

Inspection of a good school: St Peter's CofE Academy Alton

Town Head, Alton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 4AW

Inspection dates:

14 September 2022

Outcome

St Peter's CofE Academy Alton continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff are happy with their school, which is at the heart of the local community. This school is effectively led. This is a vibrant school, where children are nurtured, thrive and flourish. The Christian ethos of the school and values of love, friendship and respect are celebrated.

Reading and mathematics are taught particularly well. The curriculum in other subjects is exciting. Pupils enjoy learning. Pupils learn to play musical instruments, sing and perform. Pupils make good use of the local area to learn about geography and science. They enjoyed a treasure hunt on a local farm. The school is ambitious for all pupils.

Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. There is a warmth in the relationships adults have with the children. Pupils know their teachers expect them to behave well. Pupils show respect and care for each other and members of staff.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. Parents overwhelmingly agree with this. Pupils know what bullying is. They say that when bullying happens, staff quickly get to the bottom of it.

Staff, the trust and governors on the local academy committee are rightly proud of the contribution the school makes to the local community.

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

Children in early years get off to a flying start with learning phonics. Reading is a high priority. The school recently introduced a new structured phonics scheme. Leaders have yet to fully evaluate the impact of the new approach to phonics. Staff access regular training. Straight away in early years learning, nursery rhymes and listening to stories broadens children's grasp of sounds and language. Staff use assessment well in daily reading and phonics sessions in Reception, Year 1 and 2. Teachers identify pupils who need extra help. This quick response supports any pupils who may fall behind in reading.

Incentives encourage pupils to read at home. Pupils enjoy regular visits to the library van. Pupils aspire to be reading ambassadors and reading is celebrated and rewarded.

Leaders have developed well the curriculum in mathematics and science. Learning is carefully sequenced from early years to Year 4, in such a way that builds knowledge over time. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and understand in many subjects, including mathematics. This helps teachers to plan and adapt lessons to address any gaps in learning. However, this is not the case for all subjects. For example, in science, teachers do not check carefully enough that pupils have understood what they have been taught. Because of this, gaps in knowledge are not always addressed. This hinders learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive timely help and the resources they need. This enables pupils with SEND to learn well. Staff successfully help a small number of pupils who need extra help and support them to maintain their focus in lessons. This minimises any low-level disruption.

Work to promote pupils' personal development is wide ranging. Pupils brim with enthusiasm when talking about the '50 things to do before you're 9'. The wide range of experiences the school offers supports an understanding and care for nature and the lives of others. Pupils experience a wide range of visits and visitors, including watching live theatre productions and visits to museums. Older pupils spent a weekend at the end of term at an outdoor adventure centre. These experiences foster a love of learning and create shared memories. This school introduces the possibility of many different careers to pupils. Pupils recently enjoyed seeing a Royal Marine Commando talk about their work. Pupils are full of excitement when talking about the wider opportunities they experience at school.

Pastoral care is a strength. The school promotes being a good citizen. Pupils enjoy their work in their local community with afternoon teas, supporting local care homes and raising money for charities around the world. This work promotes their understanding of the lived experiences of others.

Behaviour of pupils is very good. Staff are positive and calm with pupils. Pupils are polite when moving around school, they open doors for adults.

Staff are proud to work at St Peter's. Senior leaders develop the talents of staff and they support staff in managing their workload.

The trust board and the local academy committee know the school well. They provide many opportunities for staff to work with schools locally and across the trust. Staff value the support and challenge. This work is further improving the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular training and updates. Staff work well with other professionals. Leaders are proactive in following up with agencies to ensure timely identification and support for pupils and their families.

Pupils learn about healthy relationships, how to keep themselves safe online and offline. Staff teaching on mental health is a strength.

Parents receive regular updates on how to keep children safe online. Checks on new staff and volunteers are carefully documented. Risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The recently introduced approach to the teaching of phonics is new to staff. Training has introduced staff to the resources and teaching approaches. Leaders need to evaluate this very new phonics programme to ensure that it has the planned impact.
- Leaders do not use assessment to identify if pupils have understood everything they need to in some subjects. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not always identified. Leaders should ensure that teachers, across all subjects, use assessment to identify effectively when pupils are falling behind, while being mindful of the workload of teachers.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Peter's CofE (A) First School to be good in February 2017.

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](#)' 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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 145679 |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number | 10241482 |
| Type of school | First |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 45 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Mary Walker |
| Headteacher | Rebecca Walker |
| Website | www.st-peters-alton.staffs.sch.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- St Peter's is a voluntary-aided Church of England first school. The most recent diocesan inspection under section 48 took place in November 2016.
- St Peters CofE Academy school converted to become an academy school and joined the Staffordshire University Academies Trust in April 2018.
- The headteacher is the executive headteacher of three schools in the trust.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club on site.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and science. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about the way the subjects were planned and taught and observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors looked at school documents, including information about the school curriculum, academy improvement planning, behaviour and attendance.

- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's policies and procedures. Inspectors met with the safeguarding leaders and spoke to pupils and staff.
- Inspectors looked at information published on the school's website.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around school, in classrooms and at playtime and lunchtime.
- During the inspection, inspectors had formal meetings with the executive headteacher, deputy executive headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, governors, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the acting chief executive, two trustees from the multi-academy trust and the chair of the local academy committee.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about the school, including how leaders consider their well-being and workload.
- Inspectors spoke pupils to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's survey of staff and parent's views. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered the free-text responses received during the inspection.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Philip Hamilton

Ofsted Inspector

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