

Inspection of Newcastle Academy

Gallowstree Lane, The Westlands, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2QS

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of the school is Nicola Bromley-Smith. This school is part of the United Endeavour Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Wendy Whelan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tim Edwards.

What is it like to attend this school?

Newcastle Academy staff and pupils have a very strong sense of community. Pupils understand and demonstrate the school's values of honour, positivity and excellence. Staff have high expectations for all pupils. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. Pupils understand and welcome the positive rewards they receive.

Pupils who spoke to inspectors talked openly about their positive relationships with staff. Pupils know they can report any behaviour issues, which staff deal with rapidly. Bullying is rare. When it occurs, staff take appropriate action to deal with it. Pupils know that inappropriate language is not acceptable and report it swiftly.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study the full curriculum. Leaders have made effective changes to ensure that pupils in Years 7 to 9 access a full range of subjects. This prepares pupils well for further qualifications, including GCSE and vocational subjects.

A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities are available to all pupils including robotics, dance and weight-lifting. Some pupils participate in these activities. Pupils are proud to serve the school and wider community through leadership positions within all year groups.

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

Since the last inspection, the trust has appointed new leaders. Leaders demonstrate high expectations for all pupils. In previous years, some pupils have not always studied the most appropriate courses for their future aspirations. As a result, pupils did not achieve as well as they should. The school has now taken effective action to address this.

All staff receive a clearly planned programme of training to develop their classroom practice. For example, staff challenge pupils to think more independently through a range of different learning activities. The curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Leaders have considered what they want pupils to learn at each stage. In most lessons, teachers deliver the curriculum well and use activities effectively to check whether pupils have remembered previous learning. For example, in science, pupils recalled the names of muscles and tendons before using the words during a practical dissection.

The school identifies effectively pupils who need additional support. 'Personalised plans' are in place to help all pupils with SEND make progress in their learning in line with their peers. Staff know these pupils well and plan lessons to remove any barriers to learning.

Staff review pupils' reading ages on entry to the school to inform the reading curriculum. Pupils' confidence in reading develops with the support of a SEND reading dog. The school has recently introduced a framework to promote a stronger culture of reading. However, the impact of this framework has not yet been fully realised. As a result, not all pupils make rapid progress with their reading.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Lessons begin and end in a calm and orderly manner. Staff take effective action to address poor behaviour. They encourage pupils to reflect on their actions. Leaders understand the importance of attendance. However, the number of pupils absent from school is higher than it should be. Leaders know this and continue to work with families. Attendance remains a key priority for the school and community.

Pupils explore issues around healthy relationships and online safety. They experience a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. The school has designed an effective PSHE programme within a strong culture of safeguarding. This programme prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The school regularly invites guest speakers to give valuable assemblies on topics such as knife crime and consent. The careers education programme is being developed to include a wider work experience offer for all pupils.

Leaders responsible for governance understand their statutory duties, the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders are mindful of staff workload. Almost all staff appreciate leaders' regard for their well-being and enjoy working at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils are absent each day. This means pupils miss too much learning, which limits their progress. The school should further its work with parents and external agencies to secure more regular attendance for all pupils.
- The school has not fully developed effective systems to support all pupils who struggle with reading. Pupils who need support, including those with SEND and who are disadvantaged, are not making sufficient progress with their phonics, grammar and comprehension. The school should further embed the current reading strategy, rapidly, to support effectively all pupils who are not confident readers.

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

Unique reference number	142277
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10268381
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Vicky Recine
Principal	Nicola Bromley-Smith
Website	www.newcastleacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the United Endeavour Trust which contains three schools.
- A new principal was appointed to the school in September 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 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 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.
- Inspectors focused on the following deep dives: English, science, modern foreign languages, computing and art. Inspectors looked at leaders' curriculum planning, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, talked with pupils about their learning and spoke to teachers. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; made referrals to the local authority; 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. Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with the CEO of the trust, trustees, including the chair of the local governing board, senior leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils. Inspectors also talked informally to pupils, staff and parents to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors considered 49 responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Michael Scott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Callaghan-Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector

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