

St Edward's Church of England Academy

Westwood Road, Leek, ST13 8DN

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- By the time they leave, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is increasingly good. In the past eighteen months, there has been rapid improvement in pupils' progress in all three subjects.
- Teaching is good and continues to improve. Teachers have high expectations and use their good subject knowledge to plan work that quickly engages pupils in their learning.
- Teachers' use of assessment to plan teaching is increasingly secure. The school is making good progress in revising its approach to assessment in the light of the recent changes to the national curriculum.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs get good support from well-qualified teaching assistants and, as a result, make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils show high levels of respect to staff and to each other throughout the school.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school, feel safe and well cared for, and are proud of their school.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to stimulate pupils' interest and ensure they are keen to learn. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well supported through well-planned assemblies, lesson activities, educational trips and visits, and many after-school clubs and activities.
- The Principal has high aspirations for the school and provides strong leadership. She has introduced changes which have improved the quality of teaching and raised pupils' achievement. She is well supported by all of the staff, who share her commitment to improve standards.
- Governors know the school well. They work effectively as a team and increasingly hold senior leaders to account for the quality of the school's performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always set work that is at the right level of difficulty, given the sometimes marked differences in pupils' ability in each class. This occasionally restricts the achievement of the least- and most-able pupils.
- Marking is not always thorough or detailed enough to help pupils improve their work and achieve consistently good standards in all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 part lessons, 11 of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They looked at other aspects of the school day, including registration time, two assemblies, pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime, and pupils' arrival and departure from the school.
- Inspectors reviewed the quality of the work in pupils' books to judge the effectiveness of marking, the progress of pupils over time and the accuracy of the school's assessment data.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, senior and subject leaders, and four groups of pupils. A meeting was held with six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 59 parents who responded to Parent View, one letter, a telephone call with a parent, four e-mails and 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documents was reviewed including: the school's own data on pupils' current progress; self-evaluation and development plans; information on the work of staff; training arrangements for teachers and other staff; the results of checks on the quality of teaching; attendance and behaviour records; minutes of governing body meetings; documents relating to pupils' safety; documents relating to the management of teachers' performance; minutes of governing body's meetings.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alan Brewerton	Additional Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Additional Inspector
Kim Bower	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Edward's Church of England Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 January 2013. When its predecessor school, St Edward's CofE (VA) Junior High, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school is a larger than the average-sized middle school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions who speak English as an additional language, or who are at an early stage in learning English, are well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is below average. No students have education, health care plans.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that all pupils consistently make rapid progress and achieve well, by making sure that:
 - all teachers set work that is at the right level of difficulty to support and challenge pupils of all abilities, particularly the more able and those who find learning difficult
 - marking is thorough in every subject and ensures that pupils know what they have done well and what needs to be done to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has high expectations and is dedicated to raising standards. In the 18 months that she has been in post she has brought considerable improvements to the school. She is well supported by the senior leadership team and all the staff. Many of the staff who responded to the staff questionnaire wrote positive comments about the leadership of the school.
- The Principal and senior leadership team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have put in place effective plans for improvement. More rigorous systems have been introduced to monitor teaching and better use is being made of assessment data to track pupils' progress. There is an extensive programme of professional training for staff which has led to considerable improvements in teaching and the achievement of pupils. Systems for managing staff performance are rigorous.
- Subject and team leaders are held to account for the work in their departments. They closely monitor teaching and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility, and quickly challenge any hint of underperformance.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to purchase extra resources, provide additional teaching and one-to-one support, and to enable eligible pupils to take part in school trips and after-school clubs. As a result, the gaps between the attainment and progress of eligible pupils and others in the school narrowed considerably in 2014.
- The curriculum offers a good balance of subjects and provides many interesting and well-planned experiences to ensure pupils are fully engaged in their learning. The school's emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy skills makes sure pupils are ready for the next stage in their education. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school celebrates a wide range of cultures and religions in lessons and assemblies, and promotes British values of tolerance and respect. Numerous after-school clubs and cultural visits and activities provide many opportunities for pupils to widen their experiences.
- The school is making excellent use of the additional primary sports funding to enhance provision and widen opportunities for all pupils. It has purchased new equipment for the sports hall and has forged strong links with other schools, local colleges and local sports clubs, including football, cricket, rugby, hockey, swimming and rowing. A variety of coaches provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in different activities. As a result, the number of pupils taking part in sporting events and after-school clubs has increased dramatically, and teams and individual pupils have successfully taken part in local, county and national competitions in a variety of sports.
- The school makes sure that all pupils have the same opportunities to take part in all aspects of school life. Recently, parents raised concerns that not all pupils had the opportunity to take part in some educational trips because of lack of places and the way the school selected who took part. The Principal and the governors acknowledged their concerns and have revised the way trips are organised to make sure all pupils are able to take part in all activities. There is no evidence of discrimination in the school.
- The school is not part of an academy chain. However, it has established strong partnerships with local first, middle and senior schools, and local colleges through the Leek Federation, and the Leek Education Partnership. These links allow teachers to share ideas and expertise in developing leadership skills of staff and governors, improve teaching and revise the curriculum. These links help pupils understand the options available to them when leaving, and ensure they progress smoothly from their first schools into Year 5 and to their senior schools at the end of Year 8. At present, the schools are working together to develop a common assessment policy to replace national curriculum levels.
- Most of the parents who responded to Parent View are pleased with the care and education provided by the school.

- The school meets all statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. All policies and procedures are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are proud of the school and are committed to providing the best possible education for the pupils who attend. They are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses and visit it regularly to get first-hand information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They take part in learning walks, interview staff and pupils, look at pupils' work and gain parents' views through speaking to them and using questionnaires. They have taken part in extensive training, including on safeguarding and safer recruitment procedures. They are very aware of their role in ensuring the health and safety of pupils in school, including the requirements to promote British values of tolerance and respect.
- Governors have a good understanding of what published data says about the school's performance and receive regular updates on pupils' progress from the presentations from the Principal and other senior staff. They know how the pupil premium and sports funding are being spent and the difference they are making.
- Governors oversee the systems for managing staff performance well. They set exacting targets for the Principal and senior staff, and make sure that salary increases are linked to staff meeting targets.
- Governors monitor finances closely to ensure that the school gets best value when purchasing goods and services.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere which is built on a foundation of warm and caring relationships. Pupils are proud of their school and are polite and respectful to one another and to adults.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They are prompt to lessons, settle quickly, and take a pride in their work. These positive attitudes contribute greatly to their good progress.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and that staff care for them and support them well. They value the information that they receive during registration periods, assemblies and through the well-planned programme of personal social and health education. They spoke knowledgeably about the dangers of the internet and social media, and were clear about how to stay safe and adopt healthy life-styles.
- Pupils are aware of the different kinds of bullying, such as racial, homophobic and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying seldom happens, and on the rare occasions that it does staff deal with it promptly and effectively.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to help the smooth running of the school. They explained to inspectors about the 'buddy system', where older pupils look after younger pupils, about the contribution they can make helping in the library, and how they help to keep the school tidy at lunchtime. They were particularly proud of the way they can influence decisions about the school through the school council.
- Attendance is above the national average. The school has good systems of support for pupils and their families so that the number of persistent absentees has reduced and is below average.
- The school has introduced a new behaviour policy which was developed in partnership with pupils. School tracking shows that the incidents of in-school referrals for unacceptable behaviour have reduced, as has the number of fixed-term exclusions. There are good support systems to help the few pupils who have been excluded successfully reintegrate back into school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is improving rapidly under the direction of the Principal and the senior team. Most teaching is now good and some is outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations and use their good subject knowledge to plan work that captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers give clear explanations and use questioning well to reinforce pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. They build on the often excellent relationships that are commonplace across the school and use praise well to raise pupils' confidence and esteem so that most make at least good progress.
- Teaching assistants are very effectively deployed. They work alongside teachers, checking pupils' learning and progress, and are quick to adapt their responses to changing needs. As a result, those pupils who they support, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and those eligible for support through the pupil premium, are fully involved in lessons and make at least good progress.
- There is a clear school focus on developing pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills across all subjects, which is contributing greatly to pupils' good overall progress and success in literacy. Examples of good contributions to the development of pupils' literacy skills were seen in history, religious education, art and physical education.
- Most teachers mark books regularly and give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. Exemplary marking was seen in English, history and art. However, good marking is not consistently evident across all subjects. Not all teachers give pupils enough detail in their marking to help them understand how they can improve.
- The planning of lessons is generally good and most teachers take account of the range of abilities in the class to set work that stretches all pupils and builds on earlier learning. However, at times, pupils of different abilities are given the same or very similar tasks, which are sometimes too difficult for the less-able pupils or not challenging enough to extend the learning of the most-able.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of pupils has improved considerably over the 18 months since the school became an academy. From their individual starting points when pupils enter in Year 5, to the time they leave at the end of Year 8, pupils make good progress.
- In 2013 in the Key Stage 2 tests, the attainment of pupils in reading and writing was in line with national averages. In 2014, attainment improved in both subjects, particularly at the higher levels to be above national averages. In mathematics in 2013 attainment was broadly in line with the national average. However, in 2014 attainment improved considerably to be above the national average, and was similar to the standards seen in reading and writing.
- In 2013, standards of attainment at the end of Year 8 were above expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments show that standards improved further in 2014, which given pupils' starting points, indicates at least good progress in all three subjects.
- Generally, the achievement of the most-able pupils is good. On occasions, however, they are not stretched sufficiently by the work they are set and could achieve even more than they already do. Results in Key Stage 2 tests in 2014 show that increasing numbers of pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics, and current assessments show that the attainment of the most-able pupils continues to improve.
- 2014 Key Stage 2 results show a considerable improvement on those of 2013, with pupils making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments for current Year 5 and Year 6 pupils show even more improvement in pupils' progress, with most pupils now reaching standards that are above expectations in all three subjects.

- The progress of pupils in Years 7 and 8 is also improving. Year 8 pupils who left in 2014 made better than expected progress in reading, writing, and mathematics. Assessments for current Year 7 and Year 8 pupils show that improvements in progress are continuing. By the time pupils move to the senior school the great majority are making better than expected progress and are well prepared for the transition to GCSE courses. The accuracy of the school's assessment of pupils' current attainment and progress was confirmed by inspectors' examination of the standard of pupils' work in class.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. This is because of the well-targeted, tailored help that they receive.
- The gap between the attainment of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium and other pupils has narrowed over the past 18 months. Key Stage 2 tests results in 2013 showed pupils eligible for the pupil premium were approximately 14 months behind pupils nationally, and 10 months behind others in school, in mathematics. In reading they were nine months behind pupils nationally, and eight months behind others in the school. In writing they were 10 months behind pupils nationally, and eight months behind their classmates. Unverified results for 2014 show that the gaps in writing and reading have closed almost completely and the gaps in mathematics have narrowed considerably. Older pupils in receipt of this support have similarly closed the gap between themselves and other pupils, and now also achieve comparable standards to those of their peers in school in English and mathematics.
- Pupils who are eligible for additional help through Year 7 catch-up funding make better progress than their classmates in improving their literacy skills because of additional one-to-one and extra in-class support. The progress of these pupils in numeracy has improved but it has not been as rapid as it is in English. Additional support has been put in place this academic year, similar to that in literacy, and this is helping to narrow the gap in attainment between these pupils and their classmates.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139171
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	448883

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	746
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Morton
Principal	Liz Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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