

St James Church of England Primary School

Grotto Road, Weybridge KT13 8PL

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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

- The excellent leadership of the new headteacher has lifted the pace of improvement markedly.
- In a remarkably short space of time she has begun to unlock the full potential of this strongly united community.
- Leaders know the school inside out. This has allowed them to build on existing strengths and focus on the right areas for improvement.
- Pupils are taught well throughout the school.
- Current pupils are making good progress. A much sharper focus on pupils who have fallen behind means that many are starting to catch up quickly now.
- Standards are rising across the school. Recent leavers did especially well in mathematics.
- Children make a good start to their schooling in the effective early years provision.
- The sense of unity and cohesion is striking. One parent captured this by describing St James as 'a warm, friendly and strongly supported school at the heart of the community for all parents and children'.
- Genuine awareness and care for pupils' well-being runs deeply through the school at all levels. Relationships between and among pupils and adults are exemplary. Pupils feel safe.
- The pupils are a credit to the school. They grow into confident and articulate learners who make the most of the varied opportunities on offer.
- Most pupils demonstrate consistently excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Governance has improved. The governing body played a critical role and took great care to appoint the right headteacher for St James.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs have begun to catch up quickly more recently, over time, gaps between them and others have not closed well enough.
- Not all teachers judge the level of challenge for the most and least able sharply enough to ensure that they do as well as they could. This is also true in the Reception Year, especially for those children who prefer to learn outdoors.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the recent rigorous actions to close the remaining gaps in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and others nationally and in school.
- Bring all teaching up to the quality of the best by ensuring that the level of expectation and challenge is always high enough for the most and least able pupils.
- Ensure that adults in the Reception Year make the most of all opportunities to challenge children and promote learning, especially in the outdoor area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The arrival of the new headteacher was a pivotal moment in the school's journey since the previous inspection. Under her outstanding leadership, the pace of improvement has significantly accelerated.
 - The whole community is behind the headteacher. Parents are overwhelmingly positive. One parent described it as 'a much cherished school which we are very lucky to have'. This represents the strong sense of pride conveyed by pupils, parents and staff alike. The high number of staff who expressed a view were unanimous that the school is a lot better now.
 - The headteacher's quiet but clear and determined leadership has been very effective. She is uncompromising in her drive to embed high expectations across the school. Staff morale is high and there is a strong sense of teamwork. 'Immense', 'incredible' and 'amazing' were just some of the many positive words that parents and staff used to describe the school's recent journey.
 - To secure the desired pace of improvement, the headteacher has made sure that other leaders too are confident and able to drive the school's development. The small team of senior leaders is highly competent. The capacity of leaders responsible for particular subjects or areas is growing well. They receive appropriate and helpful training, including from the diocese.
 - Excellent leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability has secured substantial improvement. The highly skilled coordinator of this provision champions the needs of these pupils. The meticulous tracking, to check that any additional help given to pupils works well enough, is exemplary.
 - There is a sharp focus by current leaders on refining the use of additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils do as well as others. Over time, gaps have not always closed quickly enough and have sometimes widened. Now, highly structured and systematic support for these pupils is helping them start to catch up, but it is too soon to see if recent actions will have made the difference needed in the long term.
 - Senior leaders have a deep understanding of how well the school is doing and where further attention is required. They work well with the professional and reflective team of teachers to continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
 - A well-judged balance between support and challenge from the local authority helped guide the school through a period without a substantive headteacher since the previous inspection. The local authority and inspectors agree that the school now has a strong capacity to continue improving.
 - The strong values that underpin the school's caring and nurturing ethos are well established and are entirely consistent with fundamental British values. Leaders have been successful in building on this strength, coupling it with higher academic expectations and greater rigour in other aspects of the school's work.
 - The rich and wide-ranging learning experiences offered to pupils support their learning well. This includes their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as their accelerating academic progress. Leaders recognise that the development of pupils' skills in some subjects, for example science and geography, is not always as systematic as it is in English and mathematics. They have plans in place to address this.
 - Wise use of the additional sports funding, supplemented from the school budget, has meant that it has gone a long way. Specialist coaches have worked alongside teachers to develop their subject knowledge and skills. The focus has shifted over time to ensure that pupils gain a breadth of worthwhile experiences, from outdoor adventurous activities to gymnastics. Extra-curricular clubs are highly popular, including among disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs. Leaders track carefully that all groups can enjoy equal access to clubs provided. Participation in a range of competitions has increased.
 - Within an overwhelmingly positive response from parents, a very small minority disagreed that they receive valuable information about their children's progress. Opportunities for parents to meet their child's teacher and individual pupils' reports sent home are typical of those in many other schools.
- **The governance of the school**
- The governing body played a significant role in steering the school through a period without a substantive headteacher. Their determination to keep hunting until they found the right person has paid off.

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection. The governing body worked hard and with success to address the nine recommendations arising from an external review of its effectiveness. Governors' desire to continue to improve is evident: for example, through the very helpful feedback provided by the diocese following a visit to observe a governing body meeting.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school and there is evidence that they ask challenging questions of school leaders. They are especially clear about the journey the school has been on, but less incisive about current and future priorities. They visit regularly to find things out for themselves rather than relying fully on what school leaders tell them.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Links with other professionals and agencies to protect children are particularly strong. Leaders demonstrate great determination in following up any concerns for the well-being of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Leaders and teachers have worked well together to embed numerous strengths in the quality of teaching across the school.
- Through careful planning, teachers make good use of time in lessons so that pupils achieve well over time. A good degree of challenge makes pupils think and work hard. They have the confidence to tackle tricky tasks and learn well from their mistakes. Teachers model well for pupils how to be successful in particular tasks.
- Routine use of mathematical apparatus and visual images for pupils of all abilities helps them to develop a firm understanding of important mathematical concepts. Teachers check this well by setting tasks that mean pupils have to apply their skills in a slightly different context, or use them to solve a problem.
- Teachers make the most of opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across a range of subjects. The variety that this brings for pupils is highly motivating. Similarly, pupils are proud of how much better their writing has become because they have had frequent opportunities to practise. In a Year 2 history lesson, pupils were enthused writing about what they thought they might see, hear, smell and feel if they had been in London at the time of the 'Great Fire'.
- Teachers provide frequent opportunities in lessons for pupils to put their well-developed reading skills to good use. Pupils are very keen to read their own work aloud in class. In Year 5, one teacher cleverly empowered pupils as writers by getting their classmates to analyse the effect of their writing in the same way they might when reading a published text.
- As well as increased academic rigour, teaching routinely promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. For example, Year 6 pupils were instantly animated when appreciating different artists' representations of mountains, and eager to discuss their views together. Numerous parents commented on the rich learning experiences their children describe. One parent commented on being 'beyond impressed with the lengths they go to in order to inspire the children'.
- Working in close partnership with teachers, teaching assistants contribute very well to pupils' effective learning, including but not limited to pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Extensive staff training has paid off, both within the classroom and in additional help sessions outside lessons.
- Adults' questioning really probes pupils' thinking and encourages them to extend and develop their ideas. Pupils' confidence when speaking helps them to develop reasoned and articulate answers. This is increasingly evident in their written work.
- Teachers use their deep subject knowledge effectively to develop pupils' use and understanding of technical vocabulary. They ensure that key learning points are clear for all pupils. Adults check pupils' understanding carefully throughout lessons and by checking their work closely.
- The written feedback pupils receive is very helpful. This is because teachers keep the age and ability of the pupils in mind when marking their work, adapting their feedback accordingly. They also make sure that pupils have time to follow their advice. For example, they give them opportunities to review previous mistakes or edit and improve their work.
- Teachers think carefully about how to adapt lessons to meet the needs of different pupils in the class, including pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Overall, this is effective, although the level of challenge is not always quite right for the most or least able to secure the highest possible outcomes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils and parents overwhelmingly agree that pupils feel safe in what one parent called 'an incredibly caring environment'. Numerous parents heaped similar praise on this aspect of the school's work. One parent succinctly summed up the feelings of many by writing, 'The staff seem genuinely interested in my daughter's well-being,' while another described staff as 'interested, approachable and helpful'.
- Pupils work hard and most have excellent attitudes to learning. Confident and articulate, pupils' positive approach and pride in their work makes a significant contribution to their accelerating progress. In many cases, they have increased their stamina in writing, which is helping them to develop and refine their skills.
- The mutual respect demonstrated by pupils is striking. When pupils are working together, they are highly productive and listen to each other's ideas thoughtfully. With excellent adult role models, relationships at all levels between and among adults and pupils are exemplary.
- Through a range of different activities, pupils develop a detailed understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. Take-up of the wide range of extra-curricular physical activities is high. Older pupils can explain clearly how to keep safe when riding their bikes or when using the internet. Pupils with extra responsibility, such as prefects, buddies or school councillors, are highly mature and reflective about the most important aspects and responsibilities of their roles.
- Bullying or derogatory language is very rare and tackled robustly when occasional issues arise. Pupils report that they feel very confident to share any concerns with an adult in school, knowing that they will listen and help. One pupil reported that their teacher often says, 'Your worries are always more important than mine.' Pupils feel confident that teachers check class 'worry boxes' every day and act on any issues that have been posted in.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- A highly positive and productive atmosphere is evident across the school, inside and out. Adults use the school's new 'behaviour ladders' consistently. Pupils understand these clearly and are motivated because the system recognises their positive learning behaviours too. They also report that the consequences for less positive behaviour work well. Rigorous tracking of the school's behaviour strategies shows that they have led to significant improvement, including tailored support for pupils with particular needs.
- The atmosphere in lessons is always appropriate for the tasks taking place. Pupils report that this is their typical daily experience and rate behaviour highly. Parents, staff and governors echo this view.
- Attendance rates have been above the national average for the last two years. Current attendance rates for pupil premium pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability are improving and broadly average compared nationally. Fewer pupils than seen nationally are frequently absent and this proportion continues to fall.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In many cases, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs are starting to catch up quickly with others.
- Rates of progress for pupils reaching the end of Year 6 since the previous inspection have risen overall. The acceleration in mathematics progress has been particularly dramatic, with the 2015 cohort making significantly better progress than in most other schools.
- Standards are higher across the school than at the time of the previous inspection. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are significantly above the national average. This rise is less marked at the end of Key Stage 2, largely because historically pupils have not made enough progress in writing. Nonetheless, the just-above average levels reached by recent cohorts will have stood them in good stead as they started secondary school.

- Across the school, current pupils are making significantly better progress in writing than those in the past. Younger pupils are using their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) to improve their writing. Effective support in lower Key Stage 2 for pupils who have fallen behind is helping them to catch up. In Years 5 and 6, the most able are well challenged to really refine and hone their writing skills.
- Pupils produce work of a good quality across a range of subjects. Last term's Year 6 Shakespeare topic work was presented particularly impressively.
- The most-able pupils achieve well over time. The school's own assessment information shows that proportions exceeding the expectations for their age are often high. The proportion reaching above-average levels by the end of Key Stage 1 has been significantly above average in reading and mathematics. In 2015, a quarter of Year 6 leavers achieved levels in mathematics typical of Year 9 pupils in secondary schools.
- Early but compelling signs show that outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs or disability are improving strongly. For some pupils with an education, health and care plan, progress is in very small steps due to their complex needs. Convincing case studies illustrate that the school meets the needs of these pupils well.
- Evaluating the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils is a complex picture. This is because numbers in particular cohorts are sometimes exceptionally low and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who also have special educational needs or other barriers to learning varies significantly. Although gaps between these pupils and others in school and nationally have not always closed well enough historically, gaps for current pupils are mostly closing, sometimes rapidly. This is particularly the case lower down the school where issues have been caught more quickly.
- Outcomes from the check of how well Year 1 pupils know their phonics have lagged just behind national averages in recent years. Sharper and more systematic teaching of phonics this year means that more are on track to meet the expected standard, especially boys.

Early years provision

is good

- In line with the rest of the school, good teaching across the Reception Year means that children do well.
- From starting points that are similar to those expected for their ages, children make good progress. The proportion who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has shown a strongly improving trend and is now typically above the national average. This means that children are very well prepared for the rigours of the Year 1 curriculum.
- The environment is rich and stimulating, especially indoors. Children have plenty of inviting opportunities to begin to write or use their mathematical skills. They are confident to have a go.
- Consistent with the ethos of the school, adults place a high priority on children's personal, social and emotional development. Consequently, children feel safe, secure and get off to a good start with their learning. One parent commented how their son 'has grown in confidence, made numerous friends, feels safe in his environment and enjoys attending school'.
- Leaders and teachers understand how children learn best at this age. They carefully balance focused teaching sessions with opportunities to guide children through selecting their own activities. For example, adults reinforce the effective teaching of phonics in systematic and structured sessions by practising the skills with children at other times throughout the day.
- Adults observe children's learning and development carefully. A number of parents particularly praised how much they find out about how well their children are doing. Occasionally, adults miss opportunities to extend children as they play by building in extra challenge to move them on in their learning.
- Good leadership of the early years provision has helped to establish strong links with parents and other professionals for the benefit of the children. Expert advice is sought to help support children with particular needs. Additional funding for disadvantaged children is used well to help tackle any gaps between them and their peers quickly before they widen. Current children are catching up well and the gap between them and their peers is set to be narrower than it was last year.
- Leaders have rightly identified that the outdoor area is less well developed than provision indoors. They are taking action to address this but recognise that there is more work to be done.

School details

Unique reference number	125163
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10002311

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Haynes
Headteacher	Linda Rainbow
Telephone number	01932 851762
Website	www.stjames-veybridge.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@stjames-veybridge.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2013

Information about this school

- St James Church of England Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability and who receive additional support from within the school is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average, and in particular cohorts is very low. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority (disadvantaged pupils).
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast club.
- The headteacher started in April 2015, after the previous inspection. Prior to this, the school was without a substantive headteacher for a year. During this time, the school was led by the current deputy headteacher as acting headteacher and then an interim headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes to gather a range of evidence about what teaching and learning are typically like. Most of these visits were carried out jointly with leaders from the school. As well as observing lessons taking place during the inspection, inspectors paid particular attention to the quality of work in pupils' books over time and discussed their learning with them. They also took note of leaders' own evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning.
- A range of people met or spoke informally with inspectors. They included pupils, parents, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also analysed 172 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 39 questionnaires returned by staff. Many staff and an exceptionally high number of parents added additional comments or sent a letter to inspectors to explain their views. Inspectors took all of these into account.
- Inspectors sampled a range of different aspects of the school's work and documentation, and scrutinised safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Darren Aisthorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Kusum Trikha	Ofsted Inspector

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