

Sporting Stars Academy

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

Inspection date

7 February 2023

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii)

- At the time of the last inspection, in June 2022, inspectors found that the school's curriculum was not ambitious enough. Leaders had not given enough thought to the content of the curriculum. There was little coherence or sequence to the knowledge and skills pupils were expected to learn. Teachers' expectations were not well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders had not given enough thought to how they prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have made many positive changes to improve the curriculum since the previous inspection. A new curriculum policy has been put in place which sets out what pupils will learn and how the curriculum will be taught. Pupils can study a range of GCSE and BTEC qualifications. There are different curriculum pathways for pupils depending on what point of the year they join the school. Leaders have ensured that there are appropriate long- and medium-term plans in place for each subject as well as more detailed schemes of work.
- Leaders have put in place an appropriate strategy to help support pupils with their reading. This includes one-to-one support with phonics as well as ensuring that pupils read aloud in class. Teachers are also supporting pupils with their wider vocabulary development.
- Leaders ensure that pupils with education health care (EHC) plans are well supported. EHC plans are shared with staff so that they understand how best to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the classroom.
- The school's new curriculum plans are helping to prepare pupils for their next steps in education or employment and for life in modern Britain.
- These standards are now met.

Paragraphs 2(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(i), 2A(1), 2A(1)(b)

- At the last inspection, inspectors found that leaders had failed to plan sufficient opportunities for pupils' personal development. The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum and its relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum did not cover all of the content set out in the statutory guidance.
- Leaders have made improvements as to how PSHE education is taught. This is now timetabled for two 45-minute sessions per week. Leaders have split the PSHE education curriculum into three key areas: health and well-being, relationships, and living in the wider world. There are detailed plans in place for each unit of work, which set out what pupils will learn along with what resources will be used in each lesson. Alongside this, pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 are working towards a BTEC qualification in this area to be accredited for their work.
- Leaders have also introduced 'personal development days' throughout the academic year. These cover a range of PSHE topics, such as 'safer internet day' and LGBTQ+ relationships.
- Leaders have ensured that PSHE education curriculum plans cover all RSE statutory guidance. This is supplemented by visiting speakers, such as from the NHS, who are invited into school to talk to pupils about sexual health and appropriate relationships.
- These standards are now met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g)

- At the time of the last inspection, the implementation of the curriculum was not good enough. Pupils were not supported sufficiently well in order to gain a deep understanding of the content they were taught. In addition, neither leaders nor teachers made effective use of assessment.
- Leaders have made significant improvements as to how the curriculum is taught. There are consistent routines in lessons that help pupils to recall prior learning and make connections in what they are studying. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to implement the curriculum. Staff effectively use resources to help support the learning in the classroom. Teachers use questioning well to check what pupils know and where they require further support.
- Leaders have introduced a new framework to help assess pupils' progress. The school's assessment tracker logs how pupils perform in end of unit examinations. Teachers effectively use this information to help plan the curriculum moving forward and to address pupils' gaps in knowledge.
- These standards are now met.

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

Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii)

- At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors found that the proprietor failed to actively promote fundamental British values. The curriculum did not encourage or promote pupils to be tolerant of others and did not support pupils to gain an appropriate understanding of the protected characteristics.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers have carefully considered how pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the subjects they are studying.

This provides opportunities for pupils to discuss and debate issues as part of their learning.

- The school's new PSHE education curriculum ensures that pupils are able to develop a secure understanding of British values. These are actively promoted through religious education days, for example where pupils learn about different world religions. Leaders plan to launch imminently the 'Sporting Stars Parliament' to help pupils develop an understanding of democracy.
- Leaders have planned a range of trips and visits for pupils to help support their wider development. This has included a trip to local town memorials to lay wreaths as part of Remembrance Day. In addition to this, pupils have also been to art galleries and the local library.
- Pupils are actively taught about the protected characteristics as part of the PSHE education curriculum.
- These standards are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, arrangements to safeguard pupils were not effective. Staff did not have the required knowledge to adequately identify risks quickly in order to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding records were not up to date and procedures to report concerns were weak.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have significantly strengthened safeguarding systems and processes. Leaders have a strong understanding of local safeguarding risks and work closely with Stoke and Staffordshire local authorities. Staff receive regular ongoing safeguarding training throughout the academic year so that they can spot pupils who are potentially at risk of harm.
- The school's new online safeguarding reporting system is well managed. Staff are clear who to speak to and what needs to be recorded when they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders keep accurate and up-to-date records of concerns. They act quickly when pupils need help and support.
- The school's safeguarding policy is compliant with the latest government guidance and is available on the school's website.
- These standards are now met.

Paragraphs 9, 9(b), 9(c)

- At the time of the last inspection, arrangements to promote the welfare of pupils were not sufficiently well established. Leaders did not keep a record of the sanctions imposed on pupils for serious misbehaviour. The school did not have a physical restraint policy.
- Leaders have recently revised their behaviour policy. They carefully track and monitor pupils' behaviour in order to identify any emerging patterns or concerns. Staff speak regularly with parents and carers to keep them informed of their child's behaviour.
- Leaders have ensured that an appropriate 'safer handling' policy has been put in place. Staff received training on physical intervention in July 2022.

- All serious misbehaviour incidents are recorded on the school's central system. Leaders review this regularly to discuss appropriate sanctions and next steps.
- These standards are now met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(3), 32(3)(a)

- At the time of the last inspection, leaders had not ensured that they were compliant with the independent school standards relating to policies on admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's new behaviour and 'safer handling' policy are up to date and on the school's website. These set out the expectations for staff when managing pupils' behaviour and potential sanctions that will be applied for serious misbehaviour.
- Leaders have also ensured that an appropriate admissions policy is on the school website. This sets out a three-stage process by which leaders will decide as to whether the school can meet a pupil's needs.
- These standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the time of the last inspection, leaders were not carrying out their roles effectively. The proprietor had not ensured that the independent school standards were met consistently and securely. Leaders were not actively promoting the well-being of pupils. The action plan submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in November 2022 was judged to be unsatisfactory.
- The proprietor has taken swift and decisive action since the previous inspection to help the school improve. A school improvement adviser has been working with the school since August 2022 to help move the school forward. A new headteacher was appointed in October 2022 who has strengthened the leadership of the school. Together with the executive headteacher, they have worked quickly to make improvements to many key areas. They recognise that some of these initiatives are at an early stage and will need further time to fully embed.
- The proprietor has regular meetings with leaders at the school to check on their progress against the independent school standards and the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- Leaders are tackling the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection at the right time and in the right order. Their timescales for actions are realistic and they have made good progress against many areas already.
- These standards are now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - (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
 - (b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - (b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - (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–
 - (d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - (d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - (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–
 - (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–
 - (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;
 - (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;
 - (c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;

- (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;
- (e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
- (f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range; and
- (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–
 - (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;
 - (b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - (iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - (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;
 - (vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - (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–
 - (a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - (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–
 - (b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - (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–
 - (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–
 - (1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - (1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - (1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	141128
DfE registration number	861/6012
Inspection number	10267048

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

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	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	61
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	23
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sporting Stars Community Interest Company
Chair	Shane Anthony Tudor
Headteacher	Nicky Crookshank
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,055 to £51,780
Telephone number	01782 248248
Website	https://sportingstarsacademy.com/
Email address	admin@sportingstarsacademy.com
Dates of previous standard inspection	7 to 9 June 2022

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 SEND. The primary need for most pupils is social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The previous headteacher of the school is now executive headteacher. A new headteacher was appointed in October 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This progress monitoring inspection was carried out without notice and lasted one day.
- This was the school's first monitoring inspection since its last standard inspection in June 2022, at which it was judged inadequate.
- The school was required to prepare an action plan as a result of non-compliance with the independent school standards following the June 2022 standard inspection. The proposed action plan was judged to be unsatisfactory in November 2022 and was rejected by the Department for Education.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, executive headteacher and headteacher. He also spoke with some staff and pupils.
- The inspector checked the school's curriculum policy and subject plans. He visited lessons and spoke with pupils. He examined the school's PSHE education curriculum and other documentation relating to pupils' wider development.
- The inspector held a meeting about the school's safeguarding procedures. He checked the school's single central record, looked at staff personnel files and examined how safeguarding concerns were recorded and followed up. The safeguarding policy on the school's website was also checked.
- The inspector examined the school's behaviour policy and how incidents of serious misbehaviour were recorded.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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