

# St John's CofE Primary Academy

Weston Road, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 3RL

## Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

<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>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The principal and vice-principal have a thorough understanding of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They are well supported by their middle leaders and the multi-academy trust.
- Outcomes are rising. Pupils' starting points on entry to the school are lower than typically expected. Good teaching enables pupils to progress well.
- Leaders are developing the curriculum. This is particularly the case in science, history and computing, where pupils' knowledge and understanding develop well.
- The teaching of reading is improving. Pupils develop their skills through a half-termly class text which enables pupils to gain an in-depth understanding of the themes within it.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills, solve problems and reason.
- The school needs to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in writing in key stage 2.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- The early years is well led. Staff in Reception have positive relationships with children. However, not all children are fully engaged in their phonics lessons.
- The pupil premium is put to good use. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the school's strategies.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium has been effective. Pupils receive a range of physical and sport-related opportunities, both within lessons and as extra-curricular activities.
- The local academy committee (LAC) of St Chad's multi-academy trust provides appropriate challenge for teachers. They know the areas they need to focus on to secure further improvements to outcomes.
- The safeguarding culture within the school is effective. Staff and LAC members take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve the teaching of phonics so children are excited and challenged by the tasks given to them.
- Track children's progress more carefully so gaps in knowledge can be more precisely targeted.
- Further develop the opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to write at length across a wide range of subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the school joined the multi-academy trust, the new principal has played a key role in improving the school. She and the deputy principal have a firm and thorough understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. Middle leaders increasingly take initiative for school improvement. They know their subjects and areas of responsibility well and are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have created a positive culture of mutual support and improvement among staff. They share a clear sense of direction and a desire to get the best out of pupils, both academically and socially. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel that leaders support their development through a range of training opportunities.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and focused. Leaders use the detailed information they have about pupils' progress to identify strengths and put in place relevant priorities for improvement.
- Pupils enjoy some of the wider curriculum opportunities; this is leaders' commitment to developing the whole-school curriculum. Pupils rate their school as 'good' but say, 'It is not yet outstanding because there are still things that could be better'. Pupils enjoy a range of sporting activities and clubs and support from specialist coaches, with the PE and sport premium funding being used appropriately.
- The vast majority of parents and carers express positive views about the school; however, a few parents had concerns about recent staff changes and the way this has been communicated to parents. The school provides a range of channels for parents to receive accurate information and raise concerns, including weekly newsletters, parents' evenings, parents' forum meetings, and provides parents with teachers' work email addresses so they can communicate directly with their child's teacher.

### Governance of the school

- St Chad's multi-academy trust and the LAC of the trust board receive clear and accurate information about the performance of different groups of pupils. This has enabled them to ask challenging questions when outcomes for pupils have been low.
- Committee members are knowledgeable about their roles and take their responsibilities seriously. They know that part of their core work is to ensure that outcomes are raised for all pupils.
- Governors are proud of the strong links the school has with the local Ministry of Defence base and with St John's church. They say these form part of the school's uniqueness, which it describes as an extended 'family' for pupils.

### Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are vigilant in their duty of care. Any unexplained absences from the school are followed up quickly, and staff report concerns to the right people. The school works

with the multi-academy trust and other professional organisations to ensure that everyone receives regular updates regarding keeping children safe.

- Leaders carry out all the correct employment checks on school staff and make sure they receive regular safeguarding training. Many staff have first aid training.
- The school site is secure and access by visitors is controlled. Safety procedures, such as fire drills, are carried out regularly.
- Medicines are stored in the correct places.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching at the school has improved. Since becoming an academy, staff have benefited from opportunities to undertake a range of professional development, including courses, observing good practice at other schools within the trust and a programme of coaching and mentoring by senior leaders.
- Well-planned lessons enthuse and engage learners. This contributes effectively to pupils' learning because little time is lost. In most lessons, teachers effectively enable pupils to reflect on their learning so that they make strong progress. Teachers and other adults support and intervene to ensure that pupils do not have gaps in their learning.
- Teachers exhibit strong subject knowledge in all phases, ensuring that they can deepen pupils' understanding through probing questioning. They ensure that perceptions are accurate and any misconceptions are swiftly eradicated.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are well developed across the curriculum. Reading lessons are based on half-termly texts that enable pupils to explore themes contained within a book. In mathematics, there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length and this limits what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers set high expectations and pupils, generally, model positive attitudes to learning. Very little off-task behaviour was observed, with high standards of conduct in all classes. A wide range of extra-curricular activities add to the learning that takes place in class.
- The school plans a number of enrichment activities that have widened pupils' experiences, such as working with Batik artists, visits to the theatre and outdoor adventurous activity residentials.
- The school goes to great lengths to ensure that parents have a clear understanding of pupils' progress. The inclusive nature of the school ensures that teachers promote equality of opportunity through teaching and learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils understand that it is good to be different and could talk about diversity within their community. They understand everybody has different views and say they are listened to.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities throughout the school, for example by taking up posts on the worship committee, the school council and as science ambassadors.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what is meant by bullying and they know the different forms bullying can take. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values, including democracy. They are encouraged to develop their understanding of other countries and cultures through subjects such as geography.
- The school has developed a 'Respect' curriculum which teaches pupils about a wide range of topics, including healthy relationships and healthy eating. Pupils say the food provided by the school is delicious and they 'enjoy it'.
- Charity work is a key aspect of the school and pupils have learned about the needy, both at home and abroad, and have raised money for a number of campaigns, including 'Toilet Twinning'.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons, although some off-task behaviour was observed during the inspection.
- Pupils are courteous and polite. They open doors for adults and wait for them to go first when moving around corridors. There is an appropriate level of supervision on the playground.
- Attendance rates remain above the national averages. The school consults with parents on how good attendance can be encouraged and is trialling a two-week half-term holiday in May, which has been received positively.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Standards are rising, and current pupils are doing well. A relatively high proportion of pupils enter the school with skills below a level that is typical for their age. Good teaching enables pupils to progress well as they move through the school.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was in line with the national average. Pupils make good progress from

their starting points. However, this year's cohort is likely to dip below national averages due to their low starting points.

- At the end of key stage 1, standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science have been above national averages for the past two years. Pupils make strong progress from their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average in 2017. In 2018, attainment in these subjects dipped, due to a number of pupils having very specific needs and 13 pupils joining the school in Year 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective teaching and support, which is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet their changing needs, so they make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well across the school. The school's assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils make good progress and sometimes outperform their classmates.
- Work in pupils' books shows that their knowledge and skills are developing well in other subjects. This is particularly the case in science, history and computing.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Relationships between staff and children in the early years are a strength. Staff are attentive and meet children's needs well. In the Reception classes, children are very well settled into the start of their life at the school.
- Children are encouraged to have good manners and behave well. Children were observed taking turns and collaborating with each other and were dressed smartly in their uniforms. There is a calm and productive learning environment.
- A high number of children enter the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below levels typical for their age. Strong subject knowledge and good teaching from both teachers and teaching assistants enable children to progress well across the different areas of learning.
- The teaching of phonics is accurate, although not all children were participating fully in the activities, which consisted mainly of rehearsing letter sounds. A few children were not being targeted specifically within lessons according to their needs.
- Classrooms are set up to prompt questions and discussions, and adults offer lots of praise and encouragement. Some areas of the learning environments available to children could be better organised and the school is looking at storage solutions and ways to improve this. Children in the early years have access to a large outdoor area and learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Children enjoyed their learning and laughed and smiled as they performed ribbon dances to the music that was playing and made mini-beasts out of play-dough.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of the provision. She supports staff well and has a clear view of the progress the children need to make. Parents are openly welcomed and encouraged to support their children's learning.

- Children make good progress, with the proportion of children achieving a good level of development rising from 2017 to 2018. In both 2017 and 2018, the proportion of children achieving this level was in line with or above the national average.
- Children are well supervised and kept safe at the school.

## School details

Unique reference number	143348
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10088534

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Sue Wedgwood
Principal	Victoria Evans
Telephone number	01785 251960
Website	<a href="http://www.st-johns-stafford.staffs.sch.uk/">www.st-johns-stafford.staffs.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@st-johns-stafford.staffs.sch.uk">office@st-johns-stafford.staffs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is led by a principal and vice-principal since it joined St Chad's multi-academy trust on 1 September 2016. This is the school's first inspection since the predecessor school was judged to be good in 2013. The board of trustees is responsible for setting the strategic direction of its academies. The trustees employ a chief executive officer (CEO) to oversee and work with all of the multi-academy trust's academies. The CEO is currently the chair of the LAC but a new chair is taking over in the autumn. At a local level, the LAC of the trust board holds the principal to account and monitors the day-to-day running of the school.
- A large proportion of pupils come from military families who are employed at the local Ministry of Defence base.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Inspectors also examined pupils' work in books and on display and considered the school's own assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and the school's routines. They observed pupils in lessons, at lunch and as they were moving around the school site.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 55 free-text comments from parents. The inspection team considered these and spoke to some parents during the inspection. In addition, the inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, school leaders, members of the LAC and representatives from the trust, including the CEO. Inspectors looked at the 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors examined school documents. These included information about pupils' progress and attainment, evaluations of the school's performance and several policy statements. Records relating to safeguarding and the quality of teaching were scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

## Inspection team

Heather Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Bourdon-Pierre	Ofsted Inspector

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