

# Inspection of Staffordshire University Academy

Marston Road, Hednesford, Cannock, Staffordshire WS12 4JH

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Rowena Hillier. This school is part of Staffordshire University Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, James Capper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mary Walker.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this caring school. There is a strong sense of community and togetherness. Pupils bake and sell cakes to raise money for charities, and they take part in the local arts project to commemorate Remembrance Day. There are many extra-curricular activities for pupils to take part in. Breakfast club, basketball, board games and netball are attended particularly well, including by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and pupils live up to these. They are respectful and well mannered. When pupils' behaviour falls short of that which is expected, the school get to the root of the issue. Pupils receive the right help at the right time. Workshops for self-esteem, anger management and managing emotions are provided. Pupils appreciate this support. As a result, pupils behave well.

Pupils are positive about their life at school. They feel happy and safe. They know who to speak to if they require support. The 'pastoral hub' is used to give pupils the help they need if they feel overwhelmed or anxious. It also offers guidance to pupils with mental health issues. This helps pupils to get the right help at the right time. As a result, pupils are becoming increasingly independent.

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

The school has been challenged by recent turbulence, including changes in staffing. This has led to issues including small numbers of pupils wanting to attend the school and high levels of persistent absence. The school has worked relentlessly to address these challenges. Leaders have driven significant improvements, including in the curriculum, behaviour and attendance. Staff report high levels of engagement, and they appreciate their work-life balance. The school engages well with most parents and carers. They are re-evaluating strategies to engage with harder-to-reach parents.

The published outcomes are not a reflection of the good quality of education that pupils are receiving now. The curriculum has undergone significant positive change and careful consideration has been given to what pupils will learn and when. It identifies the key concepts that pupils need to know and ensures that these topics are frequently revisited so pupils can recall their previous learning and make links to new knowledge. As a result, pupils benefit from a well-sequenced curriculum.

The number of pupils studying a language is currently low. There are actions currently in place to address this, which will help the school move towards the ambition for more pupils to achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Pupils' best interests are the driving factor for the school. This means that pupils are now getting a better quality of education.

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, have positive attitudes towards their learning. In lessons they are focused and keen to contribute to class debate and discussions. Teachers routinely check pupils' understanding. When pupils do not understand, most teachers revisit and adapt the ways knowledge is presented until it is securely learned. However, in some lessons, teachers move pupils on to new knowledge without checking that all pupils are ready to do so.

Reading is a priority across the school. Pupils who struggle to read get the help they need. They are becoming more confident and fluent readers. Staff use their training to adapt lessons so that all pupils can access the learning. Sixth-form students support younger pupils effectively. Pupils are given opportunities to work with authors in small groups to write creatively and publish a novel. Many books have been published and are being sold online. Pupils are exposed to a range of texts, from novels to news extracts. All of this encourages pupils to read widely and often in school.

Pupils with SEND study the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Staff know their pupils well. They are well informed about which strategies will help pupils learn. These personalised strategies are used well in lessons and pupils can make links between what they have learned previously and what they are learning now. As a result, pupils with SEND progress well.

The school's 'character curriculum' is well planned and pupils from Year 7 to Year 13 benefit from this weekly. It builds on pupils' knowledge over time and incorporates topics which are relevant to what is in the media and local community now. Pupils have recently been taught about the dangers of sexting and healthy relationships, and the local police have delivered sessions on how to stay safe. Pupils are taught about different cultures and many pupils have travelled to New York and Paris with the school. All of this is helping pupils to be responsible and respectful.

The school provides a comprehensive careers programme from Year 7 to Year 13. Pupils are given opportunities to attend the careers fair, where they meet employers and local colleges. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 participate in work experience to give them an insight into the world of work. This is preparing pupils well for their next steps.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The number of pupils opting to study a language at key stage 4 is low. This means that fewer pupils than the school aims for are studying the full range of EBacc subjects. The school should continue to implement its long-term plans and

raise the profile of languages to improve the proportion of those who complete the EBacc.

- There are inconsistencies in how effectively pupils' understanding is checked before moving on to new learning. This means that, at times, misconceptions and gaps in knowledge persist for too long and pupils are not fully secure in their learning. The school should ensure that assessment is used effectively and appropriately to check that pupils have secured their understanding before moving on to new knowledge.

## 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137164
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268386
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	679
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Mary Walker
<b>Principal</b>	Rowena Hillier
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.suacademy.co.uk">www.suacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 October 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Staffordshire University Academies Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the principal, other leaders, those responsible for governance, trustees and the CEO of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: history, mathematics, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in a range of other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

### **Inspection team**

Sultanat Yunus, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Guy Shears	Ofsted Inspector

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