

St James' Church of England Primary School Gorton

Stelling Street, Gorton, Manchester M18 8LW

Inspection dates

14–15 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders' passion for learning, and the unwavering commitment of the trustees, have been fundamental in driving forward rapid improvements at St James' Church of England Primary School since it became an academy in March 2015.
- Leaders are highly successful in removing barriers to pupils' learning in order to raise pupils' aspirations, and improve their life chances.
- The quality of teaching is good. This is underpinned by teachers' strong subject knowledge and the positive relationships between teachers and pupils. However, at times, there are some variations between classes.
- The 2017 test results show that pupils' outcomes in key stage 2 improved markedly in almost every subject. However, not a high enough proportion of pupils reached the expected standards in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- Disadvantaged pupils made better progress than other pupils nationally in 2017. However, although improving, progress is slower for disadvantaged pupils in writing at key stage 1.
- Middle leaders have the same passion and determination as senior leaders to continually improve outcomes for pupils. They have developed a curriculum that is exciting and creative, igniting the interests of pupils through a range of opportunities provided.
- Children in early years benefit from outstanding quality teaching within an environment that strongly nurtures, excites and stimulates them as learners. As a result, they make rapid progress from low starting points.
- Governors are highly skilled. They use their expertise very effectively to hold leaders to account, and to ensure that the high standards of education are maintained.
- Pupils who attend the special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities resource base make strong progress from their starting points. Highly skilled staff meet their needs extremely effectively.
- Pupils, staff, governors, and parents and carers are extremely proud of their school.

One pupil said, 'We know we are the most important thing about St James' School.'

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - building on the effective strategies in place to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills that they need to strengthen the quality of teaching, eliminating any variations across the school
 - embedding the improvements made to the way writing is taught so that a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils reach the expected standard by the end of key stage 1
 - embedding the improvements made in the way grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught so that a higher proportion of pupils are reaching the expected standard by the end of key stage 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- This is the first inspection since the school joined a multi-academy trust (MAT) in March 2015 following a previous judgement of inadequate in 2014. Leaders' accurate self-evaluation, and sharply focused development plans, identified the priorities for development. Leaders from the MAT have worked diligently with newly appointed leaders and staff. Leaders' swift actions have led to substantial improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes, directly contributing to improving pupils' life chances.
- Leaders have resolutely tackled the legacy of weak teaching in the school since becoming part of the MAT. They promote a highly aspirational culture. In this nurturing environment, pupils thrive and make strong progress academically and in their personal development.
- Leaders' high expectations, and their vision for the school, underpin everything that they do. They are very successful in ensuring that each child has the opportunity to reach their potential, ready for the next stage of life.
- Leaders place a high priority on the continuing professional development for all staff to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to teach pupils effectively. Leaders have highly effective strategies in place to ensure that good-quality teaching is maintained. Where variations in the quality of teaching are identified, staff are quickly given the help that they need. As a result, leaders are strengthening the quality of teaching across the school.
- Middle leaders efficiently monitor and accurately evaluate information about their subjects. They work together with colleagues from other schools in the MAT to share their expertise. They check that their judgements are accurate, and clearly set out the next steps for improvement. They provide training for staff and ensure that they have the subject knowledge across each area of the curriculum that they need. Teachers new to teaching said that they are very well supported. Staff are proud to be part of this school.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that embodies the school's values of promoting cooperation, adaptability, thoughtfulness, communication, enquiry, mobility, resilience and respect. Curriculum leaders have a very detailed understanding of their subjects. Learning activities are creative and exciting, igniting the interests of the pupils. Leaders diligently monitor the impact of teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics on the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders' sharply focused and accurate identification of barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils ensures that they use the pupil premium funding very effectively. Leaders promote pupils' academic achievement and support their social and emotional development in equal measure. They are raising pupils' aspirations for the future.
- Leaders ensure the very effective use of the additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders' close collaboration with other colleagues across the MAT ensures that pupils who attend the school's resource base benefit from the support they receive from highly skilled staff. This contributes to the strong progress

these pupils make from their starting points.

- Leaders diligently look at information about pupils' progress and carry out observations of pupils' learning. This enables leaders to identify what pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in the main school need to learn. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the right help in a timely manner. As a result, pupils who find learning more difficult make the same strong progress as others in the school.
- The additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport is used very effectively. Leaders have ensured that teachers are developing the skills that they need to deliver high-quality PE sessions and run well-attended school clubs. A coach is employed to deliver a range of additional sports activities. As a result, pupils have the opportunity to refine their skills and sportsmanship, contributing to their improving success in a number of local sports tournaments.
- Leaders work closely with families to ensure that those that are most vulnerable receive the care, guidance and support that they need. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of leaders and staff. They appreciate the support and care given to their children and the opportunities that they have in school. They feel that leaders and staff value them as partners in their children's learning.

Governance of the school

- The trustees have worked very effectively with school leaders, supporting them in their endeavours to bring about the substantial improvements made since joining the trust in March 2015. There are clear roles and responsibilities within the structure of the trust. The chair of the governing body works with trustees to ensure that governors are appointed who have a range of relevant skills and expertise, which they use wisely to promote school improvement.
- Governors understand the challenges facing the local community and the priorities for the future of the school. They share the same passion and commitment seen from all who work at the school. They provide highly effective support and challenge and they themselves are held to account by the trustees.

Safeguarding

- Leaders' work in keeping pupils safe is of the highest standard. Staff are vigilant because leaders place a high priority on safeguarding. They have identified the potential areas of risk for pupils, and have ensured that teachers receive high-quality training that is updated regularly.
- Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements, protocols and practices are fit for purpose. The relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils feel safe because they feel valued by the adults in the school. Their concerns are listened to. The effective teaching that they receive ensures that safeguarding is an integral part of the curriculum. They understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- The school supports pupils and their families. Parents appreciate the support that they receive. This also includes involving other professionals from a range of local agencies to support the most vulnerable families. The family support worker is tenacious in

ensuring that pupils receive the support that they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of how pupils learn. They know their pupils very well and they respond very effectively to their needs. The strong relationships between teachers and pupils, which are embedded across the school, contribute positively to the strong progress pupils make.
- Teachers have created an environment around school that reinforce pupils' sense of pride in themselves, their school and their community. Teachers have created an environment in classrooms that effectively enhances pupils' learning and the progress that they make.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, in their research into the local area, older pupils applied their knowledge about coordinates to help them compare maps of Belle Vue today with older maps of the area. As part of their history work on 'Our Manchester', pupils studied the work of L S Lowry and created a beautiful gallery of their own artwork in a similar style. Pupils are very proud of their achievements.
- Teachers own high expectations ensure that good-quality teaching contributes to the strong progress that pupils make. However, where there are some variations in the quality of teaching, swift action is being taken to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills that they need, so that teaching is consistently strengthened across the school.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge has successfully contributed to the teaching of phonics. Pupils' improved progress enables them to tackle unfamiliar words in their reading successfully. Pupils are confident when reading and talking to each other and adults about their books. Highly skilled support staff work effectively with some pupils to ensure that they catch up quickly with their reading.
- Teachers effectively use a range of assessment information to accurately identify the next steps in pupils' learning and to amend their planning. As a result, learning activities meet pupils' needs well and provide appropriate levels of improvement. The way that writing is taught is beginning to improve the progress that disadvantaged pupils make, particularly in key stage 1.
- Teachers use questions skilfully to develop and probe pupils' understanding. This was exemplified in a mathematics lesson with older pupils who were successfully refining their reasoning and problem-solving skills, ably supported by the teacher.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. There is a genuine warmth and respect between staff and pupils, and consequently, relations within school are highly positive. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that there is no bullying in school. Pupils said that they feel safe, they know adults care

about them and that adults will listen to them.

- The commitment and tenacity of the learning mentor ensure that the most vulnerable families receive the help that they need very quickly. For example, the very popular breakfast club, run by support staff in school, allows pupils to have a calm and purposeful start to their day, as well as a healthy breakfast. The welfare of pupils is given a high priority.
- Pupils are eager to learn and value the opportunities provided by their teachers to improve their learning. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said, 'Teachers help us to reach our potential.' The positive attitude of the majority of pupils is one of the main reasons that they make such strong progress.
- Leaders use every opportunity to raise aspirations and expand pupils' horizons. For example, through the 'Wall of Fame' display in the hall, past pupils, from a variety of cultures and religions, have been invited into school to talk about the roles they have as paramedics, teachers, shop owners, vets and footballers. Pupils have shared their own aspirations for the future, for example to be accountants or police officers. Pupils enjoy the many clubs that they can be part of during lunchtime and after school.
- Older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously as members of committees and as role models for the younger pupils. They are extremely proud of their school and of the community in which they live.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly and polite. They conduct themselves well around school in a calm and sensible way throughout the day. They have high levels of respect towards each other and to adults in the school. They socialise well and play harmoniously together.
- Pupils are confident that any negative or disruptive behaviour is quickly dealt with in the appropriate way by staff.
- Attendance is above the national average. Staff have worked diligently with families to bring about an improvement in attendance for those pupils who were often absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The 2017 test results show that pupils' outcomes in key stage 2 improved markedly in almost every subject. Pupils did well in reading, writing and mathematics, especially the most able pupils in key stage 2. Most-able disadvantaged pupils did particularly well in reading. Here, a greater proportion than others nationally attained at a greater depth. This represented an improvement from the previous year, when the standards pupils reached were below the national average. However, as a result of weaker teaching in the past, not a high enough proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- In key stage 1, a higher proportion of pupils reached the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017; this was an improvement from below

the national average the previous year. An increased proportion of pupils were working at a greater depth in reading, above the national average. However, only a small proportion of pupils were working at a greater depth in writing and mathematics.

- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 were above the standard expected for their age in reading and broadly in line in mathematics. Not enough disadvantaged pupils made the accelerated progress that they needed to in order to reach the standard expected for their age in writing. Leaders have accurately identified the gaps in pupils' learning to ensure that teachers have the skills and knowledge that they need to help pupils catch up quickly. As a result, progress rates are improving gradually.
- Leaders place a high priority on the importance of reading. They have created a library that reflects the rich diversity of culture within the school, through carefully chosen books. One pupil who spoke to inspectors said, 'Our library is amazing and the selection of books is unbelievable. We can borrow them, and take them home to read, and we love it.'
- The proportion of pupils who have met the expected standard in the phonics check in Year 1 has been above the national average for the past two years. This is as a direct result of the high-quality teaching that they receive from highly skilled staff as soon as children start school in early years.
- Pupils who attend the school's resource base for pupils who have an education, health and care plan for autistic spectrum disorder make strong progress from their starting points, especially in mathematics. This is as a result of the highly skilled staff who know pupils' strengths and meet their needs very effectively.
- The school's own assessment information of pupils' attainment and progress shows that the majority of pupils are making strong progress from the start of the academic year. Where progress is slower, particularly in writing, swift action is taken to ensure that pupils receive the help that they need to catch up quickly.
- Current work in pupils' books shows that they take pride in their work and that they are eager to share the progress that they make. Pupils know what to do to improve their work and they reflect well on their learning. Older pupils, in particular, are extremely articulate in explaining the processes and skills that they use to solve problems in mathematics.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of early years is outstanding and leaders have ensured that the provision for the youngest children, across all aspects of the curriculum, is of the highest quality.
- Leaders effectively encourage parental engagement before the children start school through a range of very successful events and activities, such as visits and 'stay and play' sessions. As a result, children settle quickly into well-established routines, which promote cooperation and develop independence. Workshops about how to teach phonics, reading and early mathematical skills provide parents with the opportunity to develop their own knowledge and skills to support their children's learning at home. Parents spoken to during the inspection commented very positively about how quickly their children settle into school.
- Leaders in early years have created an environment that nurtures, excites and

stimulates children as learners. Teachers in the Nursery class quickly establish positive attitudes to learning for the youngest children, which contributes to the rapid progress that they make. Children enter school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. Leaders quickly identify the main barriers to children's learning and ensure that staff have the skills that they need to help children catch up quickly. Consequently, children make rapid progress from low starting points.

- Leaders and staff work closely with colleagues from other schools in the MAT to share knowledge and expertise. This has contributed to highly skilled staff in the Nursery and Reception classes who use questioning effectively to encourage children to speak and listen carefully. Staff use conversations skilfully to expand children's learning and deepen their understanding.
- Teachers use the assessment information about what children can do very effectively to develop a curriculum that meets their needs. Leaders track the progress that children make, and quickly identify children who may be struggling with their learning, and provide them with the help that they need quickly. Consequently, children make rapid progress from their starting points. Parents are closely involved in their children's learning and enhance the range of evidence teachers gather about the progress that children make.
- The improvements to the outdoor area have greatly enhanced the opportunities for children's learning. Learning activities are designed around developing exploration, being active and thinking. Staff effectively promote high levels of communication, cooperation and engagement. For example, children singing counting sea shanties on the pirate ship were very excited by the anticipation of searching for the 'golden treasure stones'. The teacher skilfully encouraged the children to help each other and they worked together to find the treasure. Children then correctly identified the numbers on the stones before they put them in the treasure chest. Children demonstrated high levels of cooperation as they discussed which stone went into the chest next, and who had the number that was missing. Very strong behaviours for learning are nurtured by staff, and children thrive as a result.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception has been above the national averages for two years, including for disadvantaged children.
- Leaders have ensured that all statutory welfare arrangements are met. Well-established procedures and routines contribute to the children's ongoing safety and welfare.

School details

Unique reference number	141689
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10042421

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	269
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Maureen Kennedy
Principal	Rhian Williams
Telephone number	0161 223 2423
Website	www.stjames-gorton.manchester.sch.uk
Email address	Rhian.williams@vantageacademies.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The school operates an on-site resource provision for up to seven pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder and/or speech and language impairments.

- The school is part of a MAT. The school's governing body is responsible for curriculum and standards. All other aspects of governance are overseen by the MAT board of trustees.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, carrying out some joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. They also talked with other pupils informally around the school. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with three members of the governing body, including a phone call with the chair during the meeting. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority and a member of the MAT's board of trustees.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses and one written response to Ofsted's online Parent View survey. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the school's performance, a range of assessment information and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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