

St James' Church of England Primary Academy

High Street, Isle of Grain, Kent, ME3 0BS

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- This is a friendly, welcoming school of which pupils, staff and governors are very proud.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and standards are improving.
- Pupils' achievement in writing has improved considerably.
- Teaching is good and engages pupils well so that they have very good attitudes to learning and want to do well.
- Pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the values and caring atmosphere of the school.
- Children get a good start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after. They are polite and courteous.
- Pupils behave well. They enjoy coming to school as shown in their above average attendance.
- The headteacher leads the school very effectively.
- Leaders and managers, including governors and the academy's sponsors, work well together and have improved important aspects of the school's work, including pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' overall attainment remains below average.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils' spelling is not good enough and their achievement in mathematics has not improved as quickly as it has in writing.
- Teaching assistants do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and levels of attainment.
- Subject leaders are not yet fully involved in raising achievement in their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons or part lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work, looked at books and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions were also held with pupils, governors and representatives from sponsors of the academy, the Education Director of Rochester Diocese and the Executive Principal of the Williamson Trust.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation. These included the school's own check on its performance including the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, information on pupils' progress and documents relating to safeguarding.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to have access to the results, but inspectors spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and looked at the school's own survey of parents' views.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bryan Meyer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in an integrated unit for Nursery and Reception age children.
- The school has funded provision for two-year-olds, who integrate with the Nursery and Reception children. There is a children's centre on the site which is managed by the academy. These were not included in this inspection.
- The school became a sponsored academy on 1 December 2012 and is co-sponsored by the Rochester Diocese and the Williamson Trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment to at least national levels and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - pupils make faster progress in mathematics and confidently apply their skills in meaningful, relevant, problem solving activities
 - pupils' spelling improves
 - all teaching assistants have the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning as teachers.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that subject leaders are fully involved in raising achievement in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children start in the Early Years Foundation stage with levels of skill and knowledge that vary from year to year, but are typically below those expected for their ages. They get a good start to school and make good progress. In 2013 the proportion that achieved a good level of development was below that found nationally. This was because their poor writing skills held some back. The proportion of children achieving a good level is now much higher.
- Despite their good progress, pupils' attainment in 2013 by the end of Year 6 was below average. Pupils' work and school records show that pupils in the current Year 6 are making more rapid progress and are reaching attainment levels that are much closer to average. Small and fluctuating numbers in each year group mean that published data need to be interpreted with caution. This is because one pupil can represent a high percentage of the total and this can skew the true picture of pupils' attainment.
- In 2013, too few pupils reached the higher levels of attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Higher expectations and improved teaching are now making more demands on the most able pupils and, as a result, more are reaching the higher levels, particularly in writing.
- This year, the school has focused on writing. The positive impact of its work was evident in the good quality of writing seen in pupils' books and displayed around the school. The school has made a determined effort to ensure that pupils have lots of experiences to stimulate their writing. Pupils are motivated and engaged in writing and have opportunities to discuss their ideas with each other. This is helping to raise standards in writing. Pupils' spelling, however, is not good enough.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is good. The proportion of pupils who reached the required level in the 2013 Year 1 screening check was above average. Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic readers because reading for enjoyment is promoted well throughout the school.
- In mathematics, the school knows that pupils need more opportunities to use their mathematical skills in meaningful, relevant problem solving activities.
- In 2013 only a very small number of pupils in Year 6 were eligible for the pupil premium. As a group, their attainment was around four months behind their classmates in writing, six months behind in mathematics and nearly 18 months behind in reading. However, they all made the expected progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics, and most also did so in reading. Currently, eligible pupils are making similar good progress to others in all year groups.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress in line with others in the school. This is because of well-targeted support that is designed to meet the specific needs of each child.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well and provide interesting, stimulating activities that motivate and engage them. As a result, pupils develop curiosity, enquiring minds and a thirst for knowledge.
- Very good relationships mean that pupils are prepared to 'have a go' when tasks are challenging, and understand that they can learn from their mistakes. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and usually provide work that challenges pupils of all abilities so that all make good progress. On a few occasions, however, the tasks set for some of the most able pupils are not challenging enough and so they do not always learn as rapidly as they could.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' use of humour and drama that, as agreed by one group, 'make learning fun and exciting and not boring'. Teachers ask good questions that check pupils' understanding and help to develop new ideas.

- Classrooms, corridors and other shared spaces are attractive and stimulating in an impressive atmosphere of hard work and enjoyment. Displays and 'working walls' are used very effectively by teachers and pupils to support teaching and learning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and inspectors saw some excellent examples where teachers had given pupils clear pointers about how they should improve their work. This good practice was not evident in all classes, however.
- Subjects are taught in an interesting and exciting way. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy. There are opportunities to use these skills in other subjects, although more so in literacy than in numeracy.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff know the children well and provide a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities, both indoors and outside. These develop children's skills and independence and help them to enjoy learning. The classroom is rich with books and writing, providing children with many opportunities to develop their language and communication skills. Children clearly understand that they can communicate through writing and find their own reasons to write. For example, a child constructing a tower from bricks was not pleased when someone accidentally knocked it down. When she rebuilt it, she wrote a notice to stick on it, unprompted by an adult, that said, 'Please don't knock my tower down.'
- On occasion, when teaching assistants take groups in a lesson, they do not have the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour, or of their ability to tackle challenging tasks, as teachers. As a result, pupils in these groups do not always make the progress that they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons with their teachers, around the school and in the playground. Often their behaviour is exemplary, as inspectors saw in assemblies.
- School records show that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of behaviour over time. Pupils believe that behaviour is good because, as one group agreed, 'We all know each other and we're all friends and look out for each other.'
- Behaviour is not always as good when pupils are working with teaching assistants. This is because pupils are not always fully engaged in their learning and they become distracted.
- Pupils are caring, polite, considerate and respectful. They are proud of their school and enjoy learning. They are friendly and were happy to talk to inspectors about what they were doing and how much they like school. Attendance has improved and is above average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils said that they feel very safe and well looked after and that the school helps them to stay safe outside school as well as in school.
- Pupils understand that bullying can take different forms including physical, verbal and cyber bullying. They were adamant, however, that there is no bullying in school. Not only are they confident that teachers would quickly sort out any problems should they arise, but they said that they would take responsibility for reinforcing the fact that any unkindness would be unacceptable in their school.
- Parents felt that behaviour had improved and that pupils behave well. They said that their children are happy and well looked after at school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership for the school. She has created a strong team of teachers who, with governors and sponsors, are determined to provide the best possible opportunities for pupils. Staff feel valued and are very positive about the guidance and help they receive in meeting targets and improving their expertise.
- The headteacher rigorously checks the quality of teaching and, with other leaders, pupils'

progress. The information gathered through these checks informs the school development plan, which provides clear direction for future improvements. Where any weaknesses are identified, good support is provided and improvement is expected.

- Subject leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities but are not yet fully involved in raising achievement in their subjects.
- The school's leaders carefully check the impact of additional support that is provided for pupils of all abilities to ensure that it has the maximum benefit on pupils' learning.
- Since the academy was created, the senior team has successfully improved important aspects of the school's work and demonstrated a strong capacity for further improvement. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding, however. Despite the improving picture, current pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are not yet outstanding.
- The school goes the extra mile to broaden pupils' outlook and experience and extend their aspirations with a wealth of trips and additional activities. Parents appreciate this and a group of parents is raising funds to support these activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all of the school's work. Close links with the church help to develop their spirituality. Good moral and social development is evident in the way pupils conduct themselves in their relationships and in the respect they show for each other.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and is committed to making it possible for all pupils to fulfil their potential in a supportive, caring school without fear of any type of discrimination.
- Pupil premium funding is used in a variety of ways, to provide, for example, play therapy, one-to-one tuition and lunchtime activity clubs. The impact of the spending is monitored carefully and is evident in the improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Parents are positive about the school and feel that there have been good changes and improvements over the past year. The school has worked successfully to engage parents and the community in the life of the school.
- The school is using the additional funds for primary sports to increase the range of after school sports clubs and other sporting experiences. It has also joined a secondary school sports partnership to enable pupils to engage in league and competitive sports. Teachers have opportunities for training to extend their skills so that they can make a positive contribution to pupils' health and well-being in the long term.
- The academy's sponsors provide good support to the school. The headteacher works productively with the diocese and the Williamson Trust to improve standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very well informed about all aspects of the school's work and knows the school's strengths and improvement priorities as a result. Governors understand data about pupils' achievement and how well the school is doing compared to other schools. Governors are effective in challenging the school and holding it to account for its performance. They have a good awareness of the school's pay and promotion processes and check the performance of staff and the quality of teaching. The governing body monitors the allocation and impact of additional funds to ensure that they make a difference to pupils' achievement. Statutory duties, including safeguarding requirements, are fully met.

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

Unique reference number	138974
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	440146

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Bracknell
Headteacher	Virginia Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01634 270341
Fax number	01634 272145
Email address	wilsg001@medway.org.uk

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