

# St James the Great Academy

Chapman Way, East Malling, Kent, ME19 6SD

**Inspection dates** 20–21 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from starting points which are often low and reach standards which are average by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good because it enables all groups of pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The Principal is very well supported by her Vice Principal. Together, they regularly check teaching and take swift action to coach and train staff who need it. As a result, teaching is continuing to improve.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff plan activities which effectively develop children's language and communication skills.
- All leaders and governors know the strengths of the academy very well. They know what is needed to make it even better. Decisive action has been taken since the academy opened to eradicate any weaknesses.
- Behaviour is typically good. While some parents expressed concern about behaviour, the inspection found that, although a few pupils find behaving well a challenge, staff are very good at managing behaviour and so lessons flow smoothly.
- The academy keeps pupils very safe. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel secure. They know how to keep themselves safe.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Spelling and handwriting are not consistently taught well. Pupils do not always respond to teachers' marking and this sometimes slows their progress.
- Occasionally, teaching does not capture the interest of boys sufficiently, especially in English.
- Some parents do not know enough about the work of the academy or how they can help their child learn at home.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons or small group sessions, some jointly with school leaders. They looked at pupils’ work in lessons, as well as the work pupils have completed over time in their books.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, representatives from the governing body and the academy chain. Inspectors attended an assembly and listened to pupils read. They looked at behaviour in lessons, in the playground, in the dinner hall and in the breakfast club. Account was taken of the 33 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the academy’s plans for improvement, its checks on the quality of teaching, governing body minutes and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- There were 35 responses to Parent View, the online survey of the view of parents. These were considered, as well as the academy’s own survey. Discussions were also held with parents at the end of the academy day.

## Inspection team

Joanna Toulson, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Matthew Klimcke

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St James the Great became an academy in April 2012. It is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- It is smaller than the average-sized school. Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who receive extra help in class is more than twice the national average. The proportion of pupils who need more help than this or who have a statement of special educational needs is also more than twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are at risk of not doing as well as others and for whom the academy receives additional funding is very high.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The academy runs a breakfast club.
- The academy does not make use of any alternative provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that pupils always make rapid progress by:
  - ensuring that pupils' spelling and handwriting skills are more effectively taught and developed consistently well across the school
  - giving time for pupils to respond to teachers' marking
  - making sure that activities always interest boys.
- Improve leadership and management by developing better partnerships with parents so that they understand how the school is supporting their child and what they can do at home to help their child to learn.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels which are generally below those typical for their age, especially in speaking, listening, reading and writing. They make good progress because there is a strong focus on developing their language skills. As a result, children join Year 1 with improved levels, although still with lower-than-average literacy skills.
- Pupils' progress through the school has improved since the opening of the academy because of the improvements in teaching. Progress is now good and in 2013, pupils reached average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, standards in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests were lower than the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in reading because of the emphasis placed on frequent practice. Pupils say they enjoy choosing books from the library and solving quizzes on the computer after reading a book. Some pupils do not read regularly at home so daily sessions where adults listen to pupils read, as well as daily DEAR ('Drop Everything And Read') sessions where both adults and pupils read, are helping to give pupils the regular reading time they need.
- The focus on developing pupils' understanding of number has helped promote their good progress in mathematics. Daily 'Snappy Maths' gives pupils extra practice in their basic number skills. Lunchtime mathematics clubs and the use of 'Beat that Maths' placemats give prompts and hints about how to be successful and give pupils good opportunities to practise their skills and become increasingly confident. Teachers share good practice through the 'Magpie Maths' discussions and this also helps to promote pupils' good achievement.
- Although achievement in writing is good, it is not as strong as in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils do not always develop accurate spelling and clear handwriting.
- The academy is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. It quickly provides additional support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Good use is made of specialists. Well-trained teaching assistants provide effective support, both in the class and in small withdrawal groups. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- The most able pupils also achieve well and the proportions of pupils achieving the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have improved over the last two years.
- In 2013, pupils eligible for additional funding were around one year behind their peers in mathematics and less than a term behind in reading and writing. The academy uses the pupil premium funding well and the impact of the academy's use of additional support is now being seen for the pupils currently on roll. As a result, although there are still some gaps in attainment, these are closing rapidly as pupils move through the school.
- Achievement is not outstanding because teaching, although good, is not always strong enough to ensure pupils make rapid rather than good progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because it enables pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' learning is particularly strong when they enjoy the topics. For example, Year 5 pupils enjoyed watching a film clip from *Harry Potter* and discussing ways in which the setting could be described. Year 6 pupils enjoyed being 'ghost hunters' to identify sights, sounds and smells before writing. Occasionally, however, when activities do not captivate the interest of boys, their learning slows.
- Adults work well with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good questioning and encouragement help children to begin to write and children enjoy using word mats to identify initial sounds when writing words.
- Teachers explain tasks clearly so pupils know what they have to do and how to be successful.

Activities are carefully planned to make sure they are at the right level for the different ability groups.

- Teachers mark pupils' work well and there is a consistent approach to giving pupils two stars and a wish to convey successes and 'next steps'. However, teaching is not yet outstanding because pupils do not consistently respond to the comments that teachers make. For example, they do not always correct their spelling mistakes so misconceptions sometimes remain.
- The teaching of handwriting is not consistent and so some pupils do not quickly develop legible, neat handwriting.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Although a few pupils have particular behavioural needs, staff are well trained and have good strategies to deal with incidents. As a result, behaviour is managed consistently well and lessons flow without interruption. Academy records show that there are marked improvements in the behaviour of individuals as a result of the very good support they receive.
- Pupils want to learn and take a pride in their work. Adults are excellent role models and speak kindly to pupils and so pupils are also kind to each other and polite to adults. Pupils behave well in the lunch hall and in the playground, where they are well supervised.
- The academy promotes pupils' personal development well. The pupils explored what being a good citizen means in an assembly. Such activities help to show that no discrimination of any kind is tolerated. The academy is a community which fosters good relationships and where everyone is important.
- Some parents have concerns about the behaviour of pupils and how well the academy keeps pupils safe. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view. The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils report they feel safe. The academy provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about how to keep safe, for example, from strangers, while near a road and when using the internet. Pupils understand about some of the different forms of bullying and know that it is wrong to tease each other.
- Attendance has improved since the academy opened and is now slightly above average. Pupils arrive punctually to school.
- Pupils enjoy breakfast and playing with their friends in the breakfast club before the beginning of the academy day.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because a few pupils are over-reliant on adults to manage their behaviour, rather than being able to do so on their own.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The Principal is firmly committed to giving every child the best education possible. She shares her high expectations with all staff, who unanimously support her work and ambition for the academy. Every child is known as an individual and given care and understanding to support their learning.
- Senior leaders, middle leaders and governors work effectively together to review all aspects of the academy's work. They know how well the academy is performing, compared to all schools. Plans for improvement are realistic and focused on appropriate aspects.
- There are robust systems in place to check how well teaching is improving. Pay for staff, including support staff, is linked closely to pupils' progress. Senior and middle leaders check the quality of teaching thoroughly and use information on pupils' progress, lesson observations and pupils' books to find out if teaching is as good as it can be. Teachers, especially those who are newly qualified, feel very well supported and so quickly become confident and effective teachers.
- Excellent partnerships exist with the Academy Trust. Very good use is made of the expertise it provides and this has supported the improvements to teaching since the academy's opening.

- Leaders are determined to provide experiences for the pupils that they might otherwise not have. A full programme of visits and visitors to the academy make learning fun and meaningful. During the inspection, pupils were excited about their up-coming visit to film studios.
- Good use is made of the additional funding to improve pupils' physical activities. The academy works in partnership with two local schools to employ a specialist sports teacher to teach physical education alongside teachers. In this way, improvements are designed to be sustainable. All pupils took part in a Sports Relief event, running a total of 218 miles for charity. This is an illustration of how pupils' fitness levels are improving as a result of a focus on keeping fit and healthy.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because the academy does not always engage successfully with parents. Although a great deal of work has been done to work with parents, including coffee mornings and family learning activities, academy leaders recognise that more could be done to help parents understand the good work that the academy does and how they can help their child to learn at home.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know the academy very well. They have a clear understanding about how well pupils achieve, compared to those in other schools. They regularly visit the academy and monitor its work.
  - Governors have a very good understanding about the quality of teaching because they receive thorough information from the Principal. They ensure that the pay of the Principal, teachers and support staff are linked to how well they achieve targets relating to pupils' progress.
  - Governors value the partnership with the Academy Trust and make good use of the support it offers to ensure their skills as governors are kept up to date. Recent training has, for example, included training in the provision of literacy and mathematics. This helps them to both support the academy and hold it to account.
  - Governors know how additional funding is spent. They are keenly aware of how pupils who are at risk of not doing well are doing, compared to others in the school. They have spent the sports funding wisely to ensure it has a sustainable impact on the well-being of pupils.
  - Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are rigorously applied and meet all statutory requirements.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138074
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	399902

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Elizabeth Simpson
<b>Principal</b>	Sylvia Crockett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 841912
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