

School report

St Peter's CofE Academy

Fenton Manor, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 2RR

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal and senior staff, who want the best from all pupils, lead this school with passion, determination and energy. As a result of this collective drive, school leaders have worked hard to bring about much needed improvements at the school. Many aspects of the school's work are now improving. Pupils' personal development and attitudes have developed to a high level. The quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour is now good. However, this improvement has yet to take full effect on pupils' outcomes in Years 10 and 11, where there has been a legacy of underachievement from previous years.
- School leaders have increased the opportunities for pupils to learn about fundamental British values. Pupils reflect deeply about social issues, because they are taught the skills to discuss and debate current topics with a high level of maturity.
- School leaders have successfully improved pupils' overall attendance to levels that are above the national average. Rates of overall persistent absence are now lower than the national average.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is a growing strength of the school, and has improved since the last inspection. The school offers a bespoke professional development programme for staff. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and know how to teach their subject. Learning activities are well structured, and more pupils are making better progress than previously.
- Senior leaders continue to invest in the work of middle leaders. Subject leaders welcome the recent increased levels of accountability arising from a new four-week cycle of accountability and professional development meetings. Their day-to-day work is now systematically reviewed. Middle leaders are resolute in their commitment to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress.
- School staff are unequivocally positive about the work of senior leaders. Staff are proud to work at the school. They believe senior leaders support them well and that all colleagues are treated fairly. Staff enjoy working at the school, and senior leaders are considerate of their well-being. Staff morale is high.
- The school's curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and interests across a wide range of subjects. Senior leaders encourage pupils to study for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), because it offers breadth and challenge for pupils. The proportion of pupils entered for the EBacc exceeds the national average, because an increasing number of

pupils study a modern foreign language at key stage 4.

- The additional resources that are now being deployed effectively to support disadvantaged pupils are beginning to have a positive impact on their progress. For example, levels of absence have reduced and fewer disadvantaged pupils are persistent absentees, although these improvements have been slower than for other groups of pupils at the school.
- Pupils who need to catch up in Year 7 receive effective support, which is increasing the progress they make. Additional staffing is used well to support these pupils. For example, during a morning tutorial period pupils received targeted literacy support to help them complete tasks linked to fundamental British values.
- Senior leaders provide pupils with high-quality careers information, advice and guidance. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to meet with employers and higher education providers. The school is determined that pupils will have an education, employment or training destination at the age of 16. Pupils at risk of leaving school with no destination receive individual support from a careers adviser. Therefore, it is rare for any pupil to have no confirmed destination when they leave school.
- Senior leaders' self-evaluation is accurate. They are rigorous in checking whether actions have been successful. Leaders are confident that the school's priorities are those that will secure further improvement. Strategies to improve pupil progress have had more limited impact than other actions.

Governance of the school

- Highly committed academy councillors know the school well and have a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. They bring a wealth of experience and skills to their roles. They are also passionate ambassadors of the school.
- Academy councillors visit the school regularly. They attend various events throughout the year, for example the awards evenings for pupils in each year.
- Academy councillors hold senior leaders to account effectively. They use observations and conversations with staff, drawn from their visits to school. Academy councillors ask pertinent questions in their meetings with senior leaders and scrutinise senior leaders' reports. Academy councillors have an accurate understanding of what else the school needs to do to improve further. For example, they are aware that pupils' outcomes need to improve.
- Academy councillors support the high expectations that senior leaders have of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The academy councillors understand how the school's core values have contributed to helping pupils become articulate and reflective listeners, and talk with pride about what pupils are capable of.
- The academy council meets its statutory responsibilities. Academy councillors are up to date with their training, especially in safeguarding, safer recruitment and the 'Prevent'

duty. They have the knowledge and skills to carry out their work effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff receive regular training and advice about the best way to help keep pupils safe. In addition, the principal and senior staff know their pupils well. As a result, no staff member is hesitant about referring any concern.
- Senior leaders model the best practice in safeguarding. The principal chairs a local board understanding of safeguarding issues linked to local priorities and how these can be best responded to.
- Pupils are unequivocal in their support of the school's efforts to keep them safe and have a secure understanding of how to keep safe. In discussions with inspectors, pupils showed a mature and considered understanding of how to keep safe online. They recognise the potential dangers posed by unfamiliar situations. Pupils know where to go if they need help and advice, especially when the school day has finished.
- Leaders carry out appropriate checks on staff during the recruitment process and keep accurate records.

- Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good. Teaching is supporting pupils to close the gaps in their knowledge and understanding. As a result, an increasing number of pupils are making the progress they are capable of.
- The majority of teachers have high expectations of pupils and are ambitious for their pupils to succeed. Typically, teachers' explanations are clear and concise, helping pupils to further their knowledge and understanding. Most lessons are well planned to match pupils' abilities and their prior learning. For example, in a lesson about calculating percentage increases, the teacher insisted pupils knew and understood the method required to perform the calculation. Pupils confidently shared their answers with their peers.
- Teachers capture and direct pupils' interest in subjects very well, and use a wide range of resources to good effect. For example, in an English lesson pupils annotated a visual resource which depicted themes relevant to the extract. This helped pupils to complete an extended piece of descriptive writing, which challenged them to use a variety of adjectives and technical terms.
- The improvements in teaching have occurred since the last inspection, in large part because of the school's commitment to providing comprehensive professional development for all staff. For example, senior staff have provided sessions on how to develop extended writing skills for pupils.
- Teachers generally insist on accuracy in pupils' responses. For example, in a modern foreign language lesson which was moving at pace the teacher challenged pupils' choice of verb tense. Many pupils self-corrected their mistakes instantly. On several occasions, pupils supported their peers by quietly prompting them with the correct use of the verb. However, teachers' identification and correction of pupils' mistakes and misconceptions are inconsistent.
- Occasionally, teachers plan work which is not suitably stretching or challenging for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND or for pupils with high prior attainment who need to be supported and encouraged to think deeply. In such instances, pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.

Personal development and welfare

Outstanding

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils place a high value on learning. Throughout the inspection, pupils demonstrated excellent attitudes to learning, showing respect for others' ideas and viewpoints. Moreover, pupils are proud of their litter-free school site and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils show a high level of respect to one another and to adults.
- Pupils are highly reflective and reasoned in their conversations with adults. For example, senior pupils during lunchtime sustained a lengthy conversation with inspectors about knife crime. Their range of vocabulary was sophisticated. One group of pupils told inspectors why 'knife crime was unacceptable in a civilised society'.
- Pupils explained to inspectors that their characters are developed around the school's values. Most pupils drew on the school's values by name when discussing social and community issues. Key stage 3 pupils provided reasoned and reflective responses. They told inspectors that their confidence had grown since arriving at the school. Pupils specifically cited that strong relationships with their teachers mattered. When asked what single item a pupil would take from school if stranded on a desert island, each pupil immediately named an adult from school. This is because each adult selected possessed a specific skill which would help the pupil survive.
- Pupils value their membership of this school. They are proud of its inclusive ethos and appreciate the diverse nature of the community. Pupils told inspectors that racism and bullying are rare. Pupils get on well together, respect one another and value their learning and social time together.
- Pupils appreciate the high-quality careers education, information, advice and guidance provided by the school and the careers adviser. Pupils told inspectors they could make informed choices about their next steps.

Behaviour

Good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. Most pupils go out of their way to help other pupils at social times and in lessons with their learning. As a result, learning time in lessons is maximised. Lesson changeover happens quickly, and pupils arrive promptly at lessons. Pupils told inspectors this is because they want to be in the classroom.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Their attendance is monitored well by the school's attendance officers, who telephone each morning to verify attendance. These pupils also receive an afternoon visit from an attendance officer. They make good progress from their starting points and receive good care.
- The school uses exclusion as a last resort. Fixed-term exclusions increased marginally during this year, because senior staff have raised expectations further, based on the school's core values. However, the overall rate of exclusions remains low. Inspectors observed many examples of strong improvements in pupils' behaviour.
- Overall attendance has improved, and is now better than the national average. However, attendance has improved more slowly for disadvantaged pupils. Levels of persistent absence have reduced and are now well below the national average. Staff are highly vigilant and follow up on all absences immediately.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For the past three years, the progress of Year 11 pupils has been below the national average. In 2018, Year 11 pupils' attainment was below average, including that of disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and pupils with higher levels of prior attainment.
- The progress of current pupils is not yet consistently strong. Pupils currently in Year 11 are making better progress than in previous years. However, these pupils' progress is not sufficiently strong when compared to other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- An increasing number of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are making stronger progress.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils remains below average, except for pupils in key stage 3. Younger pupils are benefiting from effective use of additional funding. Their progress is improving, because their barriers to learning are understood and acted on by school leaders.
- Historically, the progress of pupils with SEND has not been strong. Inspectors found that recent improvements in provision for these pupils have resulted in more of them making better progress.
- In 2018, almost all pupils who left the school went on to education, employment and training. This is because of the high quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance offered to all pupils and the close tracking by the careers adviser of those pupils in danger of becoming not in education, employment or training.

Information about this school

- St Peter's Academy is co-sponsored by Woodard Academy Trust (WAT) and Lichfield Diocese Board of Education. The governing body of the school is known as 'the academy council', and members of 'the academy council' are referred to as 'academy councillors'.
- This is an average-size secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average.
- Just over half the pupils are White British and just under a quarter are of Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is above average.
- There are seven students who attend six alternative provisions. These are Want to Achieve, The Bridge Project, Merit, Reach, Stoke on Trent College and Peak.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character took place in October 2014.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, the school's policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and records relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons and parts of lessons across a wide range of subjects and key stages. Some lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in assembly, between lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors evaluated work in pupils' books and folders in lessons across a range of year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with the WAT chief executive, governors, senior and middle leaders and teachers.
- The views of parents were considered through 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered 72 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Pupils met with inspectors in two separate focus groups. Inspectors had informal discussions with pupils and considered 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

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