

St James' Church of England Aided Infant School

Leonard Street, Derby, Derbyshire DE23 8EG

Inspection dates

13–14 November 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The head of school leads a united team that is passionate in its determination to give every pupil a good education.
- The school's highly inclusive ethos is at the heart of everything the school does. All pupils and their families are warmly welcomed into, and made to feel part of, the school community.
- Senior leaders ensure that the quality of teaching is good. They give staff effective training to improve their skills further.
- All pupils make good gains from their starting points. These are below or well below those typically found in children of the same age.
- The curriculum is interesting and makes pupils want to learn. It builds pupils' long-term knowledge and helps them see links between different subjects, ideas and themes.
- Pupils get off to a good start in the early years. Staff in the Reception and Nursery classes ensure that children settle in quickly. The early years leader makes sure that children make good progress across all areas of learning and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Consistently good phonics teaching means that pupils are able to read and spell words well.
- Pupils are kept safe in school. Staff communicate well and take swift action to help protect any pupil who may be at risk of harm.
- Leaders have dramatically improved pupils' overall attendance, which is now above the national average. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn.
- Pupils are well behaved and respectful to others. They have a good understanding of the many cultures and faiths in the school, and they work and play alongside each other happily.
- Skilled and effective governors hold leaders to account and check that the school's provision continues to improve.
- Pupils' progress, though good, is not as strong as it could be. Teachers do not show them well enough how to problem-solve and reason mathematically.
- Pupils, and particularly the most able, do not receive sufficient guidance on how to use ambitious vocabulary when they write. A smaller proportion of pupils than the national average attain a greater depth of understanding in writing.
- The level of persistent absence has declined considerably but remains somewhat above the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, and thereby outcomes, by ensuring that:
 - pupils receive more opportunities to reason and problem-solve mathematically
 - teachers give pupils effective guidance so they can infer meaning from texts
 - pupils, and particularly the most able, are helped to improve their vocabulary when they write.
- Ensure that the level of persistent absence continues to decline so that it is broadly in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The head of school ensures that all staff share her consistently high expectations. As a result, members of the school team are united in their aim of ensuring that all pupils make at least good gains from their starting points.
- Leaders and staff are rightly proud of the inclusive ethos of the school, which drives both the way adults behave and the decisions they make. Pupils of all faiths, cultures and from different lands are warmly welcomed into the school, regardless of their needs or circumstances.
- Staff work hard to ensure that families can also become involved in the life of the school through, for instance, weekly family learning sessions.
- Senior leaders work well to continually improve the quality of teaching. They give staff good professional development to develop their skills, such as in the teaching of phonics. The large number of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire said that the training that leaders give them helps them improve.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching well by visiting classrooms and scrutinising pupils' work. Leaders use this, and other good evidence, to evaluate the many aspects of the school. The school's development plan shows sensible actions to further improve those areas that need to be improved.
- The curriculum makes learning enjoyable and shows children how different ideas are connected to others. For example, in the theme 'Will you celebrate with me?' pupils learn about different festivals, such as Diwali, Hanukkah and Christmas, and they read books that involve themes of light and faith. Lessons are sequenced using 'learning ladders' so that pupils' knowledge builds over time.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities that pupils say they enjoy, such as dodgeball and construction.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, pupils recently held a Remembrance Day service in which they and their families reflected silently on how they could bring peace to the communities around the world. Staff show pupils how to get along with others and to always try to do the right thing. They celebrate the many cultures of pupils and their families so that pupils develop a good understanding of those from different backgrounds to themselves.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils the inspector met told him how it was very important that everyone was treated with respect and kindness. They understand that following rules keeps everyone safe. They like taking part in decisions and, for example, have been responsible for the much-enjoyed weekly 'dinnertime disco' in the playground.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium well. They ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the support that they need to help them catch up over time.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used to good effect. Leaders have invested in a sports coach to improve staff's skills. They have increased the

number of lunchtime sports activities, and they have arranged for pupils to have swimming lessons.

- The head of school is also the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In this role, she uses the additional funding for these pupils well so that they make good gains over time. She keeps meticulous records of their progress and ensures good partnership with parents through, for instance, additional regular meetings with families.

Governance of the school

- The governing body performs its statutory duties well. The chair of governors has extensive educational experience. She and other governors have a good understanding of the context of the school, its strengths and its priorities. Other governors are similarly experienced in educational leadership and represent the views of parents well. Governors new to their role are helped to understand their responsibilities and are given good training so that they can discharge their duties.
- Governors visit the school regularly to meet with leaders and see how pupils learn. They scrutinise the weekly monitoring of the targets for pupils' learning and the impact of the support that pupils receive.
- Evidence in governing body minutes shows that leaders give governors good levels of information about pupils' achievement as well as pupils' attendance. Governors use this to hold leaders firmly to account by asking them pertinent questions and challenging them to improve further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Although a small number of parents indicated via Parent View that they did not believe their children were necessarily kept safe in school, inspection evidence confirms that leaders and staff consistently follow safeguarding procedures. They work hard to protect pupils from harm and are unafraid to take difficult decisions when these are needed.
- Staff are well trained and fully aware of their primary responsibility to protect any pupil who they suspect may be being harmed. Leaders work consistently well with external agencies, including social care, to help vulnerable pupils.
- All those parents who contributed to the school's most recent questionnaires, along with all those the inspector met during the inspection, were insistent that the school kept children safe and happy.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Members of the school's team of teachers and teaching assistants work closely together so that all groups of pupils can make good progress. They expect pupils to listen, to follow instructions and to work hard.
- They provide interesting learning activities so that pupils are engaged and are keen to show what they can do. For example, Year 1 pupils explained to the inspector how they knew that one less than 36 was 35, while children in Reception were proud to show how they were learning to hop about in the hall and then balance bean bags on their heads.
- There is a positive climate for learning in the school. Classrooms and corridors are attractive places that sustain pupils' interests and make them curious to know more.
- During lessons, staff know which pupils need to catch up and how to help them do this. They give them good support which meets their needs and consistently ensures that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum.
- Teachers address pupils' misconceptions and errors well. They notice when pupils make mistakes such as not forming their letters correctly when they write, and then they help them to do this, and other aspects of learning, accurately.
- Relationships are friendly. They help pupils, many of whom arrive at the school with no experience and little understanding of school, to feel secure. Staff are polite role models who promote good manners. They help new arrivals to learn the school's routines and how pupils are expected to behave and work. Pupils become confident to give their views and to answer questions in lessons.
- Staff take care to speak clearly and to repeat words such as 'eggs' and 'bottles' so that pupils will hear and recognise them. Their good use of language means that pupils recognise, copy and remember new words. Staff use appropriate vocabulary, such as 'ascending' and 'descending' when teaching about sequences in mathematics, so that pupils will learn and be able to use this appropriately.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and make a considerable contribution to ensuring that teaching is good. They give both confidence and support to pupils across all year groups and ensure that no pupil is left behind.
- Teachers' assessment of their pupils is consistently accurate. They check the precision of their judgements by discussing them together, as well as showing examples of pupils' work to colleagues in other schools. Recent monitoring by the local authority also confirms teachers' accuracy in assessment. Teachers use their knowledge about what pupils know in order to plan the next tasks they will give to them.
- Phonics teaching is now a strength of the school. Each morning, pupils of all ages join one of the many different small teaching groups so that each is given work that matches their ability. These groups are all led by staff who know their pupils well. Pupils look forward to these sessions and participate enthusiastically.
- Although teaching in the school is consistently good, leaders had, before the inspection, identified several aspects of teaching to make pupils' progress even

stronger. Evidence in pupils' books shows that leaders' judgements are correct.

- Pupils' workbooks confirm that teachers do not teach pupils sufficiently well how to reason mathematically and solve problems. Pupils are not as confident as they could be in applying the skills they have and explaining their thinking in mathematics.
- English books show that pupils do not receive enough guidance so that they can make inferences in the texts they read. Pupils, and especially the most able, are also not given highly effective help to use ambitious vocabulary when they write. Compared with the national average, smaller proportions of the most able pupils demonstrate a greater depth of understanding and skill in writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff help pupils to improve their self-confidence. They congratulate them when they get things right and help them when they are unsure about something. This makes pupils keen to 'have a go'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and to avoid too many sweets. They know it is important to take plenty of exercise and they run about enthusiastically in the playground.
- Staff attend to pupils' emotional well-being effectively. They are vigilant for any pupil who is upset and they intervene quickly to help. Pupils say that staff are always there for them if they are worried. They are happy to approach adults because staff are kind and caring. Year 1 pupils are also taught to relax through yoga.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe, such as from strangers and busy roads. They say that because staff teach them to be kind to each other, there is little bullying in school. They explained to the inspector that, on the rare instances it happens, adults deal with it appropriately.
- Pupils are also taught how to stay safe online. For example, pupils in Year 1 had written posters with messages such as 'before you click you need to stop and think'. Staff teach pupils not to give their personal details to anyone they do not know.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In classrooms, pupils are well behaved. They do not disrupt the learning of others and remain focused and alert.
- Pupils complete their written work with care. Their exercise books are neat. They reflect their pride in what they do and their desire to show their best.
- Pupils behave sensibly when walking around the school.
- Breaktimes and lunchtimes are happy occasions when pupils talk together or, for

example, play 'tig', hopscotch or ball games. They respond instantly to staff asking them to line up at the end and do so in an orderly way. They are keen to come in for their next lesson.

- Pupils look after the school. They tidy up together after a lesson and do not drop litter. Instead, for instance, they put their fruit peel in the bin. They respect each other's property as well as school equipment and resources.
- Attendance, which had been historically poor, has improved substantially, and is currently above the national average. This is because leaders have made this a priority for improvement. They have supplied parents with good, regular information about the importance of regular school attendance. They have also introduced a range of rewards, such as certificates, for those pupils who attend well. Pupils told the inspector how they greatly enjoy receiving these, and that they know how important it is to come to school.
- Leaders challenge and support any families whose children do not attend regularly. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is now much closer to the national average than previously, though is not in line with it.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From starting points that are consistently below or well below those typical for their age, pupils make good progress across the curriculum. This is particularly the case in their communication and language, where many pupils are in the very early stages of learning English. Staff focus on ensuring that pupils learn to understand and explain for themselves so that these pupils are also able to access and learn well across different subjects.
- The proportions of children who leave the early years with a good level of development is now broadly in line with the national average.
- Good and improved phonics teaching since the beginning of the previous academic year has meant that pupils are able to read and spell words well. The proportion of pupils who attained the skills necessary for the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018 was very close to the national average. Similar proportions of the present cohort are currently on track to also attain this standard.
- Published data shows that smaller proportions of pupils than those nationally attain the expected standards at the end of Year 2. However, the proportion who attain a greater depth of understanding in reading and writing is at least in line with this. A large proportion of pupils enter the school part-way through the school year and spend only short amounts of time at St James'. For example, in both 2017 and 2018, around four in 10 pupils in Year 2 cohorts were new arrivals. A large majority of these began with little or no English. Many of the pupils who are at the school throughout attain well.
- School information indicates that pupils' progress is consistently good across different subjects and particularly in mathematics. Between six and eight in 10 make at least the progress the school expects and around two or more in 10 make stronger gains than this.
- An extensive sample of pupils' work was examined by the inspector to check that the

school's data was accurate. This showed conclusively that pupils' progress is good and is improving. Pupils' work in mathematics illustrates that pupils are developing secure skills in number and in shape, space and measure, and are consistently able to complete equations accurately. Their English work is characterised by increasing confidence and complexity, and by their ability to write for different purposes.

- Disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points, which are often particularly low. The proportion of these pupils who attained the phonics screening check, or who achieved a greater depth of understanding in reading and mathematics, was above the national average in 2018.
- School information regarding pupils with SEND, and information from their work, shows that they make good progress, particularly in mathematics. Staff use apparatus and resources effectively so that these pupils learn well across the curriculum.
- The most able pupils make good overall gains, but not enough of them reach a greater depth of understanding in writing.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Those pupils the inspector met had been taught good strategies to pronounce words they did not recognise, such as 'scrapbook'. Pupils explained to him how they look forward to reading books both in school and at home with their families.
- Pupils make good progress in other subjects, such as science. Pupils in Year 2 learn, for instance, how to investigate which materials absorb water best. Pupils are able to make accurate predictions and explain their methods and conclusions in writing.
- Pupils also make good gains in geography. Pupils in Year 1 have, for example, learned to make a map of the local park and then write about the animals that live there. Pupils then go on to classify mammals and reptiles, and to understand carnivores and herbivores.

Early years provision

Good

- The current early years leader has worked with her team to improve teaching across the Nursery and Reception classes. She has improved both the outdoor and indoor learning areas and has shown teaching assistants how to become better at facilitating child-initiated activities.
- Adults know the children well and keep good and accurate records of what children can do. The early years leader ensures that staff plan together so that the curriculum consistently meets children's needs well across all areas of learning.
- Staff promote children's independence well. The 'creation station' allows children to select for themselves which materials to use when making objects such as diva lamps, for instance. Resources such as pens and paper, along with books, are accessible so that children can use these easily without needing adults to reach them.
- Staff are diligent in teaching children in the Nursery songs such as 'we lick our lollipop' so that they become aware of the different sounds that letters make.
- Children learn to stay healthy, for example by creating a dentist's surgery where they use toothbrushes and toothpaste to learn the importance of looking after their teeth.

- Children behave well. They feel safe in school, behave safely and cooperate happily. They are keen to show each other what they can do, and they share resources. Their attention spans are good, and they pay close attention to adults.
- Staff give parents good opportunities to contribute to the assessment of their children. They also invite parents into school regularly to see what their child is learning, including in phonics lessons.
- From starting points that are below or well below those typically found, children make good progress. This includes those with SEND along with those who are disadvantaged. Staff use the additional funding for these pupils well so that they can catch up with their basic skills.
- Good teaching means that children leave the early years well prepared for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	112915
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10052966

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Cruickshank
Headteacher	Luisa Pancisi (Head of School)
Telephone number	01332 854 985
Website	www.stjamesfederation.co.uk
Email address	infantshead@stjames.derby.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 March 2015

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized school.
- It is part of a federation with St James' Church of England Aided Junior School, sharing with them an executive headteacher and a governing body. The executive headteacher took up his position in September 2017.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is slightly higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than the national average and is around 85%. There are currently 11 of these groups in the school. Pakistani pupils represent the biggest proportion of pupils, with approximately 30% of the school's population.
- More than three quarters of pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. This proportion is much higher than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part way through this part of their education is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classrooms. All lesson observations took place with the head of school. In total, learning was observed in eight lessons. The inspector also scrutinised examples of children’s workbooks from the early years, along with a wide variety of pupils’ exercise books for different subjects across key stage 1, including from a range of different groups of pupils.
- The inspector held meetings with the head of school, the executive headteacher, the head of the early years, and members of the governing body. He analysed the 32 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, looked at the free-text comments submitted, and spoke with parents at the end of the school day. Inspectors also looked at the views of the parents who had responded to the school’s two most recent questionnaires.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school’s development plan and self-evaluation, policies and records related to safeguarding and pupils with SEND, the school’s information about pupils’ achievement and attendance and records of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Roary Pownall, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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