

Inspection of Sporting Stars Academy

Field Avenue, Baddeley Green, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST2 7AS

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Sporting Stars Academy has pupils' best interests at heart. Many pupils have had negative experiences of education in the past but here they feel safe and cared for. Pupils see the school as giving them 'another chance'. For example, some retake GCSEs and gain qualifications that they would not otherwise achieve. As one pupil said, 'They build you up; they motivate you.'

The school encourages pupils to explore their interests and talents. Pupils access a broad range of experiences, although the curriculum focuses mostly on teaching English, mathematics and science. Leaders have begun work to improve the quality of the curriculum in other subjects, but there remains more to do. The curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned. Pupils do not develop their knowledge logically in all the subjects they study.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils live up to these expectations. They are well behaved and respectful towards each other and adults. They have good manners and follow instructions. This makes the school a calm place in which to learn.

Staff are committed to helping pupils succeed, providing personalised support. They organise many enrichment activities to help pupils develop their skills and interests.

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

Most pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff identify these needs very well. They know each pupil's abilities and have designed a curriculum to spark pupils' interests and help them gain suitable qualifications. However, although the curriculum is carefully organised in subjects including mathematics and English, this is not the case in all areas of study. Some courses are in the early stages of being implemented; they are not well embedded. In some subjects, the school has not identified the knowledge that pupils are expected to learn precisely enough. This hampers pupils in making progress through the curriculum.

The school has been successful in developing the expertise of staff. Adults use a range of strategies to help pupils remember what they have learned. For example, teachers make regular recaps on prior learning. They explain information clearly. They provide useful demonstrations to help pupils understand new strategies and methods. Staff often ask questions to find out what pupils know and remember. However, in subjects where the curriculum is not well planned, teachers' assessment checks lack precision. This means they do not always identify the exact knowledge that pupils need to learn to progress.

The school promotes pupils' love of reading. Teachers think carefully about the choice of texts they use in lessons. They emphasise the meaning of words and concepts before pupils encounter them in texts. For example, pupils learn the meaning of 'greed', 'miser' and 'capitalist' before studying Charles Dickens's 'A

Christmas Carol'. This helps most pupils to understand what they read. Some achieve very well, gaining GCSEs in English literature. However, some pupils are not fluent readers. The school has not implemented a systematic phonics approach to teach these pupils how to read. This hinders these pupils from accessing the full curriculum.

Pupils listen and concentrate in lessons because they want to succeed. The school communicates clear expectations and staff deal with any disruptions quickly. This makes lessons conducive to learning. Pupils and adults work together in a culture of mutual respect. Despite this, some pupils do not attend regularly. They are disadvantaged by not accessing education. Leaders use strategies to encourage everyone to be present but, despite this work, the school has not yet secured improvements in all pupils' attendance.

Pupils deepen their understanding of a range of social topics by studying personal, social and health education (PSHE). Leaders have carefully considered the content of this curriculum. They ensure it meets pupils' needs. Staff teach subject matter sensitively to help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. In addition, pupils take part in activities to broaden their life experiences. These activities promote healthy lifestyles and develop pupils' talents. For instance, some enjoy playing golf, fishing or developing their knowledge of photography.

Pupils benefit from accessing a coherent programme of careers guidance. All pupils study a BTEC National Diploma to provide them with work skills. Many sixth-form students complement this programme of study by gaining practical work experience. For example, some take part in construction or car mechanics courses. Leaders work diligently to guide all pupils and students to the next stage of education, training or employment.

The proprietor body communicates a clear and aspirational vision for the school. Parents and carers understand this vision and support the school's work. Leaders share a strong sense of moral purpose. Everyone is determined to help each pupil reach their full potential. Staff morale is high, and adults feel valued. They are proud of the important work they are doing.

Leaders have secured many improvements in the school's provision, including ensuring that the independent school standards continue to be met. Nevertheless, the school is aware that further improvements are needed in the quality of the curriculum.

The proprietor body oversees its statutory duties well. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school has not identified the precise knowledge pupils are expected to learn in some subjects. This means that pupils do not build up their knowledge and skills as well as they might. The school should ensure that the curriculum is well planned and sequenced in all subjects so that pupils build their knowledge logically over time.
- The school's approach to assessing what pupils know and remember is not fully developed in some subjects. Staff do not accurately check the progress that pupils make through all of the curriculum. The school should ensure that precise checks are made on what pupils know and remember in all subjects.
- The school has not implemented an approach to teaching phonics. Pupils who are at the early stages of reading are not supported to build their knowledge logically. The school should ensure that pupils who are learning to read access a well-implemented phonics programme.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This limits their learning. Leaders should review their work with parents and carers to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141128
DfE registration number	861/6012
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10284431
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Number of part-time pupils	16
Proprietor	Sporting Stars Academy
Chair	Shane Anthony Tudor
Headteacher	Nicky Crookshank
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,210 to £54,878
Telephone number	01782 248 248
Website	sportingstarsacademy.com
Email address	admin@sportingstarsacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	7 to 9 June 2022

Information about this school

- Sporting Stars Academy is an independent school providing education for pupils between the ages of 14 and 19. Pupils often attend the school following breakdowns of placement in secondary schools. Many have had extended periods of time without accessing education.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in June 2022, when the school was judged to be inadequate. A progress monitoring inspection took place on 7 February 2023.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- A significant number of pupils have education, health and care plans. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is registered to admit 62 pupils on roll.
- Three new teachers joined the school in September 2023.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the executive headteacher and the headteacher. He also spoke to members of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, sports and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of sessions, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also reviewed documents and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including school policies and the school's website.
- The lead inspector made checks relating to the independent school standards, including checks on the school's premises.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil or staff surveys.

Inspection team

Jonathan Leonard, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Henrick

His Majesty's Inspector

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