

St James the Great Roman Catholic Primary School

Peckham Road, London SE15 5LP

Inspection dates

28–31 March 2017

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

- The headteacher leads and manages the school effectively. The head of school and other leaders support her very well.
- Governors know the school extremely well and consistently challenge and hold leaders to account. Leaders ensure that they do not waver from meeting governors' high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour.
- Subject leaders work closely with senior leaders to raise standards further. They understand the culture of high expectations and hold teachers to account for pupils' achievement.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers plan lessons carefully and activities are exciting and purposeful.
- Standards and progress are above average at the end of Year 6. Progress is good in all year groups, and is particularly strong in mathematics and reading but less so in writing.
- Pupils achieve at least in line with the national average in Year 2, the early years and the phonics screening checks from low starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well at this school. This is because the school successfully removes barriers that affect their lives, and pupils have a positive 'Yes, I can succeed' attitude.
- The most able pupils make good progress in all areas of their work. Leaders recognise that the level of challenge is not always enough for them to achieve the high standards.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This is because of the consistent care and support they receive.
- The progress of boys and pupils at the early stage of learning English is not as good as that of girls. Staff are tackling this.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' high attendance reflects their love for learning.
- Pupils feel very safe. They develop trusting and respectful relationships with adults and each other. Leaders' knowledge of the local context helps them to keep pupils safe.
- Parents are supportive of the school's work to develop their children's learning. The school works closely with parents to involve them in their children's learning.
- The curriculum gives pupils a breadth of experiences that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching consistently sets high expectations and promotes good or better progress and outcomes so that there is no variability in subjects for groups of pupil by:
 - placing more emphasis on writing in early years with plenty of opportunities for children to write indoors and outdoors
 - making sure that children have a good grasp of basic literacy skills and are well prepared to achieve a high standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1
 - making sure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged in all subjects to achieve the high standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6
 - improving outcomes in writing in both key stages so that pupils become experienced writers who can use their skills to write accurately
 - building on the strategies in place to diminish the differences in standards between boys and girls.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher, head of school and other senior leaders, including the governing body, have worked well together to create a school where pupils can flourish. As a result, pupils love learning and their attendance is high.
- Leaders at all levels and the governing body have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the local community that it serves. Together with the staff, they have put effective systems in place to assist pupils to overcome barriers to achieve well. This has enabled them to maintain a continuous focus on raising standards and improving the quality of pupils' experiences and education.
- The systems in place for assessing pupils' progress and their attainment are rigorous. Leaders regularly gather and analyse a range of assessment information that provides them with a good overview of pupils' progress over time. This enables them to identify gaps in pupils' learning and put in place appropriate interventions to prevent underachievement.
- Leaders use the analysis of assessment information to evaluate the school's effectiveness. They compare the information against other measures locally and nationally. Leaders manage assessment data well, so that they interpret the progress of different groups accurately when they hold teachers to account for pupils' achievement. This ensures that all pupils receive equal opportunities to achieve well.
- The appraisal process to evaluate teachers' work is demanding. Targets reflect the school's priorities and key responsibilities of post holders.
- The monitoring of teaching is thorough. Leaders check the quality of teaching and learning regularly and provide feedback that identifies strengths and areas for improvement. This guidance enables staff to receive appropriate training and development to improve their work further. Good-quality support and opportunities for professional development have led to the school maintaining a stable and loyal staff who understand and know the pupils well.
- Leaders' assessment of the school's strengths and areas for development is accurate. However, the improvement plan does not fully identify clear methods to evaluate the impact of their development.
- The school's curriculum meets the interests and needs of pupils very well; it is broad and balanced. It provides pupils with a breadth of skills outside their cultural practices while it celebrates the rich and diverse cultures within the school and local community. For example, currently, pupils from each year group are working with an artist in residence to develop a disused local park. Additionally, the school's commitment to pupils receiving instrument lessons includes a number of them attending Saturday school to learn brass, woodwind and percussion instruments. Pupils have performed at the Royal Festival Hall, and the school successfully gained a scholarship for one musician.
- Pupils value the wide range of extra-curricular activities. They were keen to talk to inspectors about opportunities to gain accreditation in sailing. Varied and extended activities provide pupils with treasured experiences.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils work and interact well with each other. They understand the needs of others and use charitable events to reach out to others requiring support in the immediate and wider community. The church ethos supports pupils in demonstrating their commitment to others. The school promotes British values very well.
- Work with the federated primary school provides opportunities for staff to share and develop their practices, including planning, moderating work and training together. The schools also share a range of resources, including staff and governors.
- Leaders ensure that they use the funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well to meet their needs by providing external and targeted support. The careful matching of support to pupils' needs in lessons enables them to settle and complete tasks well and, as a result, make better progress than other pupils nationally.
- Leaders use the additional funding for the pupil premium and the sport premium effectively. The pupil premium gives pupils access to extra tuition to improve their academic skills. Pupils also have opportunities to play a brass instrument and widen their experiences through participation in school trips. The sports premium enables pupils to develop their leadership skills and take part in intra-school activities. These activities have a strong impact on pupils' learning and progress, and contribute very well to developing their confidence.
- Partnership with parents is very good, and they are supportive of the school's work. They say that they like the good communication and workshop sessions, which help them to support their children's learning.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has a thorough understanding of the school's work. Minutes of meetings show that governors challenge leaders effectively and provide good-quality support. The governors' decision to have termly and regular meetings with the local authority provides them with an external evaluation of the school's effectiveness. These meetings provide extra challenge that enables them to inject more rigour into their work. This is evident in their questioning about the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils, boys and children in the early years provision.
- Governors are knowledgeable and bring a good range of skills to their work. They visit the school regularly and maintain good links with subject leaders and the safeguarding lead.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and the likely challenges ahead of a small school. For example, they have discussed the school's future as part of the federation. They are clear that, regardless of any change, the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains a key priority for the school.
- The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met in relation to safeguarding and equality of opportunity.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are up to date with local and national priorities, such as awareness of female genital mutilation and radicalisation, as a result of high-quality training. Leaders are aware of the local risks and ensure that staff do all that they can to keep pupils safe. Leaders are responsive and act swiftly when issues arise, for example internet safety. Leaders ensure that pupils have a good awareness of how to keep safe in and out of school. There is good coverage of age-related topics on safety in the curriculum and assemblies.
- Staff have a good understanding of the steps to take if there is a concern. Leaders give a high profile to inclusion work, particularly as the school makes very good use of early help and external services to support vulnerable pupils and families. The links with external partners are stabilising factors to pupils settling and making good progress.
- The school carries out all checks on staff and ensures that they meet statutory requirements. Similarly, it tracks and records the destination of all leavers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning, and so their planning is well structured and purposeful. They use their good knowledge of pupils when planning to match learning activities to pupils' needs. Typically, and more specifically, in mathematics and literacy lessons, teachers provide activities which meet the needs of all groups of learners. Teachers set appropriately challenging work for the most able pupils.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge and expertise to plan interesting lessons that pupils describe as 'fun' to stimulate pupils' thinking. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors that their teachers '... ask us rhetorical questions that help us to think. They also ask open-ended questions which are never straightforward.' Typically, this was evident in a number of subjects across the year groups. Teachers push pupils to challenge themselves further. High expectations mean that, regardless of their starting points, pupils make every effort to do all they can to tackle work that is more challenging. This is particularly evident in mathematics lessons.
- Although teachers know their pupils well and have a very good understanding of their academic needs, they are aware that they could stretch pupils even more to reach the higher standards at the end of both key stages in all subjects, particularly in writing. Pupils in all year groups told inspectors that teachers provide suitable challenge; however, they would welcome more challenge.
- Pupils love learning and arrive to lessons ready to begin working. Strong relationships between staff and pupils, and teachers' good classroom management skills, mean that it is rare for teaching and learning to stall. In addition, pupils told inspectors that they feel very well supported to do their best.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants and specialist staff supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities very well. They provide very good support and push pupils to think and begin working out their answers.

- High-quality feedback provides pupils with guidance on how they can improve their work. Pupils use the comments to work on the weaknesses identified and show that they have a better understanding of the work.
- School leaders familiarise pupils with new concepts, in what leaders refer to as 'pre-teaching', before they begin new work. This is because some topics and vocabulary take pupils beyond what they already know. These sessions give them a head start to understanding the work quickly.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are very well developed and they excel in this subject. They are confident in working through and grasping key concepts to find different solutions when solving difficult mathematical problems. In both instances, teachers stretched pupils. In groups, pupils discussed their solutions and habitually showed their working out. Leaders recognise that although pupils make excellent progress in mathematics, more opportunities could be available across other subjects to develop their mathematical skills. The school has made a start on this work.
- From low starting points on entry, pupils' literacy skills develop further as they progress through each phase. This is particularly evident in reading and writing. Pupils speak confidently and are not afraid to strike up and hold a conversation with visitors. The teaching of phonics is well organised and helps pupils to become confident readers able to use the iPad to carry out independent research, summarise and report factual findings accurately, as seen in Year 2. Leaders have appropriately prioritised pupils' progress in writing, as it is not as strong as in reading and mathematics. Teachers focus on pupils editing their writing and, as a result, there is evidence of pupils using ambitious vocabulary and writing sustained pieces of work that are punctuated accurately. Leaders have appropriately selected a range of quality reading texts to develop pupils' vocabulary and stimulate their writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils very much enjoy coming to their school and see it as an 'amazing place'. Pupils' happiness and enjoyment of their school is evident in their consistently above-average attendance over the last three years.
- Pupils have a strong interest in learning. They talked avidly to inspectors about the range of subjects they enjoy learning, in particular mathematics, art and science. Their positive approach to learning extends beyond the classroom to extra-curricular activities, including swimming.
- Across the school, pupils spoke firmly about being safe in their school. The very presence of staff reassures them and led to one pupil stating, 'Nothing in the school can harm us.'
- Pupils get on very well together and show respect for each other and adults. This is because the school places much emphasis on the ethos and values that reflect their faith in a range of subjects. Pupils show concern for others and reach out into the community through charitable work. Pupils benefit greatly from keep-fit exercises and

sporting activities. They understand the basics of eating healthy.

- Pupils are well rounded, mature and highly ambitious. They are drawn to the 'can do' culture which the school emphasises. This, combined with the initial work on introducing basic careers education, propels them to work hard. The school celebrates pupils' achievement through its own 'Oscar award' ceremony, which pupils enjoy.
- Pupils hold various responsibilities such as school councillors, play supporters, liturgy leaders, peacemakers and duty leaders at lunchtime. Pupils in these roles stand out as eloquent ambassadors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable during lessons, when they gather as a whole school in assembly and at social times. Parents who took part in the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, strongly agree that pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils believe in the high expectations teachers have of their work and behaviour and are quite exacting on each other if there is the slightest distraction. This is because they want to learn. Low-level disruption is rare and the school has not excluded any pupil since the last inspection.
- Pupils say that bullying does not happen in the school. They explained to inspectors that 'occasionally some pupils are not nice to each other, and when they fall out, they become friends quickly and it's forgotten.' Pupils were definite that the 'peacemakers' and staff quickly sort out instances of bullying behaviour. Pupils know that the school involves parents when behaviour is unacceptable. They also know that there is always an adult they can turn to for advice and support.
- Pupils talk confidently about the different forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying, and the risks associated with safety when online. Pupils' moral understanding of right and wrong leads to them behaving well towards each other.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from below- and well below-average starting points to achieve above-average standards at the end of Year 6. As pupils move through the school, their rates of progress improve and, by the end of Year 2, they are at least in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Across the key stages, there is some variability in the progress that groups of pupils make. For example, boys do not all perform as well as girls. In addition, some of the most able pupils do not reach the high standards in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly at key stage 1.
- At key stage 2, pupils reached above-average standards in reading and mathematics and were in line with the national average in writing. Pupils achieved above-average standards in science and in spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Phonics skills at the end of Year 1 were slightly below the national average. This reflects the starting points of pupils who enter with little or no English or who have

specific special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils who do not make good progress or achieve the national standard in the phonics screening checks receive good additional support. By the end of Year 2, most who retake the phonics screening make good progress to pass.

- The school has selected a range of quality texts to motivate pupils to enjoy reading, in particular boys. Pupils who are not fluent readers use their phonics skills to tackle and blend unknown and tricky words. Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, including confident and 'weaker' less confident readers have access to a wide range of texts that energise them to begin reading widely, both in and out of school.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieved well in the 2016 national tests, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. They surpassed the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able disadvantaged pupils made outstanding progress in mathematics. Currently, this group of pupils in the school are sustaining the good progress made in 2016.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils were particularly strong in mathematics in relation to both their attainment and progress. However, the most able in key stage 1 did not all achieve the high standards in reading and writing. The school acknowledges that pupils require more challenge in all subjects taught, and has made a start to ensuring that the most able pupils can show their full potential in all areas of learning. Assessment information suggests that they are making better progress in literacy and mathematics at the higher levels.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall. In 2016, based on their starting points, their rates of progress indicate that they made significantly above-average progress in reading. Progress was not as good in mathematics and writing; however, it was not different from in line with the national average for pupils with similar starting points.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support to achieve well in all years. As pupils progress through the year groups, support is focused on well-organised reading intervention strategies that provide them with the help needed to develop good literacy skills.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the school with skills that are well below age-related expectations but make good progress by the end of early years, with the majority reaching a good level of development. Girls make better progress than boys in all areas of learning, particularly in writing and reading. The school has invested well in resources to stimulate boys' interest in reading and writing by focusing on topics such as 'superheroes' and 'dinosaurs' to motivate them to read and write.
- Assessment information on current children's progress shows that they are making good progress, and teachers use the information well to tackle weaknesses in pupils writing, number work and fine motor skills.
- Children develop good social and emotional skills. They behave well, follow routines and listen carefully to the staff and each other. They remain on task and show determination to master their work. For example, a small group of children remained in

the 'potting area' until they had worked out their estimation of the number of pots of soil needed to fill a big pot and the 'tally' was recorded.

- Teachers provide opportunities for children to practise their writing and number skills, particularly in the morning session when they give close attention to encouraging them to write and think about their learning. Occasionally, staff do not focus enough on probing children's understanding of new and unknown words.
- Children are avid readers, and typically the more advanced readers speed through the class book on 'the Bear'. Children showed that they could successfully recall important points and make predictions.
- Teachers provide varied and purposeful activities in all areas of learning to stimulate children's interests and thinking. Typically, the music session in Reception captured boys' interest as they pretended they were performing to a crowd. In literacy, children designed small and illustrated books that recorded their adventures among dinosaurs. Teachers encourage children to engage in role play as a means of developing their language skills.
- Work in children's learning journals provides good insight into children's progress, and includes the next steps for developing their learning. Adults provide good support for children who are disadvantaged and for children learning English as an additional language so that they can access the work and have a sense of accomplishment. Children use the outdoor space and dive in to the different activities, but there are limited opportunities to write outdoors.
- Parents spoke positively about the early years provision, the feedback on their children's progress and daily contact with teachers.

School details

Unique reference number	100825
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10023601

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Cutting
Executive headteacher	Janice Babb
Head of school	Denis O'Regan
Telephone number	020 7703 5870
Website	www.stjamesthegreat.southwark.sch.uk
Email address	office@stjamesthegreat.southwark.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St James the Great Roman Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school. The school is in a federation with St John's Catholic Primary School and both schools share one governing body.
- The school makes provision for 54 children in early years. Of the 27 in the Nursery, six children attend full time and the rest are part time.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils from minority groups is high, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities support is average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. The school has a number of pupils with autism spectrum disorder and has recently opened a small unit, called Jigsaw.
- The school meets the current floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 19 teaching sessions across a range of subjects in both key stages and early years. Twelve of these were joint observations undertaken with the executive headteacher and head of school. The inspectors also looked at pupils' work in all phases.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle managers, including the inclusion manager. Telephone conversations were held with the vice-chair of the governing body and with a senior representative of the local authority. The inspectors held discussions with two groups of pupils. They spoke with over 50 pupils during break and lunchtimes, and listened to two groups of pupils read from Years 2 and 3.
- Inspectors considered 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with a number of parents who wanted to share their views about the school's work when dropping off their children on the second day of the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, assessment information on pupils' performance and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, including case studies.

Inspection team

Carmen Rodney, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Avtar Sherri	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Brinkley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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