

# St James the Great Academy

Chapman Way, East Malling, Kent ME19 6SD

## Inspection dates

7–8 March 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher demonstrates an ambitious vision for pupils' achievement. Aply supported by other leaders, including governors, she ensures that all pupils are supported well to overcome any barriers to success.
- Most pupils in key stages 1 and 2 make strong progress because teaching is good, particularly in mathematics and writing. This has securely reversed the decline seen after the last inspection.
- The progress of key stage 2 pupils in reading is not as strong as that in writing and mathematics. Leaders have launched effective action, although still in its early stages, to rectify this.
- The school's systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress to inform future planning are in the early stages of development.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and most disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their starting points.
- Most-able pupils do not consistently achieve the standards of which they are capable. High expectations and challenge for these pupils are increasingly evident but not fully established.
- The Academies Enterprise Trust provides effective support to the school. Staff have many valuable opportunities to benefit from other schools within this multi-academy trust.
- Children make a good start in the early years. However, they experience some inconsistency in the quality of provision.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe. Parents and carers agree that their children are safe and are confident they are looked after well at school.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good. They are motivated and happy to come to school. They enjoy learning, listen attentively in class and work cooperatively with their peers.
- The school provides strong support for vulnerable pupils. Leaders and staff are particularly skilful in supporting pupils' well-being.
- Pupils experience an interesting range of topics and themes. The curriculum is further enriched by enjoyable after-school clubs and stimulating visits.
- Governance is strong. Governors keep a close watch on the school's improvement, holding leaders firmly to account.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations of the most able pupils and that lessons provide sustained challenge and stretch
  - teachers accurately assess pupils' attainment to plan lessons more effectively
  - lessons require key stage 2 pupils to read widely and often.
- Ensure that teaching and provision throughout the early years supports children to build on their good start in the Nursery.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, supported well by her senior team, provides highly effective leadership. As a result, the school is improving rapidly in all areas.
- All senior leaders, staff and governors share the ambition, aspiration and determination to provide the best possible learning and personal experiences for pupils. They hold a clear vision for the school and work together as a strong team. This is illustrated by the comment of a parent: 'They (the staff) want the best for the children.'
- The headteacher ensures that teachers make good use of the multi-academy trust (MAT)'s support, particularly the opportunities to improve teaching by working with specialist staff from other schools. Recently appointed leaders and teachers who are new to their careers are supported well.
- Subject leaders make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in their subjects. Senior leaders hold teachers firmly to account for pupils' progress. Recent changes to subject leadership have brought new vitality to the teaching of English and mathematics. However, there is more to be done to consolidate recent improvements in pupils' reading and to ensure consistent challenge for the most able pupils.
- Leaders provide especially strong support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. New leaders in this area promptly identified the necessary improvements. These changes are firmly under way.
- Any weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning are picked up quickly through leaders' rigorous checks on pupils' progress. Leaders do not shy away from challenging any underperformance. Appropriate support is given to staff when needed, action points are followed up and rapid improvement is expected from staff to meet leaders' high expectations.
- Leaders have recently introduced helpful changes to the way teachers assess and record pupils' progress. These promising developments are in place across the school, but not yet fully embedded.
- The school's values and rich curriculum prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils gain an understanding of democracy and British law, for example, through visits from magistrates and the school's educational links with the police service.
- A wide range of after-school clubs help pupils learn new skills and make a significant contribution to their personal and academic achievement. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about memorable experiences both in and out of the classroom, such as their science experiments and residential and cultural visits.
- The school uses additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. Provision for these pupils is tracked rigorously to ensure that they receive exactly the support they need. The commendable work of the family liaison officer and the inclusion manager supports the most vulnerable pupils, and their families, and has a positive impact on the progress of this group.
- Additional government funding for sport is used effectively to improve the quality of physical education (PE) teaching and learning through the use of specialist coaching. This also enables pupils to experience new sports and widen their participation in competitive sport, for example the local pro-soccer football tournament. Pupils enjoy a range of after-school sports clubs such

as multi-sports, gymnastics and netball.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils show a good understanding of the major world religions and other cultures as a result of the work they do in religious education. Assemblies are used effectively to explore values such as respect and honesty. Pupils enjoy weekly assemblies where they celebrate the success and effort of each other. Pupils are accepting of each other's differences. One pupil commented, 'When I joined (the school) I felt very accepted' and another pupil remarked, 'We should be treated equally because we are all humans.'
- The MAT provides strong support for the work of the school, based on a detailed understanding of its strengths and the areas for development. The MAT has recently undertaken useful audits of the school's work focused on safeguarding and the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders have acted promptly on the recommendations from these audit reports.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body is effective and fulfils its responsibilities well. Governance has been strengthened recently as a result of an experienced chair taking on the role of chair of the governing body for this school. A number of other new governors have brought a wide range of expertise and skills, and better ways of working.
- Governors have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and its areas for further development. They also have a good knowledge of the local community it serves. They successfully hold leaders to account by undertaking their own focused monitoring visits to carefully check the information they receive from leaders.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders keep accurate records and are swift to identify pupils' needs. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that correct and helpful support is made available for the most vulnerable. The school works well with external agencies for the benefit of these pupils.
- Leaders show an impressive knowledge and understanding of pupils' individual needs. They ensure that the well-being of pupils is at the heart of the school's work.
- All staff receive regular training and are alert to any signs indicating that a pupil is at risk. Consequently, staff understand fully their responsibility to ensure that pupils remain safe at school. They know how to manage and record any concern.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, confirm that their children feel happy and safe.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to learn about staying safe online. The Year 6 e-safety ambassadors are well supported by staff in their work to educate other pupils about online safety. This is done through regular assemblies, class talks and events. As a result, pupils are clear about how to avoid risks online.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Good teaching is evident throughout key stage 1 and key stage 2. As a result, most pupils are making good progress.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils work hard and want to do well. Pupils learn to be resilient learners. They bravely try out ideas and cooperate well with each other.
- In key stage 1, effective phonics teaching contributes well to pupils' strong progress in reading. Teachers match reading books well to pupils' reading abilities and pupils are, therefore, becoming increasingly confident readers. In key stage 2, the teaching of reading is less consistently strong. Some pupils do not routinely read widely or experience a rich range of texts. Recent helpful changes are rapidly improving the teaching of reading in key stage 2, but these are not yet fully established.
- Teachers provide the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, with an increasing number of opportunities to shine. Nevertheless, leaders rightly recognise that the most able pupils across the school need further stretch and challenge in all subjects.
- Teachers and assistants adapt resources skilfully so that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities can succeed. Clear plans and interventions support these pupils to make strong progress from their starting points.
- Teachers' skilled questioning enables pupils to develop their language skills well and enhances their vocabulary. For example, a text on bees was used to develop pupils' understanding of specific scientific terms and prompt them to infer what words such as 'cavity' might mean.
- The wider curriculum provides exciting opportunities for pupils to learn in a range of subjects. Pupils talked enthusiastically about recent work on the different stages of growing up and about a science experiment about blood cells.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment is in the early stages of development. Although increasingly accurate, this information is not yet used to inform teaching as fully as leaders intend.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There are excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. Staff know the pupils well and pupils' individual needs are supported effectively. Pupils recognise this and report that 'the ladies in the office are very kind and help us when we are hurt'.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful of adults and each other. They demonstrate respect, tolerance and an understanding of diversity within the school and the wider community.
- Pupils are confident to confide in adults in school if they have concerns or problems. They said that bullying is rare but teachers are good at resolving any issues should they arise.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club benefit from a safe and healthy start to the school day.
- Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibility through the school council and the role of house captain. As a result, pupils feel they have a voice and that their suggestions are taken

seriously by school leaders.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and respond positively to teachers' high expectations for behaviour. Pupils demonstrate high levels of effort and take great pride in their work.
- The school's clear behaviour policy is understood by pupils and applied consistently and fairly by staff. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have significantly reduced.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Overall attendance is above the national average and has improved when compared with the same period last year. The school provides highly individualised and intensive support for those pupils whose attendance is low. Parents trust the school to care for their children. As a result, pupils' attendance is good and there is a reducing number of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Leaders have introduced stringent procedures in response to unauthorised absence. This has given parents a sharper understanding of the importance of their children not missing school and, as a result, these absences have reduced.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Although there was improvement compared with the 2016 results, the outcomes for Year 6 pupils in 2017 showed that their progress was still weaker than the national picture. In response to this, leaders have ensured that stronger teaching has led to further rapid improvements in pupils' learning. Consequently, the progress of current pupils is now good across the school.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics. Leaders, with effective support from the MAT, reacted promptly to the dip in the number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. They have ensured that key stage 1 and early years staff are trained well to deliver focused and effective phonics lessons. From the Nursery and Reception Years upwards, pupils demonstrate a strong and developing ability to apply their phonics knowledge when reading and writing new words.
- Pupils' progress in reading in key stage 2 is not as strong as their progress in writing and mathematics. Leaders' work to develop the teaching of reading means that the rate of pupils' progress is increasing, although more remains to be done.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress, which reflects the precise and careful teaching they receive.
- In the last two years, the proportions of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 have been consistently below the national figure. While there is clear evidence that the most able pupils are now responding to teachers' higher expectations of them, it is too soon for this to show substantially in assessments of their learning.
- Pupils' exercise books demonstrate the high expectations that leaders have for the presentation of pupils' work and their handwriting. Pupils appreciate teachers' feedback, which helps them

understand how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Pupils readily commit to improving their work.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children, including those who are disadvantaged, make a particularly good start to their learning in Nursery. Nursery staff build strong relationships with parents who are extremely positive about the care their children receive. Parents are encouraged to stay and witness how their children's day begins. This leads to a smooth and calm transition enabling children to settle quickly.
- Staff usually make accurate assessments of children's skills and knowledge, using this information well to plan activities to secure children's strong development. Any gaps in skills are identified quickly and appropriate support is put in place.
- Children's outcomes at the end of Reception Year showed significant improvement in 2017, when the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average. Nevertheless, at times, the pace of learning for older children in Reception slows.
- Children are happy and safe in the early years. Adults have high expectations for the children's behaviour. As a result, children follow safety rules and move around the setting with ease and confidence. Routines are well established and children listen carefully to the adults' instructions. For example, children in Reception Year confidently indicated whether they wanted a school or packed lunch by moving their names from their coat peg to the wall chart. They were also able to change for a PE lesson with a high degree of independence.
- Children settle down quickly as a group, learn how to cooperate with each other and play purposefully. Inspectors observed an adult-led activity in which a group of children looked for insects using a magnifying glass, and child-initiated play in the outdoor mud kitchen where children displayed intense concentration and creativity.
- A wealth of activities inside and outside the classroom, particularly in the Nursery, help children to learn well across all aspects of the early years curriculum.



## School details

Unique reference number	138074
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10040725

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John King
Principal	Tamasin Springett
Telephone number	01732 841 912
Website	<a href="http://www.stjamesthegreatacademy.org">www.stjamesthegreatacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:tspringett@stjamesthegreatacademy.org">tspringett@stjamesthegreatacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The current headteacher has been in post for two years.
- St James the Great joined the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) in 2012. The board of trustees is the accountable body for this MAT's schools. In September 2017, the governance of all the schools in the MAT was restructured. This change included the appointment of chairs of governing bodies who have responsibilities across a number of schools.
- St James the Great is receiving support from another school within the MAT.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- It is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is higher than the national average.



- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- The school has a Nursery class where children attend on a part-time basis.
- Pupils are taught in single-age classes.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching throughout the school, with most lessons observed jointly with leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and subject leaders.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and spoke to representatives from AET.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and also heard them read.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing 39 responses to Parent View, including 26 free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke informally with parents at the start of both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff by analysing 18 responses to the online staff survey.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' learning over time by examining a sample of their workbooks.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the notes from external visits carried out by the Department for Education and the AET.
- Inspectors examined the school's records of current pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Safeguarding procedures were also reviewed, including the arrangements for keeping pupils safe and recruiting staff.

## Inspection team

Frances Nation, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Fisher-Pink

Ofsted Inspector

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