

Inspection of Newcastle Academy

Gallowstree Lane, The Westlands, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2QS

Inspection dates: 13–14 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Newcastle Academy has been transformed since its last inspection in February 2018. It has improved in all areas since the principal joined the school.

Staff provide excellent care for pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy school and feel safe and secure. Bullying is rare. When it happens, staff deal with it well. Pupils told inspectors they trust the school's adults to look after them.

Pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the day. Many pupils told inspectors how much behaviour has improved. Pupils are happy, confident and polite. The school is a friendly community where visitors are given a warm welcome.

Leaders and staff form a hard-working and united team that wants the best for all pupils. The education they provide has improved considerably but there remains room for improvement. Pupils still do not learn well enough in some subjects. GCSE results have been poor in most subjects in recent years, but there was some improvement in 2019.

Parents recognise and value the recent improvements in the school. Those who completed Parent View especially praised the care provided for their children. They also recognised the openness and availability of the principal, other leaders and staff.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The education the school provides has improved considerably since it was last inspected. The school is now fully staffed with qualified teachers. Learning is organised effectively in almost all subjects. Teaching is increasingly helping pupils to learn well. The school has several strong subjects, including English, physical education (PE) and mathematics.

Some weaknesses remain. For example, pupils' learning in science does not build well from year to year. Pupils have gaps in their scientific knowledge, and teachers are not addressing these effectively.

In key stage 3, pupils do not spend enough time studying some subjects, including French. This is one reason that very few pupils choose to take a GCSE in the subject. Leaders know that this is a problem. They are reviewing the key stage 3 curriculum at the moment.

Teaching still does not consistently ensure that pupils remember what they have been taught. In recent years, this has been a key reason why GCSE results have been poor in many subjects. Although improvement is evident, there remains a mixed picture across the school.

Pastoral care is a strength. The school has a highly effective pastoral team, and all

staff see caring for pupils as an important part of their job. Leaders put great effort into developing pupils' life skills and in broadening their horizons. For example, pupils in Years 7 and 8 have 'character curriculum' lessons that focus on improving confidence, team-working and self-esteem. All pupils in Year 9 take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Here they learn new skills, they volunteer in a care home and they undertake an off-site expedition.

Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Teachers take pupils' needs into account when planning learning. Teaching assistants provide the right support in class when pupils need it.

Pupils enjoy school. Almost all attend very regularly. They are keen to do well, and they appreciate how the school has improved recently. Almost all behave well both in lessons and at other times of the day. Disruption to learning is now rare. Leaders' use of exclusion has fallen considerably and continues to do so. Pupils are friendly, courteous, polite and caring. Relationships are warm and respectful throughout the school.

The principal and senior leaders, well supported by the United Endeavour Trust, provide a clear and persuasive vision for high-quality education. The school's staff are very committed to this vision and to seeing the school continue to improve. Leaders are considerate of the well-being of staff. They invest considerable effort in helping teachers to improve their practice. Staff appreciate the support and guidance that leaders provide. Morale in the school is excellent.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff understand that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. They are vigilant to the signs that pupils might need extra help. Leaders train staff well, providing regular reminders and updates about safeguarding issues.

The school's strong pastoral team quickly deals with any concerns about pupils. Members of the team make sure that pupils get the help they need. Leaders respond well to particular needs. For example, they have put in place expert support for pupils experiencing difficulties with mental health. Links with outside agencies are strong.

All safeguarding policies and procedures are clear and fit for purpose.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Approximately three years ago, the school decided to shorten its key stage 3 to two years. Leaders also reviewed the amount of teaching time allocated to different subjects, prioritising some including English and mathematics. These decisions resulted in pupils studying some subjects in insufficient depth during key stage 3. For example, pupils currently study French for just 90 minutes each week for two years. In this time, they do not develop a secure grounding in the language. This is one reason that so few decide to take French as a GCSE. Leaders should ensure that, in key stage 3, pupils study a broad range of subjects, as exemplified by the national curriculum, in sufficient depth to prepare them for potential further study of those subjects.
- Senior and curriculum leaders have worked hard to address weaknesses in the curriculum. They have been successful in most subjects. However, the science curriculum still lacks coherence and logical sequencing from Year 7 to Year 11. Pupils have considerable gaps in their scientific knowledge. Teachers are not identifying and addressing pupils' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge and understanding as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that the science curriculum is well planned and sequenced so that pupils' knowledge builds effectively from year to year. Additionally, leaders should ensure that teachers systematically identify and address pupils' scientific misconceptions and the gaps in their knowledge.
- Pupils now remember more of what they have been taught, because in most subjects the curriculum is well planned and teaching has improved considerably. However, this remains an inconsistent picture across the school. Often, pupils are clear about, and can remember, curriculum content. At times, though, pupils do not remember work they have studied, even quite recently. Occasionally, they do not even remember that they have studied a topic, let alone its content. Leaders should ensure that pupils routinely have to recall what they have been taught, so that remembering becomes a habit.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	142277
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10111689
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	378
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Andrew White
Principal	Jamie Henshaw
Website	www.newcastleacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	13–14 February 2018

Information about this school

- The principal joined the school in April 2018.
- A very small number of pupils study for part of the week at Martec Training.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspectors met with the principal, the vice principal, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, and the two assistant principals. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the chair of the board of directors of the United Endeavour Trust. He also met with two members of the local governing body, including its chair.
- Inspectors talked to many pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as

they moved around the school. An inspector visited morning tutor periods.

- Inspectors scrutinised several documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection. They checked that the single central record contained all required information.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by considering the 18 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 14 free-text comments.
- Inspectors took account of 30 responses received on Ofsted's staff inspection questionnaire.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors paid particular attention to English, mathematics, science, French and PE. In these subjects, they met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gail Peyton

Ofsted Inspector

Neil Warner

Ofsted Inspector

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