

# Inspection of Maple Court Academy

Beverley Drive, Bentilee, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST2 0QD

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Inspection dates: 19–20 November 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Inadequate**

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The quality of education	<b>Inadequate</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Early years provision	<b>Inadequate</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The quality of education at Maple Court Academy is not good enough. In the past, leaders and the trust have not addressed weaknesses at the school. As a result, standards have declined. For example, most pupils cannot read well enough to achieve at the level that they should. New executive leaders from the trust have recently been appointed. They have begun to stem the decline and strengthen the school's leadership.

Pupils generally behave well. Interactions between adults and pupils are friendly and respectful. Lessons are normally free from disruptions, although pupils' attitudes to learning could be better. Pupils are kept safe and bullying is rare. Staff deal quickly with any that does occur.

While the pastoral care of pupils is a strength, work to promote pupils' personal development is variable. For example, leaders ensure that pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils, have opportunities to attend trips and excursions, such as the recent trip to RAF Cosford. However, these experiences are not linked well enough to pupils' learning.

Older pupils are not well prepared for their next steps in education.

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

Standards at the school have declined significantly since the previous inspection. Leaders, governors and the trust have not acted quickly enough to prevent this decline. However, new executive leaders at the trust have now begun to halt the decline and address the weaknesses. They have introduced new policies and systems to improve the school. As a result, there have been recent improvements in the leadership of the school, pupils' behaviour and attendance. Many of the other strategies are so new that it is not yet possible to see the impact of them.

Leaders have failed to address the weaknesses in the teaching of phonics and reading. Reading has not been prioritised, planned or taught well enough in the past. As a result, the vast majority of pupils are not able to read at a level that is appropriate for their age. The weakest readers have not been supported effectively to catch up, and continue to read below the level they should. Leaders have now begun to address this. New schemes and plans for reading have been introduced and show early signs of having a positive impact.

Leaders' and teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and achieve are too low. Teachers do not take pupils' abilities and needs into consideration when planning lessons. Therefore, too many pupils get tasks that are either too hard or too easy. Pupils with SEND do not get the support they need to learn well. The most able pupils are not stretched sufficiently to achieve at a higher level. Pupils at the school do not make the progress they should. This also stops them from developing consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum in some foundation subjects, such as geography, history and design and technology, is planned and sequenced well enough or that pupils study them in enough depth. This hinders pupils' build-up of skills, knowledge and understanding over time. As a result, pupils lack specific knowledge in these subjects.

In the past, assessment systems in core subjects have been weak. These did not provide leaders and teachers with accurate information about how well pupils are achieving. Consequently, teachers did not act to support pupils who needed extra help. Intervention strategies have not been effective in supporting pupils who need to catch up. As a result, pupils underachieved significantly. New leaders have now introduced effective systems to check what pupils know. These systems have very recently been introduced and need more time to embed fully.

There is currently no permanent leadership of early years because of staffing issues. A trust leader has taken on this role temporarily. There is not a focused enough overview of the early years setting due to other demands on her time. Teachers are relatively inexperienced. They do not understand children's learning and development needs well enough and have not had sufficient training to address this. Reception children generally settle well in school. They enjoy learning and playing in their own classroom and in the outside spaces. Children begin to learn about the link between letters and sounds as soon as they start school.

The quality of provision for pupils' personal development is inconsistent. Leaders do not ensure that all pupils receive meaningful learning experiences. For example, plans in personal, social and health education set out what teachers should teach and in what order, but not all teachers follow these plans. Therefore, pupils miss out on valuable content.

Older pupils do not get the information they need about secondary school. This, together with poor key stage 2 outcomes, means that pupils are not well prepared for secondary school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that the school has a strong culture of safeguarding. They check that new staff are suitable to work with children and keep accurate records. Staff are well trained to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk. All staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Teachers know their pupils well and use this information to ensure all pupils' safety.

Leaders keep oversight of pupils they know to be vulnerable. They work well with external agencies to make sure that these 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)

- In the past, leaders have not acted swiftly enough to tackle weaknesses at the school. Since the new trust leaders have been involved, there is a new urgency to bring about much-needed improvements through providing strategic leadership and introducing systems and policies. Leaders need to make sure that all recently introduced strategies are fully embedded and implemented so that these lead to sustained improvements over time.
- Leaders have not ensured that phonics has been taught well or reading prioritised at the school. Therefore, many pupils do not read at an age-appropriate level and are not able to access large chunks of the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that the new reading schemes and programmes are embedded across the whole school so that pupils catch up quickly and can read at a level appropriate for their age.
- In some foundation subjects, pupils are not acquiring enough knowledge and skills. This is because the curriculum has not been effectively planned in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans are sequenced well and that they give these subjects enough attention so that all pupils acquire the secure subject knowledge and skills needed to be successful learners.
- Assessment in the school is not well developed. Therefore, leaders and teachers cannot be sure whether pupils have learned more and can build on this knowledge in the future. Leaders need to make sure that assessments provide the information that leaders and teachers need, so they know how well pupils are learning.
- There is currently no consistent leadership of early years. This means that leaders are not reliably checking that teachers implement the intended curriculum and children develop as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure that the early years phase has clear leadership.
- Currently, pupils do not receive any information to help them with their next steps in education. Consequently, pupils leave the school unprepared for secondary school. Leaders need to make sure that all pupils get the information they need to make informed decisions and are prepared for their future education.

## 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 are the provider and you are 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139228
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111701
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	461
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Kate Townshend
<b>Principal</b>	Jonathan Baddeley
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.maplecourt.stoke.sch.uk/">www.maplecourt.stoke.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20–21 January 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Alpha Academies Trust. A new chief executive officer was appointed in September 2019.
- Since September 2019, the trust’s executive principal, senior vice-principal and other leaders have provided support for Maple Court Academy. They have begun to strengthen the leadership and many aspects of the school.
- The school provides full-time alternative provision for a very small number of pupils at Sneyd Green Primary Academy.

## Information about this inspection

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

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.

- We held meetings with the principal, the executive principal, executive leaders, senior and subject leaders, teachers, pupils, governors (including the chair of

governors), and the chief executive officer of the trust. We scrutinised school documents, including curriculum plans and school development plans.

- We scrutinised the school’s safeguarding arrangements and documentation, including the single central record. We met with the designated safeguarding leader and special educational needs coordinator. We spoke with teaching, kitchen and cleaning staff about safeguarding.
- We visited the school’s early years provision and met with the leader of the provision.
- We completed various inspection activities to gather evidence about the quality of education. These included lesson visits, looking at pupils’ work and discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils about their learning.
- We observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at break- and lunchtimes. We spoke to many pupils during the inspection.
- There were no responses to Ofsted’s Parent View, staff or pupil questionnaires.
- The inspection focused on reading, mathematics, English, geography and design and technology. All other subjects were considered as part of the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Christopher Wright

Ofsted Inspector

Jo Owen

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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