

Inspection of Alexandra Junior School

Meir Road, Normacot, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 7JG

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They value the care and support they get from staff. As one pupil said, 'At Alexandra Junior School we are a team. We help each other, and we work together as one.'

Supported by the multi-academy trust and governors, leaders have introduced a wave of changes across the school. These have led to improvements in the quality of education and the all-round provision for pupils. However, leaders are not complacent. They are already planning ways to improve the school further.

Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. Staff and pupils do not disappoint. They rise to these expectations.

In lessons, pupils listen well and focus on their work. Pupils appreciate the variety of activities that are available at lunchtime. They play games cooperatively and enjoy chatting with their friends. Pupils say the '3Bs' (Be ready, Be respectful, Be safe) help them to behave positively. Bullying is rare. Pupils are adamant that staff take bullying seriously and deal with issues quickly.

Overall, parents are positive about the school. They comment that it feels like 'a family'. They add that staff go 'above and beyond' to help and support their children.

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

In a wide range of subjects, the curriculum clearly maps out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn across year groups. This supports teachers to plan purposeful learning opportunities that build on what pupils already know. As a result, pupils achieve well. Due to the high number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), the development of vocabulary is the hallmark of the school's curriculum.

In subjects such as mathematics, leaders have made checks on their subject area. This helps them to identify what is working well and what needs to be developed further. Some subject leaders have arranged training for staff to support the delivery of the curriculum. In some subjects, the curriculum is relatively new, and some subject leaders are new to their role. In these subjects, leaders have not had the opportunity to make checks on their subject in sufficient depth.

Reading underpins the whole curriculum. Leaders have put systems in place to identify pupils at the early stages of reading. This includes identifying gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. There is a layered approach to the teaching of reading. This includes whole-class teaching, teaching to smaller groups of pupils and individual support where required. Staff teach phonics well due to effective training. Teachers promote a love of reading through the English curriculum, daily reading sessions and story times. This helps pupils to develop a love of reading.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. Leaders ensure that EAL is not mistaken for SEND. Wherever possible, pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers consider the needs of pupils with SEND when they plan learning activities. Staff are always at hand to step in if a pupil needs help.

Pupils enjoy fundraising for local, national and international charities. The Alexandra Promise ensures that pupils complete a range of experiences during their time in school. These include the opportunity to climb a tree, visit a castle and watch a sunrise. Pupils know about the different types of relationships and families that exist in their local community. They enjoy going on trips, such as the recent visit to the local mosque. They appreciate the range of after-school clubs, such as boxing and art and craft, but they would like more.

Leaders and staff know families well and work closely with them to promote pupils' attendance. Leaders have introduced a series of rewards and there are a range of systems in place to follow up and reduce absence. However, despite all of this, attendance remains stubbornly low for some pupils.

Teachers and support staff feel valued and supported by leaders. Staff value the training they have received, such as in phonics and mastery in mathematics. Teachers say that leaders have an open-door policy, are always ready to listen and are considerate of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding is everyone's business. Leaders and staff do all they can to make sure that pupils are safe. The members of the safeguarding team are knowledgeable and carry out their roles efficiently. Leaders organise regular training for all staff. As a result, staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. The curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe in school and beyond the school gate. Pupils say they feel safe because the site is secure and they trust the staff to look after them. Pupils have a solid understanding of online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders are relatively new to their role. As a result, they have not had the opportunity to make comprehensive checks on their curriculum area to discover what is working well and what may need to improve. Leaders should provide these subject leaders with time and ongoing support so they can develop their curriculum areas effectively.

- Despite leaders' best efforts, too many pupils are absent or persistently absent from school. This has a negative impact on their progress through the curriculum. Leaders should continue to look at different ways to improve pupils' attendance that build on the work they have already undertaken.

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

Unique reference number	143485
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10241479
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Louise Eagle
Headteacher	Ralf Müller
Website	www.alexandra-jun.stoke.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Alexandra Junior School converted to become an academy in July 2018. When its predecessor school, Alexandra Junior School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- The school is part of The New Guild Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school has a breakfast club operating on the site. This provision is operated by the school.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and the chief executive officer. He met with four members of the governing board, including the chair, and the chair

of the board of trustees. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.

- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss safeguarding, provision for pupils with SEND, pupils' behaviour, attendance, personal development and additional funding.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, physical education and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also looked at a selection of English books from a range of year groups.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school. Two separate groups of pupils accompanied inspectors on personal development learning walks around the school.
- Safeguarding documents were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. The inspectors checked that staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text responses received during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the governing board.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Titchener

His Majesty's Inspector

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