

Inspection of The Academy At St. James

Chelwood Drive, Allerton, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD15 7YD

Inspection dates: 5–6 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have made sure that the school has improved at a rapid rate since becoming an academy. However, there is more to do to make sure that pupils reach the standards expected for their age across the curriculum.

Leaders have made the teaching of reading a priority. Actions are proving successful for many pupils. However, pupils who struggle with reading are not getting the practice they need to help them catch up quickly enough.

Staff have increased pupils' interest in learning and eagerness to be at school every day. Subjects are brought to life by practical and purposeful experiences. This is sparking pupils' intrigue in the world around them. The headteacher greets pupils, parents and carers as they arrive at school each morning. A range of events, such as the firework display for Bonfire Night, brings pupils, parents and staff together as a harmonious community. Pupils are responding very positively to the changes. They want to come to school every day so that they do not miss out.

Pupils' behaviour has improved considerably. Pupils said that staff take good care of them. They are not worried about bullying. They feel safe because they trust the adults in school to sort out any problems they may face.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Following a turbulent period in the school's staffing, the trust has now secured a stable and committed team. Leaders are ambitious about pupils' achievement. Pupils' behaviour has been transformed, and important improvements are being made to pupils' achievement. There has been a strong focus on improving pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. At the same time, leaders have made sure that pupils access a broad curriculum. There has been success in improving the standards pupils achieve in English and mathematics. However, pupils' reading attainment lags behind. This is preventing some pupils from being able to learn to the full across the rest of the curriculum.

Leaders have made the teaching of reading their top priority. A new programme for teaching phonics from the start of Reception is helping many more pupils to read with accuracy at an earlier stage. Leaders make sure that staff have been trained to use the programme effectively. Staff give pupils plenty of practice during each session with their sharply focused activity choices. However, pupils who struggle to learn to read, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not receive enough extra practice. This means that they are not catching up as quickly as they should. Some of the books these pupils read are not well matched to their phonics knowledge. This prevents them from reading with the accuracy needed to build their confidence and fluency.

The new reading curriculum gives pupils access to high-quality texts. This is broadening pupils' vocabulary and their awareness of significant authors. Staff

support all pupils well, including those with SEND, to be involved in these whole-class reading sessions. However, pupils in key stage 2 who are not reading fluently are not practising reading as frequently as they need to.

Leaders make sure that all pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects. There is a topic-based approach to the curriculum for most of the subjects beyond English and mathematics. Subjects are not always studied with enough depth to develop pupils' understanding. Units of work do not always identify the most crucial knowledge that pupils need to understand and remember. Pupils' achievement in science and the foundation subjects is not at an age-appropriate standard. Pupils talk with interest about their current learning. They have not remembered previous learning well enough, though. This means that it is difficult for them to build on their knowledge over time. For example, in science, pupils had not remembered the names for different teeth. In physical education (PE), pupils could not remember how to warm up and why this is important.

Subject leaders, supported by senior leaders and the trust, are making further developments to the curriculum. A range of different projects are in place to aid this. Leaders have already made effective links between different subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 produced a piece of writing about global warming. This allowed them to apply their English skills and show their geographical understanding. In the early years, new leaders and staff are making effective use of training. This is resulting in children making much stronger progress.

Pupils' personal development is catered for well. Pupils told us about the school's values. Understanding these is helping them to be tolerant and treat others with respect. The changes to the curriculum are making pupils take greater interest in their learning and responsibility for their actions. This has improved pupils' attendance and transformed their behaviour. Staff have created a safe and calm culture. Pupils respond well and have very positive attitudes to school. Pupils with particular needs receive specific support to help them. For example, the 'bumble bees' club provides a quiet and calm space to eat and play at lunchtime.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that pupils' safety is paramount. Staff receive training which helps them to be alert to possible signs of abuse. They know how to report any issues. Leaders follow this up vigilantly to make sure that pupils and families get the support they need.

The personal, social and health education curriculum, including assemblies, makes sure that pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils told us how they stay safe when using the internet and about the importance of firework safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils who are struggling to keep up with the pace of the phonics programme are not catching up as quickly as they need to. Some of the books these pupils read contain words with sounds they have not been taught. Instead of using their phonics knowledge, pupils resort to inefficient methods such as guessing unfamiliar words by looking at the pictures. Leaders need to make sure that the books which pupils read are closely matched to their phonics knowledge. This will provide more effective practice for pupils as they will be able to read every word accurately and so build their confidence and fluency.
- In 2019, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved to just below the national average. More pupils are learning to decode at an earlier stage. However, some enter Year 2 and beyond without being able to read with age-appropriate fluency. Leaders should provide more planned opportunities for pupils to read their books independently in school time. This will help pupils to build their fluency more quickly.
- The curriculum covers a broad range of subjects and is interesting to pupils. However, pupils do not remember important knowledge well enough. This means that it is difficult for them to build on their knowledge effectively over time. Subject leaders have begun to map out the skills and knowledge which pupils need to secure in each subject and year group. Senior leaders should continue to support and develop these subject leaders so that they can take increasing responsibility for improving the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143847
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10110549
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	328
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tessa Mason
Headteacher	Chris Tolson
Website	www.academystjames.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the first inspection since the school became a sponsored academy with Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) in January 2017.
- The current headteacher was appointed as head of school in January 2017 and became headteacher in September 2019. There was a turbulent time of school leadership prior to his appointment in 2017. There had been four different headteachers in the nine months following the predecessor school being placed in special measures in April 2016.
- The school serves an area of high deprivation.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND or who are disadvantaged is much higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Meetings also took place with a group of five governors, some of whom are also trustees, and with the executive primary leader and chief executive officer.

- Reading, mathematics, PE, geography and science were considered closely in order to evaluate the quality of education. In each of these subjects, inspection activities included lesson visits, discussions with staff and pupils, meetings with subject leaders and work scrutiny. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read.
- A range of documentation was considered. This included the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.
- The 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into consideration. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day. There were no responses to the staff or pupil surveys.
- Many of the inspection activities gave inspectors the opportunity to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school. Additionally, we asked staff about the impact of the safeguarding training they have received. Child protection records and the single central record of checks made on the suitability of staff to work in the school were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

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