

St James Church of England Primary School

Harlestone Road, St James, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN5 7AG

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good throughout the school.
- Until recently, the local governing body has not been clear about its responsibilities. Consequently, governors have not provided effective challenge for leaders in the past.
- Teachers do not match the work consistently well to pupils' needs and abilities. When work is either too easy or too hard, pupils do not make good progress.
- Pupils' written work in English, and in other subjects, is not consistently well presented.
- In mathematics, the most able pupils are not consistently given work that is challenging for them. This means that they do not develop higher-level skills or achieve at greater depth.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average in 2016 and 2017.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics has remained well below average for at least three years.
- In the early years, children do not make as much progress in their physical development as in the other areas of learning. The current design and use of the outdoor area do not effectively promote this aspect of children's development.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She has made a good start in bringing about much-needed improvements.
- Staff morale is high as a result of the recent changes introduced by leaders. Teachers are keen to improve their practice.
- Pupils cooperate well with each other. Their conduct in lessons and around school is good.
- The quality of leadership and teaching in the early years is good. Children make good and improving progress from their starting points.
- Good pastoral care in the pupil referral units provides effective help for those pupils who need support in their social and emotional development.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils have confidence in staff to keep them safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management in order to bring about sustained improvement by making sure that:
 - those responsible for governance are increasingly effective in holding leaders to account for school improvement
 - senior leaders build on the effective start they have made to raise standards
 - leaders and governors carry out rigorous checks to monitor and improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make faster progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently set work that is well matched to pupils' abilities, particularly for the most able pupils in mathematics
 - place greater emphasis on setting clear expectations for what they wish pupils to achieve in lessons
 - share effective practice with colleagues so that the quality of teaching is consistently good and standards in reading, writing and mathematics improve rapidly in all year groups.
- Improve provision in the early years in order to promote children's physical development more effectively by improving resources and making more effective use of the outdoor area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not been effective in driving improvement in the past. Over the last three years, standards of attainment in phonics and in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have remained well below average. Leaders and governors acknowledge that the pupils' published outcomes were 'static'. They did not take remedial action swiftly enough to halt the decline in pupils' attainment.
- Until recently, the local governing body has not held leaders to account well enough. An external review of governance found that governors' meetings were not well attended and that governors were not clear about their roles and responsibilities. However, the local governing body is now working alongside the Peterborough Diocesan Education Trust to bring about the necessary improvements.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good in key stages 1 and 2. Their past checks on the quality of teaching and learning were not precisely focused on raising standards.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2017. Aply supported by her new deputy headteacher, she has set a culture of high expectations for staff and pupils. The headteacher has quickly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and, as a result, she has prioritised plans for school improvement using concise and measurable actions.
- The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school. Staff value the recent changes implemented by senior leaders, saying that they have renewed drive and enthusiasm. They now feel motivated to work together in the best interests of the pupils. Consequently, staff morale is high and there is a growing sense of teamwork and positivity across the school.
- Leaders have established new systems for precisely assessing, recording and analysing pupils' progress. Leaders make sure that teachers are involved in the assessment process. As a result, leaders and staff have an increasingly accurate overview of pupils' progress.
- Leaders produce regular and detailed reports for the local governing body on the additional funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils. The funding is used effectively and, as a result, in 2017, disadvantaged pupils made progress in reading, writing and mathematics that was at least equal to that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have made sure that a broad and balanced curriculum is available for pupils. Pupils speak especially warmly about the very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. As a result, pupils are developing a range of interests and skills, especially related to sport.
- Leaders and teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, during a well-presented assembly on the theme of respect, pupils listened intently and made thoughtful contributions to the discussion. In their conversations with inspectors, pupils showed a clear understanding of fundamental British values. In particular, they spoke positively about democracy, saying 'It's good, because we all get to share our views and have a say.' Pupils are taught about a range

of religions and cultures and can describe a visit they have made to a mosque. Pupils are rightly proud of their diverse heritage and value the way this is celebrated in school, for example through the display of a world map which identifies pupils' origins.

- Leaders use the additional funding provided through the primary physical education and sport premium effectively. Consequently, pupils are taught well and have access to a wide range of sporting activities, in which, as a school, they experience considerable success. Pupils show a good understanding of how to stay fit and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Governance of the school

- Governors acknowledge that, previously, they had a limited understanding of their duty to provide challenge and to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. They recognise that their limited effectiveness led, in part, to the school's lack of improvement and pupils' underachievement.
- Two independent reviews of the local governing body have taken place; the most recent was commissioned by the trust in June 2017. The ensuing report revealed a substantial number of weaknesses; local governance at that time was not deemed to be effective. Consequently, the trust has worked closely with the local governing body to develop an action plan for urgent improvement. An informal review, held in January 2018, indicates that there are early signs of improvement in governance. The support from the trust is substantial and ongoing.
- The trust provides an enhanced and effective degree of support for the school, including regular support for the newly appointed headteacher. Trust officers rightly believe that, with support, the headteacher has a good capacity to lead further improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have made sure that all the necessary checks are in place, in line with statutory requirements.
- Pupils, parents and carers say that the school is safe. Pupils are complimentary about the teaching they receive about keeping safe in a wide variety of situations, including online.
- Leaders and those members of staff with a safeguarding role have a close understanding of the local safeguarding needs. Their work to support vulnerable pupils and families is a strength of the school. Working effectively with other agencies, school staff make sure they address any concerns quickly and decisively in order to ensure pupils' safety.
- The chair of the local governing body visits the school regularly to check all aspects of its safeguarding procedures. She has made sure that she is fully trained in this aspect of the school's work.
- The support for pupils who have additional social and emotional needs is skilled and effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school mean that pupils do not learn and progress as quickly as they should.
- When teachers' expectations and instructions are not precise enough, pupils are uncertain about how to carry out their work. In such cases, learning slows down.
- When the work in lessons is not well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, pupils do not make enough progress. For example, in mathematics, inspectors found that the work in pupils' books does not always pose enough challenge for the most able pupils. As a result, pupils do not consistently achieve the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Work in books shows that current pupils of all abilities do not make consistently strong progress in their writing, both in English and across a range of subjects.
- Leaders and staff have recently reviewed their policy for handwriting and presentation. Although clear expectations have now been established, the quality of pupils' written work does not yet reflect the impact of these changes. Pupils do not present their work consistently well in all parts of the school.
- Teachers value the improved training opportunities made available to them. Teachers are receptive to change and are keen to improve their practice.
- The teaching of phonics is improving as a result of effective staff training. Younger pupils can apply their phonic knowledge accurately in their reading; older pupils read more challenging texts with confidence. The school library is a vibrant and inviting area where pupils respond well to a wide range of opportunities to read for pleasure.
- Following a recent review of the homework policy, staff and parents say they welcome the new homework arrangements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are keen to learn. They cooperate well with each other during lessons and show perseverance in their learning.
- Pupils have good relationships with staff and with each other. They speak enthusiastically about the ways in which staff make sure they are safe. Pupils told inspectors that there is regular teaching about online safety, 'stranger danger' and road safety.
- Pupils are aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and can explain the benefits of diet and exercise. Pupils show keen enthusiasm for the wide range of sporting activities on offer, saying 'there are so many to choose from' both at lunchtime and after school.
- School records show that incidents of discriminatory behaviour, including bullying, are rare. Pupils and parents who spoke with inspectors say they are confident that the school would deal effectively with any such incidents. Pupils are developing a mature,

reflective understanding of the meaning of discrimination. This was seen, for example, in a well-led lesson about 'celebrating our differences' in which pupils shared personal experiences and discussed sensitive issues respectfully.

- Leaders and staff are skilled in supporting the emotional and social needs of pupils. This includes those pupils who attend the specialist units run by the school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. In this aspect of the school's work, leaders and staff make sure that vulnerable pupils receive the additional care and guidance they require.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Their conduct in lessons, and around school, is good. Leaders and staff take swift and appropriate action to handle any rare occurrences of unwanted behaviour.
- School records show that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently. Incident logs and positive handling records are kept up to date and carefully analysed by leaders.
- Leaders closely track the patterns of absence for the small number of pupils and families with particular attendance issues, making sure that appropriate support is provided. Consequently, pupils' rates of absence and persistent absence are typically in line with or below national figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 do not yet make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in a range of other subjects. During the inspection, this inconsistency was confirmed by checking pupils' work in their books and by observing learning in lessons.
- Analysis of the school's latest performance information shows that progress from September has not been consistently good across the school and across a range of pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is a result of the inconsistent quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average in 2016 and in 2017.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in reading have been weak over time in key stages 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 has remained static and well below national figures for at least three years. However, in 2017, pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1 was in line with the national average for the first time.
- In 2017, by the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining at the expected standard and at greater depth in mathematics increased significantly from the previous year.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and teaching in the early years are good, including in the Nursery. The early years leader, the phonics leader and the nursery teacher have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each cohort of children. Consequently, they adapt their planning and teaching effectively, according to the needs of the children.
- Children enter the early years at a level of development which is often well below that typical for their age. As a result of effective teaching, they make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. By the end of the Reception Year, an increasing proportion of children achieve a good level of development and are ready for Year 1. Although the figure in 2017 remained below typical, for this school it represented good and improving progress from the children's low starting points.
- The children's learning portfolios provide good evidence of the progress they are currently making and the accuracy of staff assessments. Children are currently making especially strong progress in communication, language and literacy, as a result of the school's focus on this aspect of the curriculum.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective and statutory requirements are met. The indoor and outdoor areas are safe and secure and staff training is up to date.
- Staff encourage and nurture children's natural curiosity. They provide a good balance of teacher- and child-led activities. As a result, children are developing well as keen and confident learners.
- A number of children are in the early stages of learning to speak English. Their spoken interactions are limited but they respond well to staff members' gentle and skilled encouragement and are beginning to form good relationships with staff and with each other.
- Parents who talked with the inspectors spoke highly of the care and teaching that their children receive in the early years.
- Children make less progress in the area of learning relating to their physical development. Leaders are aware that the outdoor learning area is not well resourced for promoting this aspect of the curriculum and it is currently under development.

School details

Unique reference number	141724
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10041548

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	478
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John Herrick
Headteacher	Sarah Beach
Telephone number	01604 751475
Website	www.stjames.northants.sch.uk
Email address	head@stjames.northants-ecl.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St James Church of England Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and of pupils who speak English as an additional language, are above those seen nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The current headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed to their posts in September 2017, following the retirement of the long-serving headteacher.

- By formal arrangement with the local authority, the school runs specialist provision for a small number of pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Five pupils, who are currently on roll at St James Primary School and are undergoing assessments, are taught fully or partly within the school's 'PARC' unit. A further ten pupils, who remain on roll at their home schools, are taught part-time within the school's 'POD' unit.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 27 lessons, some jointly with senior leaders, across all classes.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and considered the school's assessment information on the progress and standards achieved by pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their enjoyment of reading.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, leaders with responsibilities for early years, reading, writing and phonics and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They also met with other teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body, including its chair. The lead inspector also met with the head of learning and achievement and the academy improvement officer from the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and also spoke informally with pupils during lessons, lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. The lead inspector also considered the eight responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation summary, minutes of meetings of the local governing body, the school's current information on pupils' attainment and progress, attendance records, behaviour logs, external reports on the work of the school, monitoring and evaluation records and a range of documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christine Watkins, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Walsh	Ofsted Inspector
Janis Warren	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018