

Inspection of Nether Stowe School

St Chad's Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 7NB

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 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

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Nether Stowe are safe and happy. Most attend regularly. Pupils say they appreciate the improvements that leaders have made. Parents and pupils speak positively about the size of the school, which allows the staff know all the pupils well. As one parent said, 'Nether Stowe is a welcoming environment.'

Pupils behave well around the site and are welcoming to visitors. Younger pupils in particular feel that they have been helped to settle well since joining the school. Pupils are supported to choose healthy lifestyles and benefit from vertical tutor groups.

Leaders, with support from the trust, have prioritised and redesigned the curriculum to ensure that it is ambitious for all pupils. However, some pupils find it hard to rise to these new expectations as they struggle to recall the key learning they need to succeed in a range of subjects.

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

Trust leaders have worked alongside school and subject leaders to ensure that the curriculum is well designed and has high expectations for all pupils. The curriculum for students in the sixth form is also well designed, with a breadth of courses available. Leaders have thought carefully about the subjects that pupils study. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders recognise the need to increase the number of pupils who are studying for the EBacc. This includes increasing the number of pupils taking modern foreign languages as a GCSE option.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They understand and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately. Teachers use a range of activities and learning methods to help pupils know and remember more. Teachers use assessment to identify pupils' misconceptions before moving them on in the curriculum. However, there is variability in how well this is done. In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment methods sufficiently well to pinpoint and address the precise gaps in pupils' learning. This means that some pupils struggle to recall basic knowledge, which makes it harder for them to progress to more challenging work.

Leaders have revised the expectations for behaviour to ensure that they are clear to pupils. Teachers are applying the behaviour policy with increasing consistency and, therefore, poor behaviour rarely disrupts lessons. Pupils are increasingly meeting the school's higher expectations regarding behaviour. Information about pupils' behaviour is shared with leaders to ensure that support is carefully targeted to those who need it. However, leaders are yet to develop a clear overview of the impact of their actions to improve pupils' attendance. This means that they are not fully clear about how successful their actions have been and what could be further improved.

Leaders recently placed more emphasis on pupils' reading. They use baseline tests and focused interventions to identify those pupils who need more practice to become fluent readers. However, leaders recognise there is more work to be done to close gaps for these pupils, especially those in Years 8 and 9, where gaps remain. Leaders are working to establish a wider culture of reading in the school.

Leaders have prioritised support for pupils with SEND. They have systems in place to identify and match support to the precise needs of this group of pupils. Leaders share essential information about pupils with SEND with teachers. This helps teachers to adapt the delivery of learning activities so that the needs of pupils with SEND are generally securely met in the classroom. Where the guidance for teachers is clear and specific to the pupil, this leads to better outcomes for pupils with SEND. Leaders carefully check that these pupils receive the support they need.

The school offers a number of extra-curricular activities. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, charitable activities and a performing arts club. Leaders are aware of the barriers to participation in these activities for some pupils, and are working to minimise these. Students in the sixth form have a range of options which they can take alongside their studies. There is strong independent careers advice in place, supported by the use of external agencies and school alumni. This supports many pupils and students to access apprenticeships and university places after school.

Trust leaders have high ambitions for the school and have clear priorities for the school's improvement. School leaders are starting to use the information they receive more strategically to plan for future developments.

Staff are positive about working at the school. Most said that leaders are considerate of workload implications. They report that they are proud to be members of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority. Staff receive timely and appropriate safeguarding training. This means that staff are kept up to date with any specific challenges and dangers that pupils may face. Leaders are vigilant regarding the challenges that pupils may face. Staff report any safeguarding concerns in a timely manner. Leaders act on these concerns swiftly.

Staff work with a range of outside agencies to support pupils' safety, well-being and mental health. Pupils have a good understanding of how to assess risks and keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not use assessment well enough to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning. Where this happens, pupils are not able to recall key knowledge and struggle to engage with more challenging work. Leaders should ensure that all teachers use assessment effectively to identify and close gaps in pupils' understanding so they are better placed to meet the challenges of the curriculum.
- Leaders have not ensured that the reading catch-up programme has successfully enabled pupils, especially those in Year 8 and Year 9, to become confident readers for their age. This means that some pupils struggle to engage with the demands of the curriculum. Leaders should continue to develop the catch-up reading programme to ensure that all pupils become fluent and confident readers.
- Leaders do not review information about pupils' attendance in sufficient detail. This means that they are not fully aware of what is working well and what needs to further improve. Leaders should ensure that they use all the information available to them to fully and accurately inform their improvement priorities.

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	146493
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10268166
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	671
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	69
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Vickers
Headteacher	Glyn Langston-Jones
Website	netherstowe.staffs.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is one of 19 schools that form the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership.
- Leaders makes use of five alternative providers for a very small number of pupils. Three of these are registered providers.
- Leaders meet the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff.
- The inspectors met with leaders from the multi-academy trust. Inspectors spoke to trustees, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, physical education and modern languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy. They spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding leads and the headteacher about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors took account of the responses and comments on Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff survey. The school did not send out a survey to pupils.

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tim Bassett	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Geoff Renwick	Ofsted Inspector

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