continues to improve. They demonstrate noticeable improvements in the behaviour of the small number of pupils who join the school with particular behavioural needs. Leaders have discontinued the use of a withdrawal room for poor behaviour because it is no longer required.
- Pupils are polite and friendly and wear their uniforms with pride. The school is an orderly community focused on learning. Pupils move around the school sensibly and comply promptly with staff requests. At break and lunchtime, pupils play happily together. During the inspection, inspectors observed no aggressive or unpleasant behaviour.
- Leaders keep a detailed log of behaviour and the actions taken to address more serious breaches of the school's expectations. The log shows that they have followed up incidents of bullying or discriminatory language thoroughly and sensitively. The school uses fixed-term exclusions appropriately and has excluded one pupil permanently this academic year.
- This academic year, the principal has introduced a more rigorous approach to promoting pupils' attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, the rate of pupils' attendance, which dipped last academic year, has risen quite sharply once again. It is now broadly in line with the national average

for primary schools. Although the rate of attendance for disadvantaged pupils is also rising, it continues to lag behind that of their peers.

- Pupils' attitudes to their studies are good and they generally present their work neatly. In most lessons, they concentrate very well and take the initiative to use dictionaries and other learning aids. However, particularly when the work is not properly matched to pupils' abilities, a few become disengaged and, occasionally, a little low-level disruption sets in.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because the school's information and inspection evidence show that the school's current pupils are not making consistently strong progress. This applies most notably in mathematics and science and reflects the inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
- Progress is held back when work is not effectively matched to pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Teaching sometimes fails to check carefully enough what pupils have learned and what gaps remain to be addressed.
- The school shares responsibility for pupils' progress from their key stage 1 starting points to the end of Year 6 with their partner first schools. In 2017, provisional results show that, over the course of key stage 2, pupils had made progress in writing which was in line with the national average. Their progress in reading and mathematics was significantly below that seen nationally. In general terms, the 2017 results were better than those in 2016, especially because the proportion of pupils who attained at the higher level increased, notably in writing and mathematics.
- The key stage 2 results in 2017 also saw an improvement in the progress of the school's disadvantaged pupils, although their progress remained below average in reading and writing. Information supplied by the school and confirmed by inspection evidence shows that this improvement has continued and that there is now little difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers in the school. This is because staff have worked hard to identify and overcome disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning.
- New arrangements for managing the learning of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have led to better identification of pupils' additional needs. Staff draw effectively on the expertise of other agencies when necessary. As a result, the progress of many pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has begun to rise. However, it remains inconsistent because some teaching does not make full use of the information available to plan work which is fully tailored to pupils' additional needs.
- The school is developing a strong reading culture. Pupils who spoke with the inspectors said that they enjoy reading and read at home, albeit to varying degrees. Pupils make good use of the library. They read aloud fluently and confidently, and are keen to take on this role in class. However, some inspection evidence pointed to pupils choosing easy reads, rather than more challenging texts which would develop their skills and interests more quickly.
- Leaders report that those pupils who enter the school with low levels of attainment generally catch up well. They have planned further training for teaching assistants to

enable them to provide intensive support for weak readers. However, the school has not put into effect its current plan to spend the Year 7 catch-up premium because it has been unable to appoint a member of staff to provide the support.

- Inspection evidence showed that pupils' achievement in English is increasingly strong. Standards are high in aspects of technology and in PE. Pupils are producing good work and making strong progress in several other areas of the curriculum, although not with the required consistency.
- Pupils leave the school adequately prepared for high school. However, only more consistent and rapid progress in this school will give them the best possible chance of future success.

School details

Unique reference number	139171
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10043068

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	738
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Cynthia Simmonds
Principal	Tom Hutchinson
Telephone number	01538 714 740
Website	http://stedwards.academy
Email address	office@st-edwards.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 September 2014

Information about this school

- St Edward's Church of England Academy admits pupils into Year 5 and they leave in Year 8. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, but much larger than most primary schools.
- In 2017, the academy trust proposed changes to the structure of the governing body and how it works. The trust has proposed a new scheme of delegation and articles of association. These are awaiting approval by the Department for Education (DfE). In the meantime, some information about governance on the school's website is incomplete.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is below average.

- The principal took up his post in April 2017. The faculty leader for mathematics began work at the school in September 2017 and the faculty leader for science and computing started in January 2018. There has been a considerable turnover of staff within the last 12 months.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress for pupils by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the DfE's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 32 lessons and two learning walks. Four observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed an assembly, tutor time, a rehearsal for the school production and pupils' conduct during social times.
- The inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders, class teachers and support staff. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the governing body and the adviser who acts as the school improvement partner.
- Three groups of pupils, two chosen at random and one by the school, met with inspectors. Inspectors spoke with a large number of pupils informally.
- The inspection team looked at many workbooks in their visits to classrooms and scrutinised in-depth work produced in English, science and mathematics by some pupils in Year 5 and Year 8. One inspector listened to pupils from Years 6, 7 and 8 read. They considered information about pupils' current and recent academic performance.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included development plans and evaluations of the school's progress, formal reviews commissioned by the trust of governance and of the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, the minutes of governors' meetings, school policies and reports to parents. Inspectors scrutinised in detail records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team took account of the 118 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, comments made using Ofsted's free-text service and the results of the school's own surveys of parental opinion. They also considered 46 responses to the questionnaire for staff and 20 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Henshaw	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Lord	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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