

Saint Nathaniel's Academy

Westport Road, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 4JG

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, governors and trustees are very ambitious for the school. They are committed to improving the life chances of all pupils.
- The principal provides strong leadership. Together with his leadership team, he has brought about considerable improvements in teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour.
- Both the local governing body and St Bart's multi-academy trust provide school leaders with highly effective support and challenge to drive improvement.
- Outcomes are improving and pupils in all year groups are now making good progress, especially in writing and mathematics. Actions taken to improve reading mean that more pupils are now reaching the expected standard for their age.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils show that they are rapidly catching up with others, although there is still some underperformance.
- Safeguarding is effective, staff are vigilant in maintaining pupils' safety and welfare. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Parents are very positive about the school and say how much it has improved in every aspect since joining the multi-academy trust. The vast majority would recommend it to others.
- Leaders have created a culture in which both staff and pupils can achieve their best and there is a constant focus on improving outcomes for all pupils.
- Almost all teaching staff have joined the school in the last three years. As a result of high-quality training, high expectations and effective performance management, teaching, learning and assessment are good across the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is of a consistently high standard and pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They are proud of their achievements and their school.
- In a minority of lessons, some activities are not matched carefully enough to the needs of specific pupils.
- Children in the early years develop an enjoyment of learning in a safe, stimulating and well organised environment. They are eager to join in and make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and pupils are able to thrive.
- Despite leaders' efforts to improve attendance, the number of pupils who are absent or arrive late for school remains too high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders to further strengthen outcomes for all groups of pupils, by ensuring that:
 - teaching is always well matched to the specific needs of pupils
 - pupils make as much progress in reading as they do in writing and mathematics.

Improve attendance to the national average and reduce lateness by ensuring that good attendance remains a priority and that approaches used to promote good attendance, and to improve punctuality, are understood and followed by parents.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders, governors and trustees are very ambitious for the school and are committed to improving the life chances of all pupils. As a result of their relentless drive and determination, academic outcomes have markedly improved and the school has been transformed into a vibrant, happy place where pupils are able to grow into confident, articulate and tolerant individuals. Pupils are given every opportunity to achieve their potential.
- The school is a member of the St Bart's multi-academy trust. The work of the trust, along with Britannia Teaching School Alliance, has been highly effective in helping to secure improvements in all aspects of the school.
- Almost all leaders and teaching staff have joined the school in the last three years. During this time, the principal and senior leaders have introduced entirely new systems and processes to all areas of school life and its provision and as a result the school is a calm, safe environment where pupils are making good progress.
- The principal and senior leaders set high expectations for all staff and identify specific priorities for improvement. These are addressed through an extensive development programme to improve the performance of individuals or groups of staff. Staff speak positively about the effectiveness of the training opportunities provided and their positive impact on improving their teaching skills. As one member of staff said, 'Training is seen as improving a skill as opposed to plugging a deficiency.'
- School leaders and the multi-academy trust look for talent among the staff and then actively develop this potential. As a result, a number of staff have achieved additional qualifications and several have been promoted either within school or within the multi-academy trust. Seven staff have been identified as specialist leaders in education and share their expertise within and across schools.
- Senior leaders have rightly prioritised improving standards in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils are making good progress in these subjects. The English and mathematics subject leaders have clear plans identifying the actions needed to bring about further improvements. Other subject leaders have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing in their subject although there is less consistency in how outcomes are recorded. All subject leaders are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and conscientious about improving outcomes for all pupils.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is effective. Pupils' experiences are brought to life through a range of trips and visitors to school. For example, pupils' understanding of their local area has been developed through a history project about The Potteries. This draws upon knowledge and experience within pupils' own families, valuing their input, and includes working with a local artist as well as visits out of school.
- Pupils can attend an extensive range of extra-curricular activities such as football, board games, arts and crafts, trampolining, film, drama, science and homework clubs. Such activities enrich learning and increase pupils' enjoyment and motivation to learn.

School leaders monitor attendance closely and actively encourage disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils to take part in the additional activities provided.

- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and all elements are threaded across the curriculum. Pupils are clear that everyone is 'unique and special'. British and Christian values are at the heart of the school's work. For example, every class in key stage 2 has a book where children record their own thoughts and examples when they see these values being demonstrated. Every classroom has a prayer wall and reflective space where pupils can reflect quietly or write their own prayers. Pupils also learn about other religions and are confident enough to compare their own religions and traditions with those of others. Pupils feel valued and this positive culture supports their learning very well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points. Their specific needs are addressed in a variety of ways, including extra support in class, specialist interventions and access to support for their emotional needs, for example through forest school provision. Training for teachers and teaching assistants has positively impacted on the development of pupils' speech and language. However, some interventions are not monitored regularly enough and this means that pupils may not make as much progress as they could.
- School leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils during whole-class teaching, small-group work and through one-to-one support. Disadvantaged pupils who need additional support attend forest school and are supported by a learning mentor who ensures that their academic and personal skills are developed effectively. As a result, they are now making at least as good progress as other pupils in school and are catching up with others nationally.
- Leaders use the physical education (PE) and sports premium funding well. For example, a full-time specialist sports coach is employed to teach sports and PE and to promote a healthy lifestyle. Pupils now take part in more physical activities, have access to a wider range of sports, both in and out of school, and take part in more competitions. Teaching staff across the school are able to improve their teaching of PE as a result of observing and learning from the sports coach. Leaders identify that this increase in provision has also had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.
- Parents are very happy with the school and its leadership. They recognise the significant changes that have taken place in the last three years. Parents comment positively on the progress that their children make, the quality of teaching and the fact that their children enjoy coming to school. One parent summed this up by saying that the school has 'massively improved'. As part of their support for the wider community, the school provides a range of parental engagement courses and this has led to employment for some parents.

Governance of the school

- Governors are effective and they know the school very well. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and are clear about what needs to be done to improve further. The local governing body is effectively led by a knowledgeable and experienced chair and vice-chair.
- Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge to the school leadership team. They use information gathered through visits to school, as well as from reports

provided by leaders, to ask challenging questions in order to bring about rapid improvements. These discussions are not always reflected in the minutes of governing body meetings.

- Governors value the links with the multi-academy trust, which provides them with expert advice, guidance and training. As a result, governors are confident in carrying out their roles and responsibilities in order to fulfil their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Keeping children safe is at the heart of the work of the principal and leaders. Leaders have introduced systems and processes which have created a culture where staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. As a result the school is a safe environment for pupils and they are well cared for at all times.
- All staff have had appropriate child protection and 'Prevent' training and they are clear about what they should do if they have any concerns. The safeguarding team maintains the required confidential records and information is shared with relevant external agencies as necessary. Leaders have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school and are alert to issues including extremism and radicalisation.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school and know whom to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils from each year group are involved in the e-safety committee and as a result pupils help to keep each other safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching across the school has improved significantly since opening as an academy. This is because the principal has worked with his new team of staff and leaders to ensure that everyone has high expectations, access to effective training and the opportunity to work with other schools to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching to make sure that teachers know what they must do to be more effective.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and consequently they teach concepts securely. They work together, sharing their expertise, to plan interesting and exciting units of work to engage pupils in learning. Teachers are motivated and are not afraid to try new teaching and learning approaches to support their pupils' needs.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and classrooms are calm and positive learning environments in which to learn. As a result, pupils stay focused on their work almost all of the time. They are engaged and keen to complete their work to a good standard. Occasionally, the level and demand of the work set does not match the specific needs of some pupils. For example, activities can be too challenging for lower-ability pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities while being too easy for those who are most-able.
- Relationships in classrooms are very positive. Pupils actively support each other's learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson, groups of pupils were asked to solve a

problem and then prove the answer was correct. This resulted in pupils debating and challenging each other to ensure that they had the right answer.

- Pupils' books reflect the good progress that they are making, especially in writing. Pupils are encouraged to edit and improve their writing using identified criteria. There is clear evidence that this approach is improving the quality of all pupils' work. Teachers are using the school's marking policy with increasing consistency and this is helping pupils to review and improve their work across a range of subjects.
- Leaders have taken steps to further improve the teaching of reading across the school. Teachers are putting training into practice in their classrooms and more pupils are now working at the standard expected for their age. The teaching of phonics in key stage 1 has been reviewed to ensure that it matches the needs of all pupils, especially those who are most-able.
- The principal has developed an assessment system which is being used effectively to track the progress pupils are making in English and mathematics. The accuracy of the system is checked when teachers within school and the multi-academy trust meet to compare outcomes and standards. Individual pupils' progress is discussed at half-termly meetings. If a pupil is identified as not having made enough progress, leaders hold a meeting with the pupil and their parents to identify any barriers to learning and agree specific actions to be taken.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident learners and pupils in all year groups demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. This has a strong impact on the progress that they make. Pupils take a pride in their work, their school and themselves. They actively follow the school's six 'golden rules', including listening to each other, working hard, being kind and helpful and looking after property. Pupils are caring and considerate to each other, modelling the school's motto of 'Courtesy, Consideration and Respect'.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. Even the youngest pupils can talk about how adults look after them and that the school has fences to help keep them secure. Pupils understand what bullying is and the various forms it may take. Strong relationships exist between pupils and adults and the pupils themselves. Pupils know that their views will be listened to and they are confident that any concerns will be dealt with quickly by an adult.
- As pupils get older, there are increasing opportunities for them to become more independent and to take responsibility for others. For example, some pupils take on the role of play leaders, others represent their class on the junior leadership committee while others represent their school at the multi-academy trust pupils' parliament.
- All pupils are given opportunities to widen their aspirations through the range of cultural activities available to them such as theatre trips, music and the arts. Older pupils in particular can identify how the school has changed in recent years and are appreciative of the opportunities they are now being offered.

- Celebrating success is a key strand of the school's work and celebration assemblies are held on a regular basis. Pupils' achievements of all kinds are acknowledged and pupils walk down the 'red carpet' to be recognised by pupils, staff and parents.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club. Pupils enjoy these times as an opportunity for socialising with peers and adults. The atmosphere is warm and calm and adults positively reinforce good behaviour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around school is of a consistently high standard, with almost all pupils being keen to learn. As a result, pupils are making good progress.
- The school's behaviour policy is extremely effective and focuses on motivating the pupils to behave well. There are a range of individual and class rewards which provide a real incentive for pupils to do well and to follow the school's rules. Pupils and staff understand the policy and it is used consistently across the school.
- Leaders have raised expectations further by introducing additional rewards for pupils whose behaviour goes 'above and beyond' expectations by actively encouraging and supporting other children to maintain a good level of behaviour.
- Overall attendance is below average and the number of pupils who regularly miss school, or come to school late, remains too high. Leaders track attendance carefully and promptly follow up any absence. They are alert to the possibility of children going missing from education and work with external agencies to minimise any risk. Leaders are now actively working with parents to promote attendance and ensure that they are aware of the importance of ensuring that their children come to school regularly and on time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in school are making good progress from a wide range of starting points. More pupils, including those who are most-able and disadvantaged, are making much better progress and consequently pupils are catching up with their peers in school and nationally.
- Work seen during the inspection, including in books and lessons, shows that the proportion of pupils working at the standard expected for their age is increasing rapidly, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. However, sometimes support is not targeted accurately enough to an individual's needs and this does not help them to move on as quickly as they could. Leaders are aware that they need to monitor progress even more carefully than they currently do.
- At key stage 1 pupils' attainment has risen over the last three years. In 2016, outcomes were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and in the three subjects combined.

- Standards in reading across the school are improving. As a result of training, staff are now using specific strategies to good effect. Children’s use of phonics is developing well and although outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check remained below national average in 2016, they improved from the previous year, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are aware that some phonics teaching is not matched carefully enough to the needs of the pupils, especially the most able.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have improved considerably over the last three years, for example from 24% achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined in 2013 to 73% attaining this threshold in 2015. In 2016, pupils made very good progress in mathematics but outcomes overall were affected by the increased expectations of the national curriculum, particularly in reading.
- While outcomes across the school are improving, there remains some legacy of underperformance in Year 6. Pupils are, however, making rapid progress and are on track to achieve results much closer to the national average in 2017.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress from their starting points and outcomes are in line with those of other pupils. Those who are new to English are well supported to rapidly improve their language skills.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is above the national average. The difference in outcomes between disadvantaged children and others nationally has almost disappeared. Both boys and girls do better than their peers nationally. The children leave the early years very well prepared to start Year 1.
- Children enter the early years with skills that are below, and sometimes well below, those that are typical for their age. During their time in the early years, the majority of children make good or better progress. Teachers use assessment accurately to identify those who need additional help and plan good support for them to ensure that the children catch up quickly.
- Children who speak English as an additional language are very well supported and make good progress. Children’s strengths in the wider curriculum are recognised and nurtured so that as their language skills develop, ‘the children can fly’. Bilingual teaching assistants support children’s linguistic development very effectively.
- The early years learning environment is highly stimulating and it is very well organised. Children respond to, and respect, the equipment and facilities. Most children are fully engaged in purposeful activities for the majority of their time. The outdoor area provides a wealth of opportunities, including a dance stage, bikes, slides and water play as well as activities linked to a current topic. This complements the range of activities available for children to choose indoors. Adults encourage conversation, prompting children and asking them questions to develop their thinking and deepen their understanding. Technology is used effectively to record pupils’ activities.
- As with leadership elsewhere in the school, the early years leader is doing an excellent job. She has high expectations of all staff and children. She knows the children and

their individual needs very well. She is clear on what needs to be provided to help move children's learning forward.

- The progress children make in lessons is strong. The combined teaching of phonics and writing skills are very effective. Children also have daily sessions to improve their hand control and manipulative skills.
- The children are extremely well cared for and nurtured so that they feel confident, curious and eager to join in activities. Children's behaviour is excellent and they show respect for each other. During a religious education lesson, a candle was lit and the children recognised that this was a special reflective time.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and children know how to stay safe in the setting. Welfare requirements in the early years are met.
- Early years staff encourage regular and good communication with parents, either face to face or through children's learning journals that map children's attainment and progress during the year. Parents are very positive about these links and feel that this helps their children to settle well.
- The school has very recently opened provision for two-year-olds. Routines are being established and the youngest children are developing warm, nurturing relationships with their key workers. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	140562
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10025162

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	477
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sue Molloy
Principal	Sean Thomson
Telephone number	01782 234950
Website	www.saintnathaniels.org.uk
Email address	admin@saintnathaniels.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school became an academy in May 2014. It is a member of St Bart's multi-academy trust.
- The multi-academy trust brokers support from the Britannia Teaching School Alliance to help the school improve.
- This is a larger than average primary school.
- The school makes provision for two-year-olds. This is managed by the local governing body.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is almost double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than that found in most primary schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 25 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made additional short visits to many classrooms to gather evidence on particular aspects of the curriculum or pupils' learning.
- Inspectors met with pupils and listened to some pupils read. They looked at examples of pupils' work in their books and spoke to pupils formally and informally. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and around the school as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the principal, other leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the St Bart's multi-academy trust. The lead inspector also met with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, the school's recruitment and vetting checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information relating to the management of teachers' performance, school performance data, and checked that the school's website contained all of the required information.
- Inspectors considered parents' opinions through scrutinising 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including six free text responses. Inspectors spoke to parents on the first day of the inspection and also considered outcomes from the school's own survey of 80 parents.

Inspection team

Catherine Crooks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ellen Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Benetia Mounsey	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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