

St James Catholic Primary School

Cheriton Close, off Underwood Road, Hattersley, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 3DQ

Inspection dates 20–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- There is a strong sense of pride across the whole school community. This is because the headteacher has established a strong culture of high expectations and ambition, which is shared by all.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have united to make sure that improvements are secure. As a result, the school is getting better.
- Standards across the school are rising and pupils are now achieving well.
- The school's determination to improve pupils' life chances means that gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are closing.
- Strong leadership in the early years ensures that children get off to a good start and are prepared well for their work in Year 1.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across the school. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning, helping to make sure that all pupils do well, whatever their starting points.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They enjoy lessons and work hard. They are confident, have positive attitudes to school, and learn to care for and respect each other and adults.
- Pupils behave well. They feel safe in school and the school keeps them safe. Their attendance is above average.
- A wide range of rich experiences, reflected in the vibrant school environment, contributes well to pupils' personal development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While outcomes are good overall, the most-able pupils do not always have hard enough work to do in mathematics.
- The school's improvement priorities do not have measurable outcomes against which school leaders and governors can gauge progress towards them.
- Although it continues to track the progress of individual pupils, the school has not got to grips with how to track the progress of different groups in the absence of National Curriculum levels.
- In the early years, staff do not track children's progress in the different components of communication and mathematics in sufficient detail.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In mathematics, make sure that teachers always set the right level of work, at the right time, to maximise learning, particularly for the most-able pupils.
- Improve assessment systems, the information they provide about pupils' progress and how it is best used by:
 - completing and implementing the current work on new assessment systems and finding ways to use the information more readily to track the progress of different groups of pupils
 - in the early years, breaking down assessment information to show more clearly how well children are doing in listening and attention, understanding and speaking, and number and shape, space and measure, as well as in overall communication and mathematics.
- Include in the school improvement plan measurable outcomes related to pupils' progress, against which governors and school leaders can judge the impact of the priorities they have set to improve teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's ambitious vision for the school is infectious. She speaks with passion about raising aspirations for the pupils and the community. Staff and governors share her vision, and therefore the school is a cohesive community with a common purpose.
- Morale is high because staff feel valued and supported. The large number who responded to the questionnaire for staff were unanimously positive. Staff say 'the school is in our hearts', and they relish the detailed discussions on how to improve teaching and learning. This creates a culture where everyone is striving to do the best for the pupils to give them better opportunities in life.
- Training for staff is carefully targeted to meet the school's needs and give staff the opportunity to develop personally. Training for staff who are responsible for different subjects or aspects (middle leaders) has been particularly successful.
- Middle leaders have embraced their roles well. They carry out regular checks on teaching and learning. This has helped to secure a good deal of consistency as the school has expanded and new staff have joined. They are confident that the improvements they have helped to bring about will last because everyone wants the school to get better and better.
- Staff benefit from accurate, succinct feedback from the headteacher, sensitively given so that strengths and areas for improvement are always clear. Staff readily accept advice and guidance and act on it quickly, thus improving pupils' learning.
- The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. The outcomes inform the priorities set for improvement, which in turn inform the targets set for staff as part of the management of their performance.
- The school's plan for improvement is sharper than at the previous inspection but its priorities do not have measurable outcomes against which leaders and governors can gauge progress towards them.
- Input from the local authority and from the diocese has played a significant part in helping the school to move forward. It has strengthened the school's capacity for further improvement and given both bodies the confidence that the school can sustain that improvement itself.
- The wide-ranging use of pupil premium funding has ensured that disadvantaged pupils are doing at least as well as their peers or are catching up quickly. Leaders, including governors, keep a close check on the impact of such spending, which widens pupils' horizons and gives them experiences they might not otherwise have. These include, for example, opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument, play in a brass band and visit different places of interest.
- The school has planned its curriculum well so that it inspires the pupils and gives them rich learning experiences that enhance their academic progress alongside promoting their personal development effectively. The curriculum is consistent with British values, which are given high priority throughout the school, and it prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The school successfully creates a culture where pupils are welcomed, wherever they come from, and encouraged to accept and learn from each other.
- The breadth and variety of opportunities presented to pupils strongly promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn to reflect on their learning and their behaviour, to interact well with others and to respect differences in culture, faith and background. Activities such as learning to play a musical instrument, play in the school's brass band, and take part in a range of extra-curricular activities further enrich pupils' learning and personal development.
- Leaders and teachers work closely together to track the progress of every pupil. They act on the information gained to implement support programmes to help pupils in danger of falling behind to keep up or to catch up. They check the impact of such programmes rigorously.
- Staff have begun to find ways to assess and track pupils' progress within the new curriculum, and use the information in their planning, as they have done in the past, so that they can compare the performance of different groups. However, the systems are incomplete. While they do give information about individual pupils, finding the information about different groups is at present a cumbersome task.
- The astute use of the additional sports funding for primary schools has made a big difference to pupils' participation in physical activities in and beyond the normal school day. The school sought the pupils' views on how to use the funding and, as a result, large numbers of pupils take part in a wider variety of sports and sporting competitions than in the past.

- Pupils are particularly proud of their success in becoming the schools' champion for cheerleading and their growing success in sports overall. Staff are benefiting from the training they receive as they work alongside sports coaches each week so that the improvements can be sustained.
- Leaders report confidently that the impact of the pupils' greater participation in music and sporting activities on their self-esteem, attendance and attitudes to school is as evident in the classroom as beyond it. Evidence gathered during the inspection would support this view.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the school. Their regular attendance at meetings and events reflects their commitment and dedication.
 - Governors bring a wide range of expertise to their roles. They hone their skills through regular training from the diocese as well as the local authority, and by undertaking regular skills audits and self-reviews to ensure they fulfil their roles well.
 - The governing body are realistic about what the school does well and how it can be better. They check what it is doing in the short term, but also keep a strategic view of the school's long-term development.
 - Governors make good use of a range of information about the school's and individual pupils' performance. They ask pertinent questions about why things are as they are and how they can be improved. They add to what the headteacher tells them by making their own visits to check on teaching and learning, and by liaising with staff, pupils and parents regularly.
 - Systems to manage the performance of staff at all levels, including the headteacher, are rigorous. Governors ensure that the objectives set for staff match the needs of the school while supporting staff in their own development.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school is rigorous in checking and recording the suitability of all adults working with the pupils and sensitive in dealing with issues as they arise. The school makes parents fully aware of its duties and takes swift action to protect children wherever there is cause for concern. Leaders and governors use local authority audit and training tools to keep their systems under review and check that, as far as possible, nothing can slip through the net.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers' good subject knowledge successfully promotes pupils' use and understanding of technical language in different subjects. Staff insist on pupils speaking correct English. They help pupils to increase the range of their vocabulary, thereby supporting their spoken language and their overall good progress.
- There is a strong partnership between teachers and teaching assistants, which benefits pupils' learning. Both use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to identify and address any gaps or misunderstanding. Questioning is mostly at the right level for different groups of pupils, causing them to think more deeply about what they are learning.
- Teachers use a range of ways to check how well pupils are doing during lessons and to make decisions about what to do next. They do not always use the information sharply enough to promote the highest level of learning for all pupils, especially the most-able pupils in mathematics.
- In mathematics, teachers are making increasingly effective use of apparatus, equipment and visual images to help pupils grasp key concepts. This is part of the school's drive for further improvement. Nevertheless, in lessons, teachers do not always move learning on for the most-able pupils quickly enough.
- Pupils receive frequent and precise verbal and written feedback on their learning. Teachers' marking identifies next steps for the pupils. Pupils do not all respond equally well to their teachers' comments but they understand the value of them and how they help to increase their learning.
- Staff ensure there is a bright, vibrant and well-organised learning environment throughout the school that sets the tone for purposeful and productive learning. They capture pupils' interests quickly, manage their behaviour well and ensure that time is used effectively.
- Attractive displays celebrate pupils' achievements as well as different aspects of the learning process. For example, they show how writing can be improved to reach 'perfection', encourage pupils to identify shapes from their descriptions and remind pupils how important it is to care for and respect others.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The very popular breakfast club gets the day off to a good start for those who attend. Up to around a third of pupils do so, including a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school uses specifically trained support staff exceedingly well to support pupils and their families, particularly those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, further strengthening the links between home and school.
- Pupils report they feel safe at school. Their regular attendance, confidence and conduct support this view. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, in and out of school, and when using the internet or mobile phones. There is plenty for pupils to do at play- and lunchtimes. These are happy, social occasions when pupils play well together.
- Pupils understand bullying and the different forms it can take. They report that, although bullying is rare, and everyone is usually kind to everyone else, there are occasions when there is some name-calling or use of derogatory language. Staff treat every such incident seriously and there are clear and effective procedures for dealing with any problems that arise.
- Relationships are very strong throughout the school. Staff, pupils and parents talk of a 'family feel' and a 'happy school' where pupils can thrive. Pupils consistently report and demonstrate their confidence in approaching staff with any concerns, secure in the knowledge that they will always receive help.
- Pupils particularly appreciate the 'heartbeat club', set up to help them deal with issues that might arise at home. Even those who do not attend the club, but who know the difficulties others are having, comment on the positive effect the club has in helping pupils to overcome those difficulties.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There are many instances of where the school has made a significant difference to the behaviour of individual pupils, enabling them to settle and to learn well. The school takes a very firm stance on behaviour and involves parents when necessary to ensure it remains good.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and they want to learn. They work industriously and have produced a considerable amount of work since the start of the year. They are rightly proud of their achievements and very keen to share their work and explain their learning.
- Attendance is above average. The school is vigilant in checking all absences and has been successful in reducing the number of pupils who are frequently absent.
- As they move through the school, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills and teach them about democracy (for example, as school councillors) and the need to respect others, including those of different faiths and backgrounds. Older pupils relish the opportunities they have to help younger pupils.
- Pupils respond quickly to adults' instructions. A few pupils lose concentration in lessons and their learning slows but this is only on rare occasions when what they are doing is too hard or too easy.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils throughout the school are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected levels of attainment at the end of Year 6 matched the national average. Additionally, a small number of pupils reached the highest level possible (Level 6).
- Despite variations in the size and make-up of different year groups, standards have risen across the school since the previous inspection and continue to do so. From typically lower starting points, pupils now catch up with other pupils nationally by the time they leave. This puts them on an equal footing with others as they start their secondary education.
- Work in pupils' books and on display shows good learning across all subjects. Pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their English skills in different subjects. Opportunities for them to use their mathematical skills in different subjects are fewer but they are increasing.
- Younger pupils have a good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), which they use well to help them read and spell. The proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standards in the national phonics screening check rose significantly in 2015, closing the gap with the national average.

- When heard reading, pupils in Year 2 who did not reach the expected standard when they were in Year 1 show that they have caught up and can read well. All pupils report they enjoy reading. They talk knowledgeably about authors and understand the importance of being able to read well.
- Pupils' writing is often lively and imaginative and shows a good understanding of the need to consider different audiences. Handwriting is almost always neat and legible. Spelling remains the weakest element of writing but it is improving as pupils become more confident in using phonics to help them.
- The increased focus on mathematics since the previous inspection means that pupils are now catching up fast. Pupils are enthusiastic about mathematics. They say they 'now get more questions right' and are proud to show off their developing knowledge of times tables. Year 6 pupils understand how being required to explain how they have solved problems, and investigate why something did or did not work, helps them to learn better.
- While the most-able pupils achieve well overall, they do not always have hard enough work to do in mathematics. These pupils, and, on occasions, other groups of pupils, sometimes complete too many straightforward number calculations correctly. Nevertheless, they do now have more opportunities to apply knowledge and access deeper understanding than previously.
- Pupils are also beginning to work as young scientists, undertaking investigations after predicting their outcomes and then writing up their findings afterwards. They do not yet plan their own investigations but are looking forward to doing so as the science curriculum becomes more established.
- Strong leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, accompanied by the astute deployment of well-trained and well-briefed support staff, ensure that these pupils make good progress. All support programmes are carefully targeted and constantly checked for impact.
- Disadvantaged pupils make especially strong progress in reading and writing and overall good progress in mathematics. They sometimes overtake their peers even though their starting points might be lower. The gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is narrower than found nationally and it is closing.

Early years provision

is good

- Children's language and communication skills are considerably underdeveloped when they start school. Effective leadership and management and good teaching ensure that, from their starting points, they make good progress and are prepared well for Year 1. The proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception, although below average in 2015, is improving.
- Staff prioritise language development and children benefit greatly from personalised support, including speech therapy. Adults interact well with the children, modelling language and encouraging children to speak in sentences, explain what they are doing and communicate with others.
- Well-planned learning activities, indoors and out, support literacy and numeracy skills effectively. Thus, children learn to read, write and spell, to add and subtract and to solve simple mathematical problems. The school makes especially good use of its well-appointed outdoor area to enrich children's learning.
- Children have a very settled start to the day. They arrive at school eager to learn and they thrive in the well-organised learning environment. They develop good personal skills and become increasingly independent as they follow the well-established routines.
- The early years team involves parents in their children's learning from the outset. Parents speak highly of the support they receive, including through initiatives such as the home learning bags. Safeguarding is given high priority. All staff are vigilant in ensuring children's health, safety and well-being at all times.
- Staff constantly assess, track and record children's learning. They use the information well in planning and to move learning on in lessons. However, they do not have a clear enough view of how well different groups are doing in each of the different aspects of communication or mathematics. The assessment systems are not fully enough developed to give them this finer detail.

School details

Unique reference number	106239
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10002196

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Toms
Headteacher	Jackie Walker
Telephone number	0161 368 3455
Website	www.st-james-hyde.tameside.sch.uk
Email address	admin@st-james-hyde.tameside.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has its own breakfast club.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils), at over half of the pupils, is high.
- Nursery children attend school part time and Reception children attend full time.
- The school population has grown in recent years. This year, for the first time, all pupils are being taught in single-age classes. Consequently, staffing has increased, resulting in several new staff joining the school since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6.
- More pupils join or leave the school at different times than is found nationally. Some attend the school, leave for a while and then return again.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in parts of 17 lessons, four of which were joint observations with the headteacher. They also analysed the work in the books of pupils currently in the school, alongside analysing the school's most recent information about pupils' progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2 and they sampled sessions where staff were teaching phonics.
- Discussions were held with key leaders, seven members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to gain their views of the school. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils both formally and informally, and took account of the 14 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire for pupils.
- A range of documents relating to school improvement were examined along with policies and procedures relating to teaching, safeguarding pupils, provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and disadvantaged pupils.
- The views of the 15 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account. Inspectors also gained the views of a number of parents at first hand as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and took account of the views of the 16 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Pamela Potter, team inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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