

Inspection of Alexandra Infants' School

Melville Road, Normacot, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 4PZ

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a bright, inviting and safe place where pupils are happy to learn. Bold, colourful artwork, eye-catching displays and well-equipped classrooms provide pupils with many interesting things to see and do.

Staff treat pupils kindly and act quickly if anyone is upset. In turn, they expect pupils to be kind, sensible, polite and friendly. Each week, staff and leaders notice and reward these qualities. Bullying is not a problem, and pupils behave well.

Leaders have created the 'Alexandra promise', which sets out many worthwhile activities. Staff ensure pupils have a wealth of memorable experiences, from having a picnic to visiting a museum. These broaden pupils' horizons and enrich their education.

Pupils who need extra help with language and learning are made to feel welcome. Leaders provide extra help for families, too. Whether it be pastoral or language support, staff go out of their way to meet families' needs. Even so, some parents do not send their children to school often enough.

The school has many high-quality books and resources to support the teaching of reading. Indeed, the curriculum in many subjects is well organised. However, across the school, there is room for improvement in mathematics.

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

Leaders and staff work hard to support pupils and families in lots of different ways. They have created a safe, nurturing place where pupils feel happy, valued and secure. Pupils' positive attitudes to school mean lessons run smoothly.

Many pupils start school with little knowledge of English. Leaders have established a consistent, well-resourced approach to teaching reading in response. Senior staff lead by example, and make sure everyone knows exactly what to do and how to teach reading well. Lots of speaking and listening activities in the Nursery pave the way for phonics lessons in the Reception class. Here, and throughout key stage 1, daily lessons are brisk and purposeful. Staff send home good-quality books. They also arrange workshops for parents to help them support reading, language and other learning at home. Pupils who fall behind and those who are new to the country get regular, extra help to catch up.

The curriculum and assessment in mathematics, in both early years and key stage 1, are not so well organised. Over time, leaders have made some improvements, but these have not been sustained. In part, this is due to disruption caused by the pandemic. However, shortcomings in the curriculum and in how well staff check on children's learning are also factors. Because of this, some pupils do not cover important parts of the curriculum or get enough practice, for example, with early number formation. Leaders recognise this and have plans to make improvements.

In most other subjects, leaders have thought carefully about what to teach and when. Different subjects are taught regularly and, for the most part, new learning builds logically on what has gone before. Furthermore, staff emphasise subject-specific ideas to help pupils in future lessons. When learning about the Great Fire of London, for instance, teaching introduced pupils to the concept of monuments and the purpose that these serve. Similarly, pupils learn about how things change over time and why.

Beyond lessons, staff teach pupils about the values that guide democracy. Pupils take part in school council meetings, and pupil councillors attend a school parliament organised by the multi-academy trust (MAT). This gives them a say in how things are done. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Visiting experts, such as health professionals, show pupils how to take care of themselves. In deciding how best to provide meaningful pastoral support, leaders think carefully about the local community and its needs. Parents value this and have many positive words to say about the school. In particular, they praise the inclusive ethos and community-minded leadership. Nevertheless, some parents do not bring their children to school often enough.

From the start, in Nursery, leaders are quick to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Using specialist advice from other agencies, they make sure that staff and parents know how to support individual needs. Consequently, pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum and school life.

Staff say that they enjoy working at the school. They describe a 'buzz' of team spirit and are committed to their jobs. They report that leaders set fair expectations and consult them about well-being and workload matters.

Governors and trustees understand their roles and bring a healthy level of challenge and support to the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are informed about safeguarding matters, including particular risks within the locality. They notice, record and follow up any concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. When necessary, they work closely with other organisations and share information with the right people in the right way. Staff provide a lot of support for families, and use community links to share important safety messages. Through the school's personal development programme, pupils learn about respectful and safe behaviour.

All the required checks are carried out on adults in school. Proper first-aid arrangements are in place and medicines are stored correctly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The mathematics curriculum and the way it is assessed do not enable pupils to learn as well as they might. Sometimes, pupils miss out on key parts of the curriculum or do not get enough practice because of the way lessons are structured. Leaders should review the mathematics curriculum and improve the way it is organised and assessed.
- In the early years, staff do not pay enough attention to ensuring that children practise developing their knowledge of number formation. Leaders should review the approach to early number work so that all children learn the key knowledge that leaders expect.
- Some pupils miss too much school for no good reason. This limits their learning. Leaders should continue to work with families and professional organisations to improve pupils' attendance.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	143489
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10241477
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Louise Eagle
Headteacher	Adele Lupton
Website	www.alexinfants.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of The New Guild MAT.
- The school provides before-school childcare at a breakfast club on the school site.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, history and music. In these subjects, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects in less detail to check how they were organised and taught.

- Inspectors looked at published performance data about the school and a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the curriculum, training, governance and school improvement planning. They also checked the school's website.
- The inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders, governors, trustees and parents about safeguarding arrangements and safety routines. The lead inspector examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records.
- The inspectors talked informally with pupils, parents and staff to gather general information about school life. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff and parents' views. An inspector spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and visited the breakfast club.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class, at lunchtime, on the playground and at other times during the day.
- During the inspection, inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, school staff, pupils, governors, trustees and the chief executive officer of The New Guild MAT.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Ray

Ofsted Inspector

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