

# Foundation Bridge Academy

Stoke-on-Trent College, Burslem Campus B Block, Moorland Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 1JJ

## Inspection dates

30 January–1 February 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- As the proprietor of the school, Stoke-on-Trent College provides a strong management structure that supports the headteacher of Foundation Bridge Academy. Experienced leaders support every aspect of provision.
- Leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They work hard on aspects of provision that improve outcomes for pupils.
- A broad, varied and interesting curriculum motivates pupils. Its focus on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is strong.
- A team of continuing professional development (CPD) leaders regularly supports teachers to improve their skills. As a result, teachers are able to provide improving learning opportunities for pupils.
- Support for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health issues is strong. Adults work as a cohesive team to support pupils to settle well into school and begin to enjoy learning.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Pupils feel safe at all times. This security contributes to the growing confidence that pupils show in their learning and relationships.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They plan lessons to meet the different needs of pupils. However, pupils' knowledge of more advanced words is limited. Because of this, pupils' writing does not improve quickly enough.
- Pupils are well behaved and courteous. They get on well with adults and their peers. A minority of pupils do not attend school often enough. Outcomes for these pupils are, therefore, weak.
- While teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn mathematical vocabulary, pupils do not use this in their spoken language and reasoning. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress in this aspect of mathematics.
- Lessons are often interesting and stimulating. However, pupils who are offered challenging work sometimes prefer the easier option. This means that those pupils do work that is too easy for them.
- The majority of teachers work hard to develop pupils' discussion and argument skills. However, this is not done consistently enough. As a result, pupils do not develop this skill fast enough.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve outcomes for pupils and further improve teaching by ensuring that:
  - the minority of pupils who do not come to school often enough improve their attendance
  - teachers encourage pupils to challenge themselves to take on harder work
  - pupils develop greater skills in persuasive argument and discussion
  - pupils develop a deeper knowledge of advanced words to use when speaking and writing
  - pupils readily use the correct mathematical vocabulary when speaking about mathematics and when providing reasons for their calculations and answers.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Leaders are determined in their efforts to 'educate young people in life and work skills and to deliver outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.' The proprietor and leaders have a good awareness of the school's effectiveness. They have used a clear set of priorities that have had impact on both the emotional and academic progress of the pupils. Their self-evaluation is realistic and accurate.
- The new headteacher, who has been in this role for just two weeks, strongly supports the head of faculty for foundation studies, who knows all the pupils extremely well. A cohesive team of teachers, learning support assistants, mentors and counsellors has a significant impact on improving pupils' emotional well-being.
- Leaders have trained staff well to manage pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. As a result, staff are highly skilled in all aspects of behaviour management and offering emotional support.
- Staff morale is high. Relationships at all levels are very good. All staff who completed the staff questionnaire indicated that they enjoy working at the school. They say that leaders and managers support them well in their school roles and in their personal well-being.
- Strong collaboration with leaders at Stoke-on-Trent College has a significant impact on the progress that pupils make. The leadership team supports all staff with their own targets for improvement. Experienced CPD leaders support teachers to improve their skills through a strong programme of lesson monitoring and follow-up training.
- The school keeps excellent records of all pupils and their individual needs. There are good relationships with outside agencies. Records of each pupil's behaviour and starting points are thorough and provide a reliable basis for discussing their academic and social progress.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a broad and balanced programme of activities. Pupils at the school study a core curriculum of: mathematics; English; science; personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education; information and communication technology (ICT); and physical education (PE). They also choose from a wide variety of alternative practical pathways for their vocational course. Courses offered are hairdressing, construction, art, vehicle maintenance, sport and caring. All courses lead to a range of qualifications, including GCSE, BTEC national diploma and City & Guilds. Pupils who come to the school for alternative provision choose from the vocational pathways.
- Pupils are also encouraged to join extra-curricular activities. They are able to choose from a wide variety of sports clubs and other clubs where they can participate in street dance, a forum for pupils who have disabilities, gymnastics, cooking, dungeons and dragons, watching movies or table tennis.
- Leaders monitor, assess and record pupils' progress effectively. Teachers' lesson plans ensure that the individual needs of pupils are catered for well. Detailed information about each individual pupil's needs helps learning support assistants to carry out their roles effectively.

- Leaders have included in the curriculum tutorials that have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Each pupil attends a weekly tutorial group of six to 14 pupils. They also attend 'big tutorial' sessions delivered by Stoke-on-Trent College. These 'big tutorial' sessions often feature invited speakers on a range of subjects, for example: 'Staying safe, being safe', 'Get active, make a difference', 'Making healthy choices' and 'Embracing diversity'. The principle of equality of opportunity is evident. The school promotes the British values of tolerance and respect well. Staff do not tolerate discrimination and they explore the reasons for it with pupils in these tutorials.
- Leaders have created good relationships with parents and carers of the pupils who attend the school. All parents spoken to were enthusiastic about their child's progress since joining the school. A typical comment from a parent was, 'My child is more settled. I cannot praise them enough.'
- Leaders make effective use of funding for pupils based in the school by local authorities. Leaders spend much of the funding on well-trained teaching staff, support assistants and mentors.
- The school has no post-16 students. However, the school has suitable plans and schemes of work, which take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of potential sixth-form students.

## **Governance**

- An effective chain of command between governors and senior managers at Stoke-on-Trent College and Foundation Bridge Academy ensures that all staff and pupils are well supported.
- The newly convened governing body knows its purpose and is prepared to hold the school to account.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are strong. Leaders display the school's safeguarding and child protection policy on the school's website. The safeguarding policy is effective and meets current government requirements. The leaders have created a strong culture of shared responsibility for protecting pupils and this permeates all areas of the school's work. All staff know the designated safeguarding leader to contact if they have concerns about pupils. They are all appropriately trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns and ensuring that they inform outside agencies when a pupil is at risk or missing from education. Staff keep appropriate records that detail safeguarding concerns and actions. Staff are well trained to recognise signs of extremism and radicalisation.
- Effective procedures monitor the attendance of those pupils who are in alternative provision. The provider schools know within 15 minutes if a pupil has not arrived for their alternative provision lessons at the Foundation Bridge Academy.
- The building is securely monitored. Exits and entries are secure. Pupils and staff have appropriate means of identification so that staff can quickly identify unaccompanied visitors. No one over the age of 18, apart from members of staff at the school, can go into the part of the building occupied by the school.

- The school occupies part of the Stoke-on-Trent College building. It is a modern, well-maintained building with high standards of cleanliness and safety measures. Pupils, staff and visitors who have disabilities can access all areas. An external organisation carries out regular checks, including fire safety checks. This ensures that everyone can safely leave the building in the event of a fire.
- Risk assessments for all aspects of school life, and related to individual pupils where necessary, are rigorously maintained. The premises meet all the independent school standards.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- A calm learning environment ensures that pupils feel safe and secure and are able to apply themselves to learning. Teachers care about pupils' personal well-being and educational progress. Adults and pupils base their relationships on mutual respect. All of this helps pupils to work steadily and to make good progress in most lessons. Pupils are particularly engrossed in learning during vocational studies.
- Teaching staff make good use of the high-quality resources they have to promote pupils' learning. For example, staff use electronic whiteboards in every classroom to show demonstrations and to help pupils explore the properties of shapes in mathematics. The school benefits from well-equipped areas for the teaching of vocational subjects, for example the hairdressing salon, joinery workshop and construction area. A modern sports hall provides an excellent environment for the teaching of PE.
- Pupils benefit from weekly tutorials with teachers. Staff use these tutorials to teach PSHE education, to review pupils' progress and to set academic targets. As a result, pupils benefit from regular opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their progress in a supportive setting.
- Teachers encourage pupils with their reading. Reading is included in pupils' personalised learning plans and into research tasks both for homework and in the classroom. Teachers plan effective lessons that link both reading and writing.
- Staff assess pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding when they join the school. Teachers use this information to set pupils minimum targets to aim for in all subjects. Teachers frequently assess pupils' progress against these targets. Half-termly 'milestone' meetings ensure that teachers review and revise, where necessary, pupils' targets. Leaders have created good links between pupils' parent schools and Foundation Bridge Academy. As a result, staff in the parent schools have up-to-date information about the progress of their pupils. This system is in the early stages of development but already demonstrates that pupils' progress is closely monitored.
- Learning support assistants provide strong support for the pupils in all lessons. They are well trained in the skills needed to support pupils who have social, emotional and mental health issues. They frequently re-direct pupils whose attention may be wandering and deflect situations where emotional difficulties could cause disruption. As a result, the pupils do not disturb other learners and are themselves able to re-focus on the lesson. The good questioning skills of the learning support assistants also promote learning.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan appropriate learning for each individual pupil. They provide the learning support assistants with detailed expectations

for each of the pupils in the school. Learning support assistants also have the benefit of information about individual pupils in profile documents. As a result, the very detailed information helps them with appropriate ways of managing the pupils and their academic needs. However, pupils do not choose the challenging questions offered to them often enough. This means that some pupils do not make fast enough progress.

- Pupils enjoy the variety of opportunities for active learning in the wide-ranging curriculum. For example, during a construction lesson, the teacher challenged and motivated the pupils effectively. They renovated a piece of woodwork, by preparing the wood and painting it. They all worked diligently and with great concentration, showing a good application of the skills needed. An extension task was to paint irregular shapes with a fine brush on a vertical plane. Pupils showed pride in their work and some of them said that they would consider this as a career choice. An interesting and challenging practical mathematics lesson involved measuring the volume of the room and finding out how many reams of paper would fill it. Good questioning and the help of the learning support assistant enabled pupils to attempt the challenge successfully.
- Some teaching gives pupils opportunities to listen to each other and to discuss their classmates' ideas. For example, in a lesson where pupils were learning to set up a business, pupils were required to share ideas and listen to one another. They showed respect for each other and managed a constructive discussion. However, a minority of pupils are not developing the spoken language skills that are necessary for life beyond school and the world of work.
- English lessons, taught by teachers with good subject knowledge, enable pupils to develop their creative writing. There is appropriate emphasis on accurate spelling and punctuation and on learning to use the skills of a writer. However, some pupils have very low starting points, with limited vocabularies. Although teachers provide them with the vocabulary they need for lessons, this skill is not improving fast enough in all lessons across the curriculum. As a result, pupils are unprepared for understanding the words in their reading or when using them in speaking and writing.
- Mathematics teachers use resources well to engage pupils in their learning. However, most of the responses from the pupils involved one-word or simple number answers. Teachers who asked pupils why something was correct did not receive full answers. In most cases, teachers answered the question more fully themselves. Because of this, pupils do not learn to use spoken reasoning effectively or learn to use correct mathematical words.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils develop greater confidence in themselves as they spend more time in the school. Pupils spoke confidently to the inspectors about their social development and enjoyment of the wide choice of lessons and activities on offer.
- The school's arrangements for the pupils' induction to the school are good. Pupils visit the school before they join and staff visit them in their homes. The views of pupils and parents are fully considered when pupils join the school and when they choose their

subject and qualification pathways. The school works well with other schools and agencies to collect important information about each pupil.

- The school is a secure environment where the pupils always feel safe. Pupils' confidence grows as they become more accustomed to the fact that adults are all striving for their success and well-being. Behaviour support officers provide suitable supervision throughout the school day. They ensure that pupils are always safe and that they move swiftly back into lessons. They are friendly and supportive and know the pupils well.
- Staff are highly skilled at recognising pupils' emotions and are able to pre-empt any difficulties that might occur in lessons. If necessary, staff offer pupils counselling before their emotions escalate. This vigilance results in a calm learning environment that promotes learning.
- The school teaches the pupils how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including online and when using social media. They know that they should tell someone whom they trust if they have any concerns about their own safety.
- Pupils are encouraged to raise issues that affect them during morning breakfast club. They are encouraged to think about ways in which changes could be made that would improve things for them. For example, they asked for an ICT club at lunchtimes and for a singing group. As a result, they begin to see how democracy works.
- Good-quality careers advice and guidance, along with effective work experience, prepare pupils for their future lives. Teachers give them guidance during weekly 'preparation for work' tutorials. Pupils have had good opportunities to make choices about their vocational training with support from the staff. This has prepared them to make choices about their future. Some of them have clear ideas about what they would like to do.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education supports pupils to develop their relationships and understanding of the community and the world effectively. Pupils are given opportunities to learn about serving the community in a variety of fund-raising events for charities and when volunteering in the local children's hospice and a local church coffee morning. They also help to clear paths for the Wildlife Trust. People from the Wildlife Trust have been most complimentary about the behaviour of the pupils who help.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. They learn about the law in relation to equalities, about different religions and cultures, and about democracy. Tutorial sessions give them opportunities to discuss current affairs. Invited speakers stimulate development in knowledge about different cultures, for example the 'big tutorial' about embracing diversity.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and respectful to staff and visitors.
- The vast majority of pupils either attend regularly or have made marked improvements to their attendance since joining the school. The school works hard to improve the attendance and punctuality of those who do not attend regularly enough. Overall attendance remains low.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Low attendance continues to affect the progress of the minority who do not come to school regularly enough. However, the strong leadership team of Stoke-on-Trent College, together with the headteacher and the head of faculty, has a clear focus on ensuring that this improves quickly. The attendance of the vast majority of pupils is either good or improving quickly since they started at this school. This is due to measures already put in place. However, for a minority of pupils, although improved, attendance remains low.
- Many pupils join the school with very low starting points. Although the vast majority of pupils met their targets between September 2017 and January 2018, they need to make faster progress to catch up with their peers. While pupils are now making stronger progress, their attainment is still too low. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including from scrutiny of pupils' work in books and the school's own assessment information, shows that progress is too variable.
- Pupils' use of spoken language and wider vocabulary across the curriculum is not improving fast enough. This limits some pupils' ability to speak and to write clearly and accurately and for different purposes and audiences.
- Progress rates for pupils on vocational courses are good, both for pupils attending the school's alternative provision and for pupils who are in the school full time. Those who attend school regularly make good progress in all subjects. This includes pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.
- All pupils have made good progress in their social, emotional and mental health development. This is due to the strong pastoral care of pupils by staff who know them well.
- In the last academic year, all of the pupils enrolled at the academy throughout the year successfully completed their learning aims. This year, all of those pupils started a vocational pathway, including in construction, motor vehicle maintenance and sport and active leisure.



## School details

Unique reference number	143928
DfE registration number	861/6014
Inspection number	10041369

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	36 in alternative provision from other schools
Proprietor	Stoke-on-Trent College
Chair	Jeremy Cartwright
Headteacher	Carol Martin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£75 per day
Telephone number	01782 603590
Website	<a href="http://www.foundationbridgeacademy.com">www.foundationbridgeacademy.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:carol.martin@stokecoll.ac.uk">carol.martin@stokecoll.ac.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is located in a four-level block on the Burslem campus of Stoke-on-Trent College in Moorland Road, with access to other blocks and facilities on the same site. Pupils attend some vocational courses at Stoke-on-Trent College and Cauldon Campus at Stoke Road, Shelton.
- This school has formalised an alternative provision that already operated from this site. The local authority also quality assures the provision on a regular basis.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.

- The school is registered to cater for 200 vulnerable pupils. These are of mixed gender, and range from 13 years (Year 9) to 19 years. They include pupils who have disabilities, communication difficulties and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The majority of pupils come from maintained schools and academies. Some come from the elective home education sector. In some instances, referrals come from the main college.
- The needs, aptitudes and abilities of pupils are wide ranging.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first standard inspection of Foundation Bridge Academy. Prior to this inspection, there was a pre-registration inspection in December 2016.
- The inspectors observed 15 lessons.
- One inspector had a formal discussion with pupils. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during lessons.
- Inspectors observed behaviour at breaktimes and during breakfast club.
- The lead inspector undertook a tour of the premises and outdoor area, accompanied by the head of health and safety for Stoke-on-Trent College.
- A wide range of written evidence was considered, including school policies, information about pupils' progress, planning documents, the school's self-evaluation, and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors took account of the opinions of all staff who returned the staff survey questionnaire.
- Inspectors held meetings and discussions with a number of senior leaders responsible for different aspects of the school, including the headteacher, the head of faculty for Foundation Bridge Academy and the vice-chair of governors.

## Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Bernice Astling

Ofsted Inspector

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