

Inspection of St Edward's Church of England Academy

Westwood Road, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 8DN

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Katie Smith. This school is a standalone academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Katie Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Cynthia Simmonds.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at school, and they enjoy their lessons. They feel safe. The school takes the approach 'it could happen here'. Pupils say there is always someone to talk to. They behave consistently well and have very positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils live up to the school's statement to 'live and breathe our core values'. These include respect, hope, courage and friendship. This is based on the '10/10 vision' of St John's Gospel, having 'life in all its fullness'.

The school has high expectations for all pupils to succeed. This is achieved for most pupils, including those who find learning difficult and need extra help. Parents and carers are positive about the way the school meets their children's specific needs.

Pupils respect those with different backgrounds and beliefs to their own. The school provides pupils with excellent opportunities to learn more about their local community, as well as places which may be different to where they live. For example, they have had trips to Cornwall, Manchester and Normandy in France. There is a very extensive range of clubs and wider activities for pupils. These include drama and mythology. Pupils look forward to dressing up to celebrate the upcoming European day of languages.

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

The school has made rapid improvements under new senior leadership. It has put in place an ambitious curriculum, designed to be well sequenced. As a result, pupils can build their knowledge based on their previous learning. The mathematics schemes of work are sequenced around key concepts and science around 'big ideas'. Leaders promote high-level thinking well across subjects.

All pupils have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects regularly. In most cases, wherever possible, from Year 5 upwards they are taught by specialists. In subjects such as design and technology, they have specialist facilities.

Teachers expose pupils to reading challenging texts, for example by Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare. This is leading to a greater proportion of them achieving a higher standard. Adults support those who find reading hard to catch up well, gaining the knowledge and skills they need to be confident readers.

In subjects such as history and French, arrangements to check how well pupils are doing are in place. This allows teachers to identify and address gaps and misconceptions. For example, in science, teachers check pupils know how to draw a circuit.

The school makes sure that adaptations are made for the increasing numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), for example through breaking up sentences into smaller chunks in French. This enables them to access their learning and achieve well. Leaders and staff know their pupils' individual needs very well.

The school's tenacious approach has led to improved attendance. There is more to do to reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils do not do as well in

standards and progress in national tests compared to their peers, and the gap is slow to close. New leadership has ensured this group is a key priority for the school moving forward. Some pupils take less care in the presentation of their written work. The extent to which this is addressed by teachers sometimes varies.

Pupils show exceptional levels of character. They take full advantage of the opportunity to take part in a very wide range of activities beyond lessons. The school offers a range of over 50 clubs. Take-up, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, is strong. At lunchtimes and after school, there is always a club to go to, whether it is art therapy, languages, nature sense, sport, history, cooking, board games or rehearsing for the school production 'High School Musical'.

Trustees know the school very well. Since the last inspection, they have acted more strategically. They are fully aware of what the school does well and where their key priorities are. The school engages well with challenge through external partners.

Staff well-being is at the forefront of senior leaders' minds, managing workload alongside increased expectations. The staff survey was overwhelmingly positive about the way this has been considered. In their survey, a large majority of parents said they would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Standards, progress and levels of attendance are not as high for disadvantaged pupils as they are for other pupils. As a result, those who have fallen behind are not as well prepared for the next phase in their education. Leaders should ensure that the priorities they have set lead to rapid and sustained improvement for disadvantaged pupils in standards, progress and attendance.
- Not all pupils take sufficient care in how their written work is presented. This may lead to some not doing as well in their answers to assessments as they could. The school should ensure that high expectations for presentation are consistent across school.

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	139171
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322847
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	696
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Cynthia Simmonds
CEO of the trust	Katie Smith
Principal	Katie Smith
Website	www.stedwards.academy
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The principal and two vice-principals were appointed after the last graded inspection in 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian ethos. It is part of the Diocese of Lichfield. The last section 48 inspection at the school was in June 2022. The next scheduled inspection is due in 2029.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, the vice-principals, other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, including a group of girls.
- The lead inspector met with members of the board of trustees, including the chair.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone to a representative from the diocese and two external school improvement partners.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. They also considered additional feedback from parents. Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils. Inspectors considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, design and technology, French, history and science. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading in English lessons.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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

Mark Sims, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Scott	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Callaghan-Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Eve Morris	His Majesty's Inspector

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