

Newcastle Academy

Gallowstree Lane, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2QS

Inspection dates

13–14 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the school opened, pupils have made too little progress in almost all curriculum areas, including mathematics and English.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge pupils to complete activities, allowing some pupils to sit in lessons doing very little work. As a result, current pupils are making less progress than they should.
- Often, work is too easy, restricting pupils' progress and meaning that some pupils become bored or disengaged.
- Pupils do not get enough help or direction from their teachers on how to improve their work.
- Disadvantaged pupils do less well than other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally. In 2017, their results in English and mathematics were more than a grade below other pupils nationally.
- The new principal began working at the school in January 2017, with much of the senior leadership joining after him. They have been successful in creating a more positive ethos and improving behaviour and attendance. However, their actions have not yet had enough impact on improving the standard of teaching and learning.
- Teachers regularly collect assessment information and this is reviewed by leaders, including the academy trust. However, very small improvements are over-generously identified as positive trends. As a result, it is difficult to easily recognise underperforming groups of pupils.
- There have been recent improvements in behaviour around the site at break and lunchtime. However, there are occasional instances of boisterous behaviour and occasions in lessons where pupils do not quickly follow their teachers' instructions.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are well cared for. The school and trust use internal and external resources to support pupils in attending regularly. Attendance has improved in recent years and is now in line with national levels.
- Staff, pupils and parents value the improvements that have taken place at the school since the arrival of the new leadership team. They recognise the positive changes leaders have brought to the ethos of the school.

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?

- Ensure that leaders and governors have a better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and standards attained by current pupils by:
 - reviewing how assessment information is summarised and shared, so an accurate pace of improvement is evident
 - implementing timely interventions where it is apparent that groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are underachieving, compared to their peers
 - ensuring that information about pupils' progress is used alongside other monitoring and evaluation activities to inform leaders' judgements about the effectiveness of teaching.
- Support all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to make better progress by making sure that teachers:
 - have high expectations of all pupils in their lessons, keeping a strong focus on learning and expecting all pupils to settle quickly and to complete work set
 - use a range of questioning strategies to regularly check that pupils understand the new knowledge and skills introduced and are making progress in completing their work
 - are clear about what they expect pupils to learn and set work that is appropriate to pupils' ability, understanding that pupils should find the work hard at times
 - provide feedback in lessons that helps pupils understand how to improve.
- Build on the effective work that has been undertaken to improve attendance and pupils' well-being to:
 - make greater use of the pastoral team to improve pupils' academic achievement
 - support pupils in taking greater responsibility for their own learning, coming to lessons fully prepared for learning, following the instructions from their teacher and settling quickly to their work.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders are all relatively new to their roles. They have set a clear aspirational direction for the school and have tackled some issues with urgency, including poor behaviour, a limited curriculum and a lack of pastoral support, thereby demonstrating their capacity to bring about change. However, they have not had a rapid enough impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders are over-generous in their evaluation of the quality of teaching. They do not pay enough attention to the progress made by pupils when deciding if teaching is good. As a result, there has not been enough focus on improving core elements of teaching and learning across the school.
- The school's identified priorities for teaching and learning, including developing teaching activities with increasing levels of difficulty, are evident in improvement plans and training priorities. However, these were rarely seen during the inspection or in pupils' books and are not embedded as part of everyday practice.
- Senior leaders have struggled to ensure that they have enough permanent staff. High levels of temporary cover staff were reported as a particular issue by pupils. All stakeholders recognise that this situation is now improving but catching up on work missed is a problem for pupils, particularly those in Year 11.
- The achievement of pupils is regularly tracked through termly collections of progress information. The summaries of this information are complex and it is difficult for leaders and governors to quickly identify areas of weakness or groups that are underperforming.
- Middle leaders are increasingly held accountable for the outcomes of pupils within their subject areas, through regular meetings with their line managers. This is leading to a greater focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and supporting underachieving pupils. However, to date there is limited evidence of the impact of these changes.
- In the last year, there has been very creative development of the curriculum. Despite the small size of the school, leaders have been effective in offering pupils a good range of GCSE and vocational options. Good use is made of partnerships with other schools in the trust to maximise individual choices for pupils.
- Pupils participate in a broad range of clubs and activities after school and at lunchtimes, including in sports, creative activities and additional subject support. These well-attended clubs enhance pupils' social and cultural development.
- Through the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the academy council. The school uses assemblies to help pupils understand the different backgrounds and experiences of pupils new to the country.
- The United Endeavour Trust has successfully focused on building a new leadership team, developing the well-being of pupils through better links with families and external agencies, and building the systems and processes to support quality assurance

and accountability. However, these actions have yet to impact on the progress made by pupils. In the two years that the school has been part of the trust there has been insufficient improvement in pupils' outcomes, with continuing weaknesses evident in the quality of teaching.

- Leaders of the trust are aware of the weaknesses in pupils' performance and recognise that the planned strategies for improving teaching are not embedded in the school. Plans are in place to increase specialist teaching capacity across the trust but the pace of change to improve teaching is too slow.

Governance of the school

- Governors are well informed about the school's performance. Several governors also serve on the board of the trust, and so hold a deeper understanding of the challenges that face the school. Governors are very aware that pupils are currently underachieving but are confident that the new leadership team has the commitment and skills to move the school forward. They recognise that the school has been successful in changing the curriculum to better meet the needs of pupils and has undertaken effective work to improve pupils' well-being and links with community. They sustain a careful oversight of spending priorities and carefully check the school's work on safeguarding and looking after pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Governors also monitor the school's spending on disadvantaged pupils but not enough consideration is given to the impact of the actions taken.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Records are carefully kept and appropriate checks on new staff are made.
- The highly qualified and knowledgeable designated safeguarding lead has robust systems in place for training and monitoring and has a good understanding of the safeguarding risks in the local community. This is then shared with all staff well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- There is significant variation in the standard of teaching across the school. In too many lessons, teaching does not support pupils to make good progress over time.
- At the start of lessons, some pupils are slow to get ready for learning and need additional challenge from their teachers before they organise themselves.
- In some lessons, teachers do not ensure that all pupils are focusing on their work, allowing small groups of pupils or individuals to sit doing very little. This reflects low expectations for these pupils and has a significant impact on the progress these pupils make at the school.
- Teachers do not use questioning effectively enough to check or extend pupils' learning; questions are often very simple and answers only taken from a small number of pupils who volunteer. In other lessons, pupils shout out answers and are rarely challenged to answer in more depth.

- Too many tasks are not difficult enough, keeping pupils busy rather than making them think hard. Pupils commented that they rarely found work that was too hard for them.
- The standards of presentation in pupils' books vary considerably between classes, with some books very poorly kept. This makes it difficult for pupils to easily prepare and revise for tests and examinations.
- Pupils expressed concerns that in several curriculum areas they are not sure what they need to do to improve. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were allowed to choose what activities to complete following a marked assessment. They spent some unproductive time picking an activity that they wanted to do rather than being directed to an activity that would help them address an area of weakness in their work.
- Pupils told inspectors that when poor behaviour occurs in lessons it is linked to work that is dull and undemanding. Where teaching is not challenging, pupils lack interest and are more likely to talk among themselves and complete little work.
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss and work in groups. Some pupils use this method of working very effectively to deepen their understanding and share ideas. Other pupils struggle to find anything to say and time is wasted as they sit doing very little.
- Teaching assistants provide confident support to targeted pupils, questioning individuals to help them develop a better understanding of their work. While pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make inadequate progress overall, some individuals do better as a result of the support they receive.
- When teaching is planned well and pupils are supported, praised and challenged then lessons are effective. Pupils make good progress and enjoy their learning. In a Year 10 history lesson, GCSE pupils received high-quality, challenging feedback to their ideas, enabling them to make rapid progress in their work. This was typical of the more effective teaching in the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- A proactive focus on attendance has ensured that overall attendance levels have improved and are now broadly in line with the national average.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils lags slightly behind others in the school. Successful pastoral interventions mean that the attendance of this group is slowly rising and the differences in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school is closing.
- Pupils feel safe and can describe in detail the messages about keeping safe they receive through the PSHE education curriculum and assemblies. Pupils believe the school is very effective in ensuring that all pupils understand the current risks to their well-being, including material on cyber bullying and the threat of extremism.
- As part of the school's focus on raising aspirations, pupils have a clear understanding of their career pathways. Pupils in Year 11 have access to independent careers

guidance, which they find helpful. Younger pupils benefit from an extensive programme of activities, delivered through PSHE lessons, related to the world of work.

- Pupils are confident in describing what they can do well and how staff at the school support them to achieve their goals; indeed many pupils described their warm relationships with staff as a strength of the school.
- Members of the pastoral team work effectively together to ensure that pupils' physical and emotional well-being is a priority. There are robust procedures in place to identify vulnerable pupils and to work closely with pupils and their families in overcoming difficulties. The team has had less focus on supporting pupils' academic progress.
- The small group of pupils attending alternative provision is carefully tracked by the pastoral team to ensure that they are attending regularly and behaving appropriately.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The level of excluded pupils has been well above the national level for a number of years and significant numbers of pupils have received more than one period of exclusion for repeat offences. In recent months, the level of exclusions has decreased as the result of the successful implementation of a new more rigorous behaviour policy and the use of internal sanctions when possible.
- A new off-site provision for pupils at risk of exclusion, based at another school within the trust, has helped to provide additional support for some of the school's most vulnerable pupils.
- Behaviour has been the subject of a considerable focus over the last year and pupils and staff told inspectors it is improving, and other evidence available supports this. Behaviour around the site is usually appropriate, with pupils moving sensibly and treating their peers with respect. High levels of senior staff presence reinforce this.
- In lessons, the majority of pupils are ready to learn and behave accordingly. However, a small number of pupils find it difficult to show self-discipline and only behave appropriately and complete work when under careful scrutiny from their teachers.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils arrive at the school with key stage 2 attainment scores that are broadly in line with the national average. However, by the time they leave, GCSE results are well below national standards. In 2017, only 24% gained a good pass in English and mathematics at level 5 or better compared to 40% nationally.
- In 2017, pupils did not make enough progress in any key curriculum area. Pupils' progress in mathematics, English, humanities, science and modern foreign languages was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils' standards in English and mathematics were more than one grade lower than other pupils were nationally. The school's own tracking information suggests that disadvantaged pupils are currently performing broadly in line with their non-disadvantaged peers at the school. However, the progress of both

groups is still too slow to reach national standards.

- Leaders agree that despite improvements in the standards of teaching and learning and a targeted intervention programme, current Year 11 pupils are still not making enough progress to reach national standards in English and mathematics. Current progress for these pupils is too slow.
- In 2017, boys did significantly less well than girls. Such differences are not evident in current assessment information, although boys were notably less engaged in a number of observed lessons.
- There was very little difference in the progress made by groups with different prior attainment on entry to the school, including those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. All groups made less progress than expected.
- According to the school's internal tracking information, pupils in key stage 3 are making more rapid progress than older pupils. However, evidence from pupils' books and lesson observations would suggest that they are still not achieving well enough.
- In a small number of subjects, pupils are responding well to effective teaching and are making better progress. Leaders point to successes in French, history and BTEC National Diploma in sport as evidence of the successful impact of their teaching and learning strategies.

School details

Unique reference number	142277
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10043066

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	381
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Shaun Smith
Principal	Tim Rogers
Telephone number	01782 667650
Website	www.newcastleacademy.org
Email address	office.newcastle@snfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in September 2015 as part of the United Endeavour Trust. The trust currently runs three schools in the Stoke-on-Trent area.
- The school has its own local governing body that oversees its day-to-day work. There is also a trust board that employs a chief executive officer and a small central team to oversee all three schools in the trust.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Pupils enter the school with levels of prior attainment that are broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

- The proportion of pupils receiving special educational needs support is average.
- About 90% of students are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- At key stage 4, a small number of pupils receive full-time alternative provision at a shared trust provision at Clayton Hall Academy.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in the period 2014 to 2017.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11, in 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all curriculum areas and undertook a number of learning walks. Some observations took place jointly with the vice principal for teaching and learning.
- 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 trust.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and considered information about pupils' current and recent academic performance.
- Inspectors also observed tutor time and pupils' conduct before school, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors took into account the 42 views of parents on the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered 25 responses to the questionnaire for staff and a small number of responses to the questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally around the school and in discussion groups.
- Inspectors reviewed information on the school's website.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including records relating to behaviour and safeguarding, and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.

Inspection team

Deborah James, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Henshaw	Ofsted Inspector

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