

Inspection of St James' C of E Primary School

West Malvern Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 4BB

Inspection dates: 10–11 March 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school life. They say that their school is like a family, where everyone is welcome and cherished. Pupils are quick to point out examples of how well everyone gets along, including pupils of all ages joining in with a football match at playtime. They say that they feel safe at their school and that bullying is not a worry for them. However, if they do have a problem, then their teachers sort it out quickly.

Teachers make sure that they plan lessons that are exciting and engaging for pupils. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of experiences. Pupils have taken part in African drumming sessions, and they enjoy visits from experts who share their specialist knowledge about a variety of subjects, for example the Romans.

The interim executive headteacher and her staff put pupils first. They have high expectations for all pupils and work together to unlock their potential. The majority of parents agree. They describe staff as 'genuinely caring' and say that the school is a place they would 'recommend to anyone'.

Pupils are polite and respectful and behave responsibly. They carry out additional duties, such as lunchtime monitors, sensibly and enthusiastically.

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

After a period of instability, during which the local authority and the diocese provided effective support, the school is in a more secure position. Through the open and determined leadership of the interim executive headteacher, a culture of togetherness and sense of purpose has been built. All leaders, including governors, are ambitious for pupils and have a clear direction for future improvement. Actions taken by leaders have had a positive impact on both the curriculum and pupils' attainment. Furthermore, pupils' positive attitudes help them with their learning.

Leaders have recently designed a well-thought-out curriculum from early years to Year 6. They have clearly identified the knowledge and skills pupils will learn by the end of each academic year. Teachers have further identified links with other subjects to allow pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the topics being taught. However, sometimes teachers do not focus closely enough on helping pupils to retain specific subject knowledge. As a result, pupils cannot remember or apply important parts of their learning as well as they might.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Pupils in key stage 2 can talk at length about their favourite authors. They read widely and often. Pupils have also been instrumental in developing a new school library. They have helped to create a 'Narnia' themed environment where all pupils can enjoy and share a range of books. The teaching of phonics begins soon after pupils start school. All staff have been well trained in the

delivery of phonics. Pupils quickly gain the skills they need to sound out unknown words. Consequently, pupils' phonics knowledge has strengthened considerably. However, occasionally teaching in key stage 1 does not focus closely enough on helping pupils understand the meaning of unfamiliar words.

The curriculum in mathematics is well organised and allows pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding from year-to-year. Learning in mathematics is well planned and delivered by all staff. Pupils enjoy lessons and can talk confidently about learning that has taken place.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Clear routines and warm, nurturing relationships help pupils to settle quickly. Parents visit the school regularly for events such as reading workshops. They take an active part in their children's learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are effectively supported by well-trained staff. They know the pupils well and adapt lessons to ensure that pupils' needs are met.

Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is a strength of the school. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and are quick to provide support where needed. Strong relationships with pupils and their families are a pivotal element of the school's success. Pupils also have access to a range of extra-curricular activities from handball to coding club.

The governing body makes a significant contribution to the overall ethos of the school. Governors recognise the strengths of the school and where the school needs to make further improvements. Governors visit the school regularly to maintain an oversight of the school's performance.

Staff who completed the Ofsted survey for staff were exceptionally positive about the culture of the school. They value the training and professional development opportunities afforded to them and say that leaders are mindful of workload. Staff morale is high.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are skilled and knowledgeable about safeguarding matters. All staff receive regular and appropriate training and have an 'it could happen here' attitude. They have a clear understanding of the school's policies and procedures and are quick to identify signs that a child may be at risk of harm.

Appropriate recruitment checks are carried out. Leaders and governors check site security as part of their work to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Leaders have developed a personal, social and health education curriculum that helps pupils to manage everyday risks and keep themselves safe, including in relation to online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has made recent changes to curriculum planning in some subjects. Staff are still finding their way with this. There is more to do to ensure that the new planning is implemented to best effect so that pupils are able to remember and recall important subject information as well as possible.
- Books for some younger readers are not well matched to their abilities, as they do not know the meaning of some key words. This hinders their understanding of what they are reading. Staff should ensure that teaching focuses more closely on helping pupils to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words, in order to support their fluency and confidence.

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 are the school and you are 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	116903
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10122471
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rev. Paul Folland
Headteacher	Jolanda Simmonds
Website	www.stjames.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been no significant changes since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the school's interim executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders. We met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- We met with a representative of the local authority and spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- As part of this inspection, we reviewed the school's work in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, history and geography. We made lesson visits with leaders to classes, checked pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning. We discussed the curriculum in these subjects with teachers and leaders.

- We made visits to the Reception class to learn about the curriculum in the early years.
- We checked safeguarding by speaking with leaders, staff, pupils and parents about safety. We also checked samples of relevant school policies, procedures and leaders' records of checks on the suitability of adults to work in a school.
- We considered pupils' behaviour in classrooms, corridors, outside areas and in the dining hall. We also spoke to leaders, staff, pupils and parents and checked a sample of records.
- We spoke informally to parents on the playground. We reviewed 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. We also looked at 26 written responses.
- We reviewed 13 responses from pupils to Ofsted's pupils' survey. We met with different groups of pupils from key stages 1 and 2 to ask them about learning to read, bullying and the school's support for their personal development.
- We met with groups of teachers and support staff to ask them about their experiences of working at the school, including their workload. We considered the responses of eight staff to Ofsted's survey for staff.

Inspection team

Josie Leese, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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