

Inspection of Staffordshire University Academy

Marston Road, Hednesford, Cannock, Staffordshire WS12 4JH

Inspection dates: 26–27 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

The quality of education at Staffordshire University Academy has improved but is not yet good enough. There remains too much variation in the delivery of the curriculum in different subjects, such as mathematics, science and modern foreign languages (MFL). This has led to weak outcomes for pupils. In the past, leaders and the trust have taken too long to address weaknesses. Recently, improvement work has quickened, and issues have been tackled effectively. The curriculum design and pupils' behaviour and attendance have improved.

Generally, relationships between pupils and teachers are respectful and purposeful. Pupils say that lessons can still be interrupted by incidents of low-level disruption. Records show that these incidences are still too frequent. Pupils' attendance has improved, as they begin to value their education.

Most pupils say that things are now better and that they like the school. Bullying is rare, and staff deal quickly with any that does occur. Pupils feel safe and are safe.

The provision for pupils' personal development is a clear strength of the school. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, take part in extra-curricular activities, trips, visits and residential. Pupils value these opportunities.

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

Standards at the school have been low and pupils' outcomes poor, due to previous weak teaching and significant staffing issues at all levels. In the past, leaders and the trust have been slow to tackle weaknesses. Leadership at the school is now stable. Leaders have begun to stem the decline and put things right. They have introduced new policies and systems to improve the school. As a result, there are improvements in the design of the curriculum and pupils' personal development, behaviour and attendance.

Leaders have created a curriculum so that pupils learn in a broad range of subjects. They are clear about what pupils should learn and in what order. However, the delivery of subject plans varies between subjects. For example, in mathematics pupils do not deepen their learning well enough. In MFL at key stage 3, pupils do not learn in sufficient depth. Some teaching remains less effective in ensuring that pupils gain the expected skills and knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Assessment systems in key stage 3 are not detailed and effective enough. Some staff see key stage 3 as preparation time for key stage 4. These leaders and teachers continue to focus on what pupils need to be able to do in their GCSE examinations rather than developing a depth of knowledge across their subject areas. This is preventing pupils in some subjects from gaining the broad knowledge

and skills they need to succeed.

Leaders have made the decision to enter pupils in Year 10 for their GCSE examinations in English Literature and chemistry. Pupils do not have sufficient time to cover the whole study programme and embed their learning fully in these subjects, so this is not an effective practice. Pupils say that they would have achieved a better grade had they had more time.

Leaders place pupils' personal development at the centre of learning. Pupils benefit from the strong pastoral care provided by staff. Leaders know their pupils well and make sure that they have many valuable opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. There is a variety of extra-curricular opportunities, trips and visits, which pupils enjoy. They speak very highly of the opportunities the school provides. Leaders have developed a comprehensive careers advice programme to teach pupils about future employment choices. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Pupils' behaviour has improved. Incidents of poor behaviour are now rare. Fewer pupils are excluded from the school. There remain too many times when a minority of pupils are removed from their lessons due to low-level disruptions.

Currently, there are only a small number of students the sixth form. Year 12 and 13 students studying the same subject are currently taught together for most subjects. This does not give students the opportunity to study subjects in enough depth. They do not deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding well enough in those subjects. The sixth form is inclusive. It offers some students the experience of further study which they may not have received elsewhere. Students' personal development is a strength. Students enjoy the sixth form and act as role models to younger peers. They receive effective careers advice and guidance. Most students who complete the courses move on to further or higher education, apprenticeships and employment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff understand that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. Teachers know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Teachers report concerns, however minor, to the safeguarding team. Staff know their pupils well and use this information to ensure that pupils are safe.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They complete appropriate employment checks and keep accurate records. Staff follow up any concerns with outside agencies. Leaders make sure that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The delivery of the curriculum remains variable. This means that some pupils do not learn some subjects in sufficient depth and continue to underperform. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum in each subject area covers the appropriate content in sufficient depth so that pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.
- Some leaders continue to view key stage 3 as preparation time for key stage 4. These leaders and teachers focus on what pupils need to be able to do in their GCSE examinations, rather than developing a depth of knowledge across their subject areas. This is preventing some pupils in some subjects from gaining the knowledge and skills that they need to succeed. These leaders should ensure that pupils in key stage 3 have the opportunity to study the appropriate curriculum.
- In the past, governors, leaders and the trust have been too slow to improve the school. This changed at the start of this academic year, and improvements are now evident. Leaders at all levels need to ensure that the rate of improvement continues at pace.
- Entering pupils for examinations early in some subjects such as English literature and chemistry has not been effective. Pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that pupils have sufficient time to study all subjects in depth and achieve their potential.
- Sixth-form students do not study subjects in sufficient depth. This is because both year groups learn in the same classroom and are taught by one teacher at the same time. Leaders need to make sure that students can study their chosen subjects in enough depth and breadth in order to gain sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding.

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	137164
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10088446
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	41
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mary Walker
Principal	Rowena Hillier
Website	http://www.suacademy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	25–26 April 2017

Information about this school

- There have been significant staffing changes at all levels in the school since the last inspection. This includes the senior leadership team.
- The school's governance structure includes a local academy committee which acts as a local governing body.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at 'The Bridge', a pupil referral unit.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- We met with the principal, vice principal, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and safeguarding leader as well as a range of subject coordinators and teachers. The lead inspector met with members of the local academy committee, including the chair and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- We scrutinised the school’s safeguarding arrangements and documentation, including the single central record. We met with the designated safeguarding lead and special educational needs coordinator. We spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- We completed various inspection activities to gather evidence on the quality of education. There was a focus on English, mathematics, science, MFL and history. This included lesson visits, looking at pupils’ work and discussions with teachers and pupils about their learning. All other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection.
- We observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. We spoke to pupils and staff about behaviour.
- We considered 36 responses from staff to the Ofsted staff survey and 35 parent responses to Ofsted’s Parent View questionnaire. We also considered 52 responses from pupils to Ofsted’s pupil survey.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Steve Byatt

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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