

Inspection of a good school: St James' Church of England Primary School

Lyme Street, Haydock, St Helens, Merseyside WA11 0NL

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 February 2023

Outcome

St James' Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school. They are kind and respectful towards each other. Pupils said that the best thing about their school is the people in it. There is a strong sense of teamwork that permeates across the whole school community.

Staff at all levels have high expectations for every pupil. This has led to vast improvements in the quality of education that is on offer, alongside many other aspects of school life. Leaders continuously strive to provide pupils with the best opportunities they can. Many pupils develop into well-rounded citizens, who achieve well, by the time they leave school.

There is a calm atmosphere around school. Staff are consistent in their approach to managing behaviour. Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying means. If bullying or name calling happens, it is reported and leaders deal with it effectively. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupil leadership is prioritised at school. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to act as reading leaders, marvellous musicians and worship warriors. This helps pupils to become responsible. Many pupils are involved in these roles, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum. They have ensured that the curriculum is progressive and clearly ordered in most subjects. For example, when developing their understanding of the world, children in the Reception class learn about their local area. By the time that pupils reach Year 5, in geography lessons, pupils are able to compare their local area and its climate to Brazil. Even so, in a couple of subjects, some pupils do not have a secure knowledge of what they have learned. This is because the curriculum is new and teachers have not identified the gaps in pupils' previous learning before introducing new subject content.

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the core knowledge that they expect pupils to acquire in each year group. This provides clarity for teachers on what to teach. It also allows teachers to check pupils' understanding, ensuring that pupils know more and remember more over time. This contributes to pupils' positive achievement over time. However, in some subjects, the core knowledge that pupils must learn is not made clear enough. This stops teachers from building on what pupils already know. It also hinders how some pupils learn in these subjects.

Leaders have recently introduced a new early reading programme. Staff have received appropriate training. They make sure that they deliver the phonics programme in a consistent manner. Pupils who find reading difficult receive help so that they can catch up. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they know. As a result, pupils learn to read with fluency and confidence. Pupils enjoy reading. They are encouraged to be 'joyful readers.' Pupils are exposed to a wide range of texts within reading lessons and across the curriculum. Storytime is prioritised in the early years to help children to gain a love of reading.

Pupils with SEND are supported well. Adaptations are made to teaching, only when necessary, so that pupils with SEND can access learning with their peers. Staff identify pupils with SEND early. Staff are well trained to meet pupils' additional needs, so that pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils behave well during lessons. Learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Staff and sports coaches provide a range of activities during playtimes to engage pupils and keep them physically active.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils understand the importance of equality and diversity. They learn about healthy relationships and they are taught strategies to stay mentally healthy. Older pupils learn about financial management and how to manage a budget. Activities such as this prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

The trust, working in partnership with governors, have robust procedures in place which support leaders and holds them to account. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support that they receive from leaders. Morale is high and staff are determined to do their best. Relationships with parents and carers are also typically strong.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and understand their responsibilities in relation to keeping pupils safe. Staff are vigilant and know what signs to look out for to protect pupils. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the needs of their pupils. They work effectively with external agencies and put support in place quickly for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe as part of their curriculum. For example, they learn about online safety and understand the importance of keeping personal information protected.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, pupils struggle to recall their previous learning. This is because the curriculum is new and teachers are not fully aware of the gaps in pupils' prior learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers identify and overcome the gaps in pupils' learning before moving onto the subject content in the new curriculum.
- In a small number of subjects, subject leaders are refining the essential knowledge that they want pupils to know. In these subjects, some pupils do not learn as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this will be taught.

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 James' Church of England Primary 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

Unique reference number	146429
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10256099
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Maggie Swinson
Executive Headteacher	Jennifer Young
Website	http://www.stjamesceprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St James' Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, St James' Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- This school is part of the Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust.
- The school is a Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2017.
- A new executive headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher and members of staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the trust board and governors' local advisory board.

- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. The inspector also spoke to staff about safeguarding and about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school, in class and in the outdoor play areas.
- The inspector spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. He considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspector conducted deep dives into early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.

Inspection team

James Marsh, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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