

Inspection of Smallthorne Primary Academy

Chetwynd Street, Smallthorne, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 1PR

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

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

The principal of this school is Tina Steele. This school is part of The City Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Carl Ward, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Melanie Sproston.

What is it like to attend this school?

Smallthorne Primary Academy is a very happy place to be. Pupils are articulate, courteous and curious. They work hard to live out the school's motto of 'strive, smile, shine'. Adults in school have made sure that everyone knows that bullying is not allowed, and pupils are kind to one another. On the rare occasion that bullying does happen, pupils know what to do and adults help to sort things out.

Pupils are great advocates for their school. They love their lessons. Pupils often complete work of a high standard. This is because staff have high expectations of them. In a small number of subjects, the school has not thought in enough detail about what pupils should learn. This means they do not achieve as well in these subjects as in others.

The school provides a wide range of activities beyond classroom learning. For example, pupils enjoy learning musical instruments, playing in bands and going on local visits. Some pupils also benefit from being on the junior leadership team. This teaches them how to be responsible.

Parents have seen many improvements in the school over the past few years. They deeply appreciate the opportunities provided for their children. They recognise the school's caring atmosphere and positive attitude and the approachable nature of staff.

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

Smallthorne Primary Academy is a warm welcoming and vibrant school. The school promotes and builds pupils' confidence effectively over time from the earliest years onwards. All adults work together to make sure that pupils receive a secure education. Parents recognise and are grateful for how the school nurtures their children.

Pupils' social development and behaviour are impressive. As they grow through the school, they become more and more confident and dedicated to their work. Disruption of any kind is rare. Everyone knows the rules. They are applied fairly and consistently. Pupils appreciate this.

The school places a great emphasis on reading. Pupils read regularly. They enjoy listening to stories read by others. Pupils have access to a wide range of interesting books across school. This includes books available in classrooms, corridors and on display. The school trains staff well to teach reading. Pupils who fall a little behind are supported to catch up quickly. The emphasis on reading starts the moment pupils join the school in Nursery or Reception, where they read a wide range of familiar books. This helps them build their confidence and rehearse and embed new vocabulary. This creates a love of reading very early on.

Similarly, pupils achieve well in mathematics. The schools makes sure that most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. They are well supported through carefully adapted lessons, for example, by staff providing extra help and resources such as introducing pupils to new key vocabulary before their lesson. The maths curriculum is taught from the very start. For example, in the nursery, children talked proudly about their success at building chairs for the Three Bears. This helped them to use mathematical language to explain size and position.

In other subjects, too, the school has made sure that it has chosen ambitious content that pushes pupils to do their best and to be ambitious. For example, art lessons have challenging content for pupils at all ages, including those in the early years. Pupils across the school say that they 'love' art. They achieve well and know a lot about it because they study many artists and learn to do art in a step-by-step way. In physical education, pupils learn a wide range of sports and build their skills as individuals, on 'set pieces' and in match play, over time.

The school has effective systems to assess the needs of pupils with SEND. This ensures they are making strong progress. The school listens carefully to pupils' hopes and aspirations. This helps to accurately plan for their education.

The curriculum is not yet as well planned and sequenced in a small number of subjects. Where this is the case, sometimes work is too easy or is repeated. Pupils' work, therefore, is not as good as it could be. This also includes pupils with SEND. They do not make the progress that they could in these subjects because the curriculum is not always adapted to meet their specific needs. The school knows this and already has plans in place to address it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not planned as well as it needs to be. It does not outline what pupils need to know and when. This means that in these subjects, pupils do not develop their knowledge well enough. The school should make sure that it plans the content in these subjects carefully.
- The school does not always adapt the curriculum effectively enough for some pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils with SEND do not consistently make the progress they are capable of. The school should consistently adapt the curriculum to meet needs of all pupils with SEND.

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	142207
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10268385
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Melanie Sproston
Principal	Tina Steele
Website	clt.smallthorne.coop
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the City Learning Trust in 2017, when it converted to become an academy.
- The school has a breakfast club, operating on the school site. This provision is managed by the school.
- There is an after-school club operating on the school site. This provision is inspected separately by Ofsted.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, art, geography and history. 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 discussed the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with leaders, teachers and pupils. They spoke to some parents and pupils and met with those responsible for governance. They also spoke with the chief executive officer and trust leaders and analysed answers to Ofsted's Parent View and staff surveys.
- 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

Dan Owen, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Abigail Rourke

Ofsted Inspector

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