

Sporting Stars Academy

Field Avenue, Baddeley Green, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST2 7AS

Inspection dates

17–19 April 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have a strong positive impact on the quality of provision at the school. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe at all times. This feeling of security contributes to the growing confidence that pupils show in their attitudes to learning and in developing positive relationships.
- Leaders have created a cohesive teaching team. The team's skills in teaching, learning and behavioural support ensure that pupils make good progress.
- The three proprietors are fully involved in the day-to-day management of the school. They each have their own clear responsibilities. This leads to smooth management of all aspects of learning and care for pupils.
- A broad, varied and often inspiring curriculum motivates pupils. Its focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong.
- The strong emphasis on sports and art in the curriculum has a very positive impact on increasing pupils' confidence.
- Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards are met.
- The senior management team meets regularly to discuss management issues and the plans for the future. However, minutes of formal meetings lack a clear focus on specific improvement actions.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. However, in some lessons, teachers talk for a relatively long time. Consequently, pupils become less engaged as the lesson progresses.
- Teachers question pupils about their learning regularly. However, teachers accept one-word answers that fail to show pupils' developing thinking skills. Because of this, they do not develop their spoken language, reasoning skills and use of vocabulary in talking and writing.
- In some lessons, teachers involve the pupils in informal discussion of issues. However, teachers do not involve them in formal discussion, debate and decision-making. As a result, pupils do not experience the practical ways in which democracy works.
- The attendance of a minority of pupils is poor.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets 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 teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to apply reasoning and thinking skills across the curriculum
 - ensuring that the timings of activities in lessons maximise pupils' interest.
- Improve outcomes by ensuring that pupils develop their use of technical and more advanced vocabulary in their talking and writing.
- Improve personal development by creating more opportunities for pupils to take part in formal discussion and debate so that they fully develop their understanding of democracy.
- Improve leadership by ensuring that written records of management team meetings show clearly the necessary improvement actions.
- Improve attendance for the minority of pupils who do not come to school regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have created a strong team of adults who work with the pupils at the school. The combination of qualified teachers, art and sport specialists, well-trained teaching assistants and an art-therapy-trained pupil counsellor works well. Additionally, the headteacher has extensive experience as a qualified special educational needs coordinator and knows what is needed to be done to help these pupils succeed. As a result, pupils who have previously been unable to work in other schools settle down to make progress in a supportive environment.
- A broad, balanced and sometimes inspiring curriculum enables pupils to make progress in both their personal and academic education. Consequently, the pupils are strongly supported in every aspect of their development.
- Sports lessons are held in purpose-built premises used by the school, where there are good opportunities to work both indoors and outdoors. In addition, pupils have opportunities to experience a wide range of sports at other centres, for example archery, high-wire walking, badminton, boxing and trampolining. As a result, pupils are able to develop their skills in sports in the most appropriate environments.
- The senior management team has developed a clear set of priorities that have had a positive effect on the social, emotional and academic progress of the pupils. Recent actions have resulted in a greater emphasis on the use of outside visits and visitors to the school. Leaders have undertaken a close review of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. As a result, pupils have better opportunities to gain insight into the attitudes and values of others in multicultural Britain.
- The school promotes well the British values of tolerance and respect. Discrimination is not tolerated and is explored fully.
- Staff morale is high. Relationships at all levels are very good. All staff who completed the Ofsted inspection survey indicated that they enjoy working at the school. They feel that they are well supported in their roles and personal well-being by the management.
- The school keeps good records of all pupils' individual needs. Education, health and care (EHC) plans for those who require them are well documented and carefully followed. Records of each pupil's behaviour and starting points are thorough and provide a reliable basis for discussion of their academic and social progress. Strong leadership ensures that pupils' individual needs are catered for well.
- The school has good relationships with relevant external agencies. Leaders are held in high regard by the local authority team who places pupils in their care.
- Leaders have put in place assessment procedures to ensure that pupils' progress is effectively monitored and recorded in English, mathematics and science. Consequently, they know pupils' starting points and how much progress they have made. They are also able to identify gaps in their previous knowledge so that these can be addressed in teaching. Teachers are also able to identify quickly those who are falling behind and take effective action to arrest any slowing of progress.

- Leaders also assess, monitor and track pupils' improvements in behaviour. They analyse behaviour patterns with a view to understanding the needs of pupils and groups. This enables them to be supportive to individual pupils and to the teaching staff.
- Leaders have created strong relationships with parents and carers. All adults in the school, including the headteacher and the other proprietors, are involved in collecting pupils from home in the morning and returning them home. Consequently, they have daily contact with parents, which enables pupils' personal problems to be addressed without delay. In this way, staff also ensure that the attendance of the vast majority of pupils improves quickly.
- Those parents who spoke to the inspector were all overwhelmingly appreciative of the work of the school in supporting their children. Typical remarks included, 'The school has been my helping hands.' Another parent said, 'My child looks forward to coming to school and is making really good progress. I am really pleased.'
- At the time of the inspection, there were 51 pupils on roll. The school intends to apply to the Department for Education to increase this registration number.

Governance

- The three proprietors are fully involved in all aspects of school life. They are in school every day and have their own clear responsibilities. As a consequence, they are closely involved in everything that takes place and are well placed to address any issues.
- The management team has regular formal meetings and knows where it needs to move forward, but written records of meetings fail to set out clearly the necessary actions that are going to be taken to secure further improvements.

Safeguarding

- Leaders have created a strong culture of shared responsibility for protecting pupils. Consequently, pupils are safe and well supported.
- Leaders have ensured that good-quality safeguarding and child protection policies are available on request. The safeguarding and child protection policy and practice are effective and meet current government requirements.
- All staff are 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.
- The building is modern and well maintained. It is kept to an appropriately safe standard, with clear access to doors in case of fire. The health and safety officer regularly checks the building for fire risk and other safety hazards. Leaders rigorously maintain risk assessments for all aspects of school life and for individual pupils where necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- A calm learning environment ensures that pupils feel secure and therefore able to apply themselves to learning. Teachers care deeply about pupils' personal well-being and educational progress. Relationships between pupils and staff are based on mutual respect. All of this helps pupils to work steadily and to make good progress.
- A strong emphasis on sports in the curriculum supports the specific skills involved, but also promotes the development of collaborative skills, leadership skills and self-discipline. Pupils gain a growing confidence in themselves that translates itself into their lives and into their academic work. One remark from a pupil was, 'Sport keeps your mind stable. You can socialise and learn to work as a team.' The experienced and skilled instructors who lead the lessons have been professional sportsmen in their previous employment. Because of this, the pupils have a great respect for them and recognise that they are being taught by exceptionally skilled instructors.
- The strong emphasis on the creation and enjoyment of art has a positive impact on pupils' confidence and personal development. A calm, relaxed atmosphere has been created where pupils are able to work enthusiastically and discuss their work with insight. Highly skilled teaching presents an excellent role model for pupils. The art room is open to pupils who wish to use it at any time of the school day and it is well used by pupils. As a result, pupils gain fulfilment as well as confidence in their artistic skills.
- Teachers make good links between different areas of the curriculum. For example, artwork was linked to PSHE work on festivals and, in an English lesson, a discussion developed that linked to the study of how institutions work.
- Pupils arriving in the school take assessments so that teachers can accurately establish their starting points. Teachers are able to identify gaps in learning from previous schools so that these gaps can be filled. Assessment, monitoring and tracking procedures ensure that any pupil falling behind is quickly identified. Leaders have set aside identified times at the end of the school day for pupils to seek help with any area of learning where they feel insecure or feel that they are not making sufficient progress. As a result, teachers support pupils to catch up if they are falling behind.
- Individual assessment ensures that teachers know those who need to be challenged more and those who need to consolidate their understanding before moving on. Small class groups, typically seven to nine pupils, ensure that each pupil can receive individual attention from the teacher at his or her level of need. Teachers set tasks that enable pupils to move quickly on to harder work. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils working on compound interest were able to also work on an example of percentage decrease if they wanted a further challenge.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This is shared well with pupils to ensure that pupils have the appropriate knowledge for examinations. However, in some lessons, teachers spend too much time talking. Consequently, pupils sometimes lose focus as the lesson progresses. When questioned, pupils reply with one-word answers and fail to develop their answers. Teachers do not place a strong emphasis on pupils learning new words and expressions. As a result, pupils do not develop their spoken language and they do not learn to use a wide vocabulary in their talking and writing.
- Teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on the development of reasoning and thinking

skills across the curriculum. Consequently, this aspect of their development is weak.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All pupils spoken to recognised the progress in confidence that they had made since starting at this school. They said that their previous schools had been too big but, in this school, they find it easier to learn. A typical comment from the pupils was 'All the staff want the best for us in the future.' They all agreed that they had felt welcome when they started at the school, unlike their other schools, where they felt that they were not welcome because of their behaviour.
- The support from adults, combined with the effective use of detailed assessment that focuses on individual needs, contributes well to pupils' growing confidence. Pupils gain much self-belief from the strong emphasis on art as a subject and art for spiritual development. Teamwork in sports activities develops collaborative skills.
- The school's counsellor provides exceptional support to pupils. In addition to the planned individual and group work, pupils are able to seek her advice and support whenever they feel the need. She also provides support for families through family therapy. Her work has a considerable impact on the personal development and safeguarding of pupils.
- Pupils all said that they are safe in school and they know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They say there is no bullying at school. Their knowledge of healthy eating was clear in the observed lesson. Teachers ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe online, in face-to-face relationships and in the locality.
- Good-quality careers information, advice and guidance help pupils to consider their futures. The school has very recently increased support from careers advisers to two days per week. Most of the choices pupils make at present tend to be gender-specific, for example boys choosing engineering, while girls choose health and social care. However, leaders are already aware of this and have formed plans to develop experiences that will enhance pupils' aspirations in the future.
- Extensive work with a wide range of external agencies supports pupils' well-being and helps to keep them safe. For example, the police, the gang violence team, the youth offending team and the drugs action team provide workshops for pupils, as well as individual support where necessary.
- The school has supported pupils, where appropriate, to find themselves part-time jobs for which they are paid, for example working in a cafe, garden centre or charity shop. One pupil has had work experience in a primary school. In this way, pupils prepare themselves for life in employment.
- Within school, adults give pupils responsibilities such as helping the caretaker with gardening and cleaning windows. Pupils also help teachers to prepare for outside visits by preparing the related paperwork, as well as helping in the office. Pupils have good opportunities to consider how they can support the community or the wider world by fundraising for a variety of different charities. They volunteer to pack bags in

supermarkets and volunteer for litter-picking. As a result, they have good opportunities to develop awareness of the needs of others.

- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. They learn about the law in relation to equalities. They have opportunities to visit, for example, the civic offices, the local mosque and local churches. They learn about different cultures in relation to diet, customs and prayer. Pupils were very clear that we should not discriminate against people because of race, disability or background. However, pupils do not have good opportunities to take part in formal discussion and debate so that they fully develop their knowledge of democracy.
- Pupils from other schools who access part-time alternative provision take part in chosen pathways alongside pupils registered at the school. They therefore have the opportunity to benefit from much of what the school does to enhance pupils' personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils over time is good. During the inspection, pupils conducted themselves well around the school and showed respect and consideration for adults. They were courteous when spoken to and showed politeness when holding doors open for adults.
- The school behaviour code is very clear to all pupils and their parents. Pupils understand the sanctions well. A variety of rewards motivate pupils to behave well and to apply themselves to learning in the classroom. Staff consistently use praise when pupils show positive engagement. Rewards such as certificates, vouchers and extra trips or visits help pupils learn that good behaviour is valued.
- The school keeps detailed records of pupils' behaviour. Teachers record behaviour alongside pupils' academic record and colour-code documents to focus the pupils and their parents on good behaviour outcomes. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with where necessary by appropriate fixed-term exclusions. These exclusions become considerably fewer as the pupils settle into school. The spring term this year was particularly positive because there were fewer exclusions in comparison to the autumn term.
- Overall attendance is lower than national averages. However, the vast majority of pupils either have good attendance or attendance that is better than in their previous school. This is due to the diligence with which leaders follow up attendance issues. Pupils' attendance also continues to improve over time. This significantly improved attendance contributes strongly to their progress both emotionally and academically.
- The school works exceptionally hard to improve the attendance of the minority who attend less regularly but some of these pupils have not made strong progress due to their poor attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most of the pupils, including pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make good progress. This is because of the

effective support for the social, emotional and academic development of pupils that is provided by the highly committed staff.

- The vast majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have made good progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and science. This includes those who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, as well as those who are looked after by the local authority. This is because teachers make accurate assessments of starting points when the pupils arrive in the school. They use this information to plan well-delivered individualised learning programmes.
- Pupils have good opportunities to enjoy reading. They read in every lesson and when they research their own projects in independent learning sessions. As a result, their progress in reading is good.
- Many of the pupils have been unable to progress in their previous schools due to their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils' confidence develops the longer they are in this school and they are able to access GCSE examinations.
- In July 2017, a significant proportion of pupils achieved success in GCSE examinations, including in English and mathematics. This represents good, and sometimes outstanding, progress for the vast majority of these pupils from their starting points.
- In addition to these core subjects, many successfully completed GCSEs in art, science, child development and food and nutrition, as well as a BTEC (level 2) certificate in sport.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. Previous pupils have obtained places on further education courses, apprenticeships or with work-based training providers.

School details

Unique reference number	141128
DfE registration number	861/6012
Inspection number	10047137

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	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Number of part-time pupils	7
Proprietor	Shane Tudor
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Emma Tench
Annual fees (day pupils)	£17,355
Telephone number	01782 248 248
Website	Not applicable
Email address	emma.tench@sportingstarsacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	28 April 2015

Information about this school

- The school occupies a former church building located on the edge of a suburban area near Stoke-on-Trent. The proprietors carried out a significant modernisation of the premises to create the classrooms, recreational spaces and facilities for the school.
- The school is registered to admit up to 50 pupils aged 14 to 16. There are 51 pupils currently on roll. The school intends to apply for a material change to increase the registration number.

- A team from the local authority places pupils at the school. Pupils join the school at different times of the year during Years 10 and 11. They are placed on part-time or full-time programmes, depending on their levels of need.
- Pupils placed at the school typically have emotional and social difficulties. At the time of the inspection, four pupils had a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan.
- The school is overseen by the headteacher, who is also a proprietor. There are two other proprietors who work at the school. The leadership team also includes the deputy headteacher. There are no middle leaders at the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Ten pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the school from another establishment for two days per week to follow the programme of study for the BTEC diploma in sport.
- Post-16 pupils come to the school from other establishments to attend the sporting provision. They have three two-hour sessions of sporting activities.
- The school provides all pupils with lunch.
- All pupils are collected to come to school and returned to their homes at the end of the day by the school's own transport.
- The school was first registered in 2014.
- The school's previous inspection was 28–30 April 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in several sessions and scrutinised a variety of pupils' books. She also visited the local leisure centre where sporting activities take place and made a brief observation of the learning of football skills. The inspector also spoke to a group of pupils.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the proprietor whose responsibility is finance and the proprietor whose responsibility is health and safety. She also held a meeting with the school's pupil counsellor. She spoke to a member of the local authority's pupil placement team.
- The inspector listened to two pupils reading and spoke to them about their understanding of the text and their reading preferences.
- There were telephone discussions with several parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised schemes of work and lesson plans, as well as a variety of documents about pupils' individual records and safeguarding. She scrutinised risk assessments about the school building, individual pupils and external visits.
- The inspector toured the school premises.
- The inspector took account of eight staff questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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