

# Inspection of a good school: Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent

Westport Road, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 4LD

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

## Outcome

Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where staff work hard to help pupils become well-rounded young adults. Leaders set high expectations for what they want pupils to achieve and how they can broaden their horizons beyond the local area. Many pupils appreciate these opportunities and wear their school uniform with pride.

Pupils generally behave well. In lessons, pupils are usually attentive and show a positive attitude to their learning. However, incidents of misbehaviour are not always handled consistently well by staff. At social times, pupils enjoy playing games outside or sitting talking with friends. Bullying can sometimes happen, but leaders deal with this quickly and decisively when it does occur.

Pupils study a suitably broad and balanced range of subjects as part of the curriculum. Leaders have particularly focused their efforts since the COVID-19 pandemic on helping pupils to catch up with their reading. This is proving successful and is helping pupils to achieve well.

Pupils benefit from many different wider opportunities. Several pupils take part in the Co-op young leaders programme and get involved with community activities, including supporting primary school pupils and local charity groups.

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

Leaders have ensured that pupils study an ambitious curriculum. Subject leaders have carefully thought about the sequence of topics and how knowledge develops over time. They routinely discuss in subject teams how the curriculum could be further improved. This is particularly effective in English. Teachers build on what pupils know from primary school and make connections in and between the topics that are studied. In this way, pupils are confident in what they know and make good progress in their learning.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use a range of strategies to check what pupils have learned and identify where gaps in knowledge might exist. The school's 'learning cycles' are used effectively, to check that pupils are secure in the smaller blocks of learning that are needed before moving on to more complex ideas. While most pupils can recall aspects of their previous learning, this is sometimes not as secure as it needs to be to help them connect ideas together.

The number of pupils opting to study a modern foreign language (MFL) at key stage 4 is low. Leaders have recently recruited new teachers to this subject, which is providing greater stability in this area. Leaders recognise that the number of pupils who opt to study MFL at GCSE level needs to rise and have plans in place to address this.

Leaders have made reading a top priority for the school. All pupils are tested at the start of the academic year to help identify those who have specific gaps in their reading knowledge. Leaders have put in place a systematic intervention programme, including for those pupils who need support with their phonics. This support is proving highly effective in helping pupils to catch up.

Leaders have clear processes in place to help identify those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders carefully track and monitor the progress of pupils with SEND and put in place appropriate interventions. Leaders ensure that learning plans are reviewed regularly so that they accurately match pupils' needs.

Many pupils behave well and show a keen desire to do well. Positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. However, not all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. In addition to this, too many pupils are removed from lessons or spend time in the school's isolation room. This can sometimes interrupt their learning.

Leaders have put in place a well-structured personal, social and health education curriculum. Teachers revisit topics each year to deepen pupils' knowledge of themes and issues, such as health relationships, personal safety, and fundamental British values. Leaders ensure that pupils are provided with appropriate guidance and support for their next steps in education and/or employment. Pupils learn about the different academic and vocational routes available to them after Year 11. The majority of pupils go on to secure a positive destination when they leave school.

The Academy Governing Council are knowledgeable and carry out their delegated duties from the trust well. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders to help the school move forward. Many staff are appreciative of the support they receive from leaders around their workload and well-being. They enjoy working here and are proud to be part of the academy.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All appropriate checks are carried out on staff before they begin working at the school.

Leaders have a strong understanding of the community they serve and are highly knowledgeable about vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders provide regular training to staff so that they are alert to potential signs of harm or abuse. Records of concerns are detailed and show that leaders take timely and appropriate action to ensure that pupils get the help and support they need. Local agencies, such as the police, greatly value the work of leaders in helping to tackle issues within the local community.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not ensured that all staff implement the school's behaviour policy consistently well. Additionally, the number of pupils removed from lessons and who spend time in the school's isolation room remains high. This means that they miss too much of their learning in the classroom. Leaders should review their behaviour policy and ensure it is implemented consistently. They should also look to reduce the number of pupils who spend time out of lessons because of their behaviour.
- The number of pupils who choose to study MFL at key stage 4 is low. This means that the number of pupils completing the suite of subjects which makes up the English Baccalaureate remains below the government's national ambition. Leaders should continue to explore ways to increase the proportion of pupils who opt to study MFL at GCSE level.
- On a few occasions, pupils struggle to recall what they have previously been taught. This means that some pupils cannot connect their learning together or see how smaller parts of knowledge fit into larger ideas. Leaders should continue to help teachers develop strategies in the classroom to help pupils remember more of their learning over time.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2013.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136102
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10278832
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,119
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Russell Gill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shane Richardson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://stokeontrent.coopacademies.co.uk">stokeontrent.coopacademies.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Co-operative Academies Trust.
- The headteacher has been in post since June 2020.
- A small number of pupils in key stage 4, who are part of the school's 'loft' provision, attend various vocational courses off site on a Friday.
- The school uses three registered and four unregistered alternative provisions.

## Information about this inspection

- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, MFL and history. 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 reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about

behaviour, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.

- Inspectors talked to staff and leaders about safeguarding arrangements. They examined how leaders make employment checks on staff and scrutinised further safeguarding records. They also asked how incidents reported by pupils are recorded and analysed.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the trust, members of the Academy Governing Council, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Mark Howes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Hermitt

Ofsted Inspector

Michael Scott

Ofsted Inspector

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