

Inspection of Sporting Stars Academy

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

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

At Sporting Stars Academy, pupils do not receive a good enough education. The curriculum across the school is not ambitious enough. Leaders have not decided what they want pupils to know and learn, and in what order. As a result, pupils, including those in the sixth form, are not being helped to make good progress in their learning.

Pupils are potentially left at risk of harm because of some weaknesses in safeguarding practice. For example, reporting procedures are not robust, and staff have gaps in their knowledge of safeguarding.

Pupils often join the school in key stage 4. Many have not had positive experiences in other schools. Leaders and staff warmly welcome pupils and reassure them that this is a new start. They quickly build positive relationships with pupils. Helping pupils develop positive attitudes to behaviour and respect for each other is at the heart of everything the school does. Because of a culture of mutual respect, pupils behave well in school. They say unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, is quickly dealt with and resolved.

Leaders support pupils well to develop their interests and talents. They organise activities for groups and individual pupils. These include opportunities to go fishing, visit a local boxing club, play football and visit a farm.

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

Leaders and the proprietor body do not have a good oversight of the school's curriculum and its wider provision. They are not clear about the aspects of the school's work that need improvement. Consequently, leaders have not done enough to tackle the school's weaknesses.

There is little coherence or sequence to the curriculum in many subjects, including in the sixth form. This is because subject leaders have not decided what they want pupils to know and learn. Teachers do not plan an effective sequence of learning that helps pupils build and retain their knowledge over time. As a result, assessment is not used well. Pupils are not supported to remember more and apply their knowledge to new contexts.

Leaders have identified that pupils' reading ability is often poor when they first arrive at the school. Leaders are beginning to develop a reading strategy to help improve pupils' skill and confidence to read. However, the support is not yet in place to implement this strategy. Staff do not listen to, or read to, pupils regularly enough to help them improve their reading. There is a limited amount of reading material for pupils to access in school.

Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the specialist support they need from other agencies.

However, teachers are not using the information in the education, health and care (EHC) plans to meet the learning needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils do not achieve well. Some pupils need additional support to access the curriculum. Leaders have begun to take action to improve the support provided. However, these improvements are at the earliest stages of implementation. Currently, pupils with SEND are not making the progress they should.

During national lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders ensured that virtual independent careers advice was offered to pupils. The school is now returning to providing independent careers advice and guidance for all pupils. This includes supporting pupils and their families to access career events and college visits.

There is a strong culture that promotes positive behaviour in the school. Pupils try hard to manage their behaviour. They know they are improving, through staff praise and rewards. Pupils value the weekly telephone calls that staff make to their families. The modern, well-kept building provides a mature learning environment that pupils value and look after.

Many pupils have extremely low attendance when they begin Sporting Stars Academy. Through leaders' determination and use of rewards, pupils' attendance improves quickly. For example, pupils in the sixth form receive a bursary each month to reward good attendance.

While some aspects of the school's work to promote pupils' wider personal development are strong, there is some variation. The personal, social, health and economics (PSHE) education, and the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum are at the earliest stages of development. Pupils do not access their entitlement to a full PSHE and RSE curriculum and are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they should be.

The proprietor body is well intentioned, although its understanding of some of the independent school standards and their implementation is limited. For this reason, the school does not meet all the independent school standards. More recently, the proprietor body has been trying to strengthen curriculum provision by employing new, suitably qualified staff. These new staff have some good ideas to bring about improvement. The proprietors all hold staff roles within the school. However, there is no effective mechanism for holding leaders to account and checking on how the school is performing. The school meets schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders make appropriate checks on staff who work with pupils. They ensure that risk assessments are updated regularly. However, as a result of poor knowledge, staff are not adequately equipped to identify risks quickly enough to keep pupils safe.

Safeguarding files are not up to date and reporting procedures are weak. Records do not include comprehensive information about concerns raised, actions taken, or the impact of these actions. Leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead, do not monitor safeguarding in the school closely enough to tackle any weaknesses.

The school does not have a physical restraint policy. However, records state and pupils affirm that staff do restrain pupils. The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy that is in line with government guidance. However, the policy is not implemented effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not ensured that staff fully understand and effectively execute their responsibilities for safeguarding. Staff are not properly equipped to identify risks quickly enough to keep pupils safe. Leaders need to ensure urgently that staff receive the necessary safeguarding training. Leaders should check to ensure that training is effective and applied by staff. They should ensure that reporting and recording of safeguarding concerns are accurate and appropriately detailed.
- Leaders have not constructed a curriculum that is sufficiently ambitious and meets the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. As a result, pupils are not benefiting from a good quality of education. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is carefully constructed and ambitious for all pupils. Leaders should ensure teachers use the information in EHC plans to inform curriculum planning and delivery.
- The curriculum, including in the sixth form, does not identify the skills and knowledge that leaders expect pupils to learn and is not coherently sequenced. This means that pupils are not sufficiently helped to know and remember more. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum identifies the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn over time and in what order these will be taught.
- Leaders have not prioritised reading sufficiently well. Pupils do not have enough reading experiences to develop their reading skills and build confidence. Leaders should ensure that reading is better promoted and that pupils have the chance to read widely. Teachers should support pupils to make rapid improvement in their reading so that they are ready for the next stage in education or employment.
- Leaders do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils' personal development. They have not given enough thought about preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. As a result, pupils do not have access to their entitlement of a full PSHE curriculum and are not learning the information they need to know. Leaders should develop a PSHE curriculum that considers what pupils need to know and experience.
- The school does not meet the independent school standards. Leaders and the proprietor body should ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of the independent school standards. They should ensure that the standards are met consistently and securely.

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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](#).

School details

Unique reference number	141128
DfE registration number	861/6012
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10220433
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Sporting Stars Community Interest Company
Chair	Shane Anthony Tudor
Headteacher	Emma Tench
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,055 to £54,990
Telephone number	07411 557550
Website	https://sportingstarsacademy.com/
Email address	admin@sportingstarsacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	17–19 April 2018

Information about this school

- The school is an independent school for pupils aged 14 to 19. Pupils are often placed in the school following a breakdown of placement in their secondary school.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- A significant number of the pupils who attend the school have EHC plans.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs. The primary need for most pupils is social, emotional and mental health needs.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietor body, headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website and additional documents provided by the school during the inspection.
- The inspectors made checks of the premises and other information to evaluate compliance with the independent school standards.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in: reading, English, science and PSHE, which includes the school's RSE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and looked at pupils' work in business and technology education (BTEC National Diploma) courses.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Pupils' case files were reviewed. The single central record of checks on staff's suitability to work with children was scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with staff to discuss their workload and the support they receive to carry out their roles.

- Inspectors examined behaviour support plans and incident records, and observed pupils at different times of the day to evaluate pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online parent questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, the pupil questionnaire and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Amanda Clugston, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Antony Edkins Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 2(1)(b)(ii) do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
 - (2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9]
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2).
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(a) particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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