

St James Primary School

Great Charles Street, Brownhills, Walsall, West Midlands WS8 6AE

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, school leaders have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Expectations and academic standards throughout the school have risen.
- Recent standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 compare well against national figures.
- Most pupils make good progress. In nearly all year groups, however, girls make stronger progress than boys.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of subjects, which are usually taught well so that pupils learn new things in a logical and meaningful way. Classrooms are well set out to assist learning and teachers' subject knowledge is usually good.
- Occasionally, pupils do not make the most of lessons because they are not sure what is expected of them or do not get the right level of challenge when they need it.
- Phonics teaching is well organised and increasingly effective. Staff have plans to build further on this through ongoing training and sharing more information with parents and carers. In addition, leaders are looking to do more to promote reading in school and at home.
- A quarter of pupils are unable to swim well enough by the end of Year 6.
- Subject leadership has strengthened and all staff now do more to check on pupils' progress and the impact of teaching. The new leadership of special educational needs is still getting to grips with the role.
- Good leadership in early years has brought about change for the better. Indoor and outdoor learning areas have been improved and teaching in both the Nursery and Reception classes is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and get along with one another on the playground. Pupils who find it hard to cope in some situations get high-quality support to help them overcome their difficulties.
- There are a lot of effective routines in place to support pupils' welfare. This is a particular strength and parents' confidence in the school's care for their children is well founded. Pupils feel safe in school and trust the adults to help them if they have a problem.
- The governing body is supportive and informed about the school's current performance. Governors' role in long-term strategic planning is not well developed. A few school records are not updated or checked carefully enough.
- Arrangements for staff to share information about pupils' achievement when they move from one class to another could be improved.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards higher, especially for boys, by:
 - providing consistently clear and accurate guidance to pupils in lessons so they know what is expected from them
 - providing the right level of challenge at the right time, so that work moves on at an appropriate rate
 - improving arrangements for staff to share information about pupils' achievements when they move from one class to another
 - continue to build further on the good-quality phonics training and work to promote reading.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening governance arrangements so governors are more informed and involved in long-term strategic planning
 - ensuring that the leadership of special educational needs (SEN) maintains an informed oversight of the quality of provision
 - making sure that school records are updated promptly, and analysed with sufficient care, when necessary
 - finding ways to improve the impact of the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding on pupils' achievement in sports targeted by the school, such as swimming.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The interim executive headteacher and acting head of school provide strong leadership that is steering the school on an upward journey. Standards have risen, behaviour has improved, and expectations are fair, ambitious and consistent.
- The senior leadership team has done much to build confidence and leadership skills in others. Subject leaders are required to take responsibility and exercise initiative, while also being accountable for their actions and impact. In turn, teachers are provided with training and guidance, prompted to question and reflect on their work and find ways to improve it. Leaders give praise where it is deserved, support or challenge when necessary, and encouragement to succeed. During this inspection, many staff spoke to inspectors about the positive working environment and the 'can-do' culture operating in the school.
- The school curriculum provides a good range of subjects. There is an appropriate daily focus on literacy and numeracy, and learning in other subjects, such as music, art, history, geography or French, is also given prominent slots on class timetables. Subject content is taught in a logical sequence and pupils acquire knowledge that stimulates their interest in the world and prepares them for later learning. In addition, pupils go on educational visits and learn about the different faiths and customs of people in modern-day Britain.
- The school's values and the day-to-day interactions between staff and pupils help to reinforce pupils' understanding of right and wrong. Pupils show concern for one another, are polite to visitors and willingly help with jobs around the school.
- Parents are very complimentary about the school's work. Every online Parent View comment was positive and the parents who spoke with inspectors said that they were happy with the school.
- Specific funding, such as the pupil premium and PE and sport monies, are used for their intended purposes. The pupil premium, which funds some pastoral and support staff posts and a range of curriculum enrichment activities, has evidently been used well. In most cases, targeted pupils achieve equally as well as others.
- Much of the PE and sport premium helps to fund specialist sports teaching and swimming lessons in the on-site pool, with mixed results. Last year, for instance, three quarters of pupils could swim at least 25 metres by the end of Year 6, but a quarter of the cohort could not. After-school clubs and a link with a local football team provide extra sports activities for pupils.
- The leadership of SEN has recently changed, and the new leadership is still settling into the role. This inspection found that lots of worthwhile SEN support is in place and is clearly beneficial to the pupils. However, leaders are not yet doing enough to evaluate the impact of SEN spending in order to adjust and refine provision in response to pupils' regularly changing needs.
- Support provided through the local authority has helped the school to improve.

Governance of the school

- Governors are supportive. They are aware of the school's current improvement priorities and performance because information provided by the headteacher and the local authority is accurate and easy to understand. Governors have completed a skills audit and know that there is a need to strengthen governance, particularly around matters relating to finance.
- Governors' role in strategic planning is underdeveloped and they rely heavily on information and advice from school leaders. They have not established enough routines for checking information or procedures for themselves. This has caused a few problems in the past and, more recently, led to omissions on some school documents. These are either clerical errors or oversights that have not been picked up by governors or school leaders. Currently, such mistakes are mainly minor matters but are indicative of a lack of scrutiny.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- As noted in the previous inspection, safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and records are maintained with meticulous care. Staff receive regular training and updates to keep them informed about legal requirements and the school's expectations. All understand their duty of care.
- When any concerns arise, staff act quickly and in the right way. Information is kept securely but also shared with the right people when necessary. The school has established highly effective links with local authority departments and other agencies in order to support families and help pupils.
- Governors and staff know that Walsall is a 'Prevent' duty priority area. They have completed training and assessed local risks.
- Medicines in school are stored correctly, first-aid treatment is available when needed and the site is well maintained.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In all year groups, good teaching means that pupils make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage pupils with firm, yet kind and warm authority. Consequently, pupils behave well in lessons and, during the inspection, all were polite, attentive and keen to learn.
- In recent times, teaching and assessment have been strengthened. Indeed, over the past 12 months, assessment has been improved significantly. Across the school, there is now a consistent approach to checking on and recording pupils' progress. The system is understood by pupils, staff, leaders and governors so everyone is informed about the impact of teaching. Consequently, all are able to work together to learn from successful teaching and target aspects that need further improvement.
- This informed approach, raised expectations and team spirit are apparent in classrooms. Typically, lessons are interesting and teaching builds logically on what has

been taught before. In one well-planned French lesson, for example, the teacher's expert subject knowledge and knowledge of what the pupils already understood enabled her to pitch questions and activities at just the right level. The school's organised approach to progression in different subjects means that pupils usually understand what is being taught, make good progress and gain feelings of success.

- Similarly, the teaching of phonics is increasingly effective because of the school's disciplined and systematic approach. All staff have received good-quality training and know what to do to ensure that pupils understand and make progress. Furthermore, there is a whole-school push to promote reading in school and at home. In class, pupils read regularly and enjoy listening to stories, although story time happens more frequently in some classes than in others.
- Pupils usually record their work carefully and are attentive to the feedback that teachers give them. Pupils who shared their work with inspectors could explain how teachers help them if they get stuck or challenge them to improve their work.
- On the other hand, there are times when teaching does not move on to new learning in a timely manner or pupils are not sure what their teacher wants them to do. Inspectors' checks on pupils' exercise books found some examples of pupils doing work this year that they had already managed successfully last year. In another example, pupils found it hard to complete a task because the teacher's explanation was not clear. Such incidents are not common but, clearly, there is room to improve these aspects of teaching. Leaders agree that arrangements for staff to share information about pupils' abilities and achievements when they move from one class to the next could also be improved.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel secure, safe and confident in school because they understand the rules, which adults apply with consistency. They know that they will be treated fairly and that an adult will always help them if they have a problem or look after them if they are upset. Equally, they also know that good behaviour will be noticed and rewarded, and any poor behaviour will be stopped.
- Bullying is very rare. Pupils who spoke with inspectors could not recall any instances of any type of bullying. All were sure that, if it did happen, it would not be tolerated. Similarly, in parents' responses to Parent View, no one raised a concern about behaviour or bullying.
- An inclusion manager and family support worker are employed to provide an extra level of support for pupils and their families. In addition, the school has developed some good-quality nurture provision, which is available to pupils when they need it. This supportive, solution-focused approach inspires trust from pupils and parents and ensures that pupils get the right help at the right time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils wear school uniform, look smart and attend regularly. Most arrive on time in the mornings. Attendance at the school's breakfast club has helped to improve punctuality for those pupils who have been regularly late in the past.
- In lessons, pupils show respect to staff. On the playground, they get on well with one another. Staff, parents and pupils all report that, since the previous inspection, pupils' conduct and attitudes to school have improved. Inspection evidence supports this view. Furthermore, inspectors' checks on school records found some striking examples of how effective support in school has led to marked improvements in behaviour for some individuals.
- Leaders' attention to pupils' behaviour and constructive actions following instances of exclusion have led to a year-on-year reduction in the number of pupils being excluded.
- Some poor behaviour does flare up from time to time, but it is managed well by staff, who feel supported by the school's leadership. Pupils who find it hard to cope in school receive professional help from a range of experts, and school staff work closely with families to find solutions.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen. In Year 6, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in each subject are now close to national figures. Furthermore, the proportions reaching a high standard have risen above the national average in mathematics and spelling, grammar and punctuation and match the national average in reading. These standards represent good progress from pupils' starting points when they enter the school in early years. Pupils who recently left St James Primary School at the end of key stage 2 were well prepared for learning at secondary school.
- This good progress is continuing for current pupils. Indeed, in all classes, almost all pupils make good progress. Some pupils, often girls, make excellent progress. In fact, in most year groups, girls are pushing ahead faster and reaching higher standards than the boys. School leaders and staff are alert to this because the school's improved assessment system has highlighted the pattern very clearly. In response, there is a whole-school focus on making sure boys do as well as possible.
- There is little difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others. Whether disadvantaged or not, pupils get an equally good deal in school.
- The most able pupils are also doing well and reaching some high standards, particularly in mathematics. In class, they have plenty of opportunities to practise and consolidate their knowledge and understanding. That said, at times, teaching does not push them on when they are ready for a new challenge.
- In most cases, support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective. Currently, leaders are stepping up their checks on teaching for these pupils to make sure all are making the progress that they should.

Early years provision

Good

- Good leadership has maintained effective provision in the Reception class and brought about improvements in the Nursery class. In both classes, children are kept safe and taught well. Children quickly come to understand the school's expectations. They enjoy learning, play happily with others and are well behaved.
- Since the previous inspection, the early years classrooms have been relocated to a different part of the school. The current settings have plenty of indoor and outdoor space, which is used well for teaching and learning. Staff inject imagination and fun into purposeful and worthwhile daily activities. During this inspection, for example, staff in Nursery used a pretend tea-party to prompt children to think, imagine, talk, listen, share and count. Indeed, many activities in both Nursery and Reception focus heavily on developing children's communication and number skills. Typically, these are weaker aspects of children's development when they first start school.
- There is also a big focus on phonics and reading. Daily phonics sessions are brisk and lively, giving children plenty of practice but also moving them on when they are ready. Phonics teaching in the Reception class is tip-top and, through an ongoing programme of training, the phonics leader has plans to develop teaching further in Nursery and the rest of the school. Part of this push will involve information events for parents, so they can find out more about how to help their children's reading at home. Parents already receive other information about their children's learning and welfare at school. They say that staff are approachable and keep them informed about school life.
- The results of the school's targeted attention to children's learning needs can be seen in the generally upward trend in the proportion of children being ready for learning in Year 1. In 2018, nearly 60% of children reached a good level of development, which remains below the national figure but, given children's starting points, is still indicative of good progress across early years. As in the rest of the school, arrangements for sharing information between staff about children's achievements when they move out of early years into their next class could be strengthened.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged children is used effectively and learning needs are identified early.
- Early years staff have visited other settings to observe and learn from good practice. This outward-looking approach has helped to build evaluative attitudes and leadership skills in staff, and has improved teaching and learning. Consequently, children get a good start to their education.

School details

Unique reference number	131581
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10042866

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev. Elizabeth Dunning
Interim headteacher	Mr Andy Nicholls
Telephone number	01543 452328
Website	www.stjamesprimaryschool.com
Email address	postbox@st-james.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 February 2016

Information about this school

- St James Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are both above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club from 8am each morning.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has stopped admitting two-year-olds into Nursery. Instead, part-time Nursery provision is offered to three- and four-year-olds. In addition, there have been several changes to the membership of the governing body. The current chair of governors was appointed in September 2018, a week before the inspection.
- Currently, the school is being led by an interim executive headteacher who is the substantive headteacher of Moorcroft Wood Primary School, Walsall. He spends part of the week at St James Primary School. An acting head of school is based full time at St

James Primary School. This arrangement was brokered through the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's routines, at the beginning and end of the school day, in lessons, at lunch- and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders and governors. The lead inspector had a meeting with a local authority representative.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 24 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 15 free-text responses. The inspectors considered these and also spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. In addition, the inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to gather their views.
- Inspectors examined school documents. These included information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and several policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff training, SEN, early years, external advice, behaviour, attendance, exclusions, safety, safeguarding and the quality of teaching were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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