

# Inspection of a good school: Sankey Valley St James Church of England Primary School

Dorchester Road, Great Sankey, Warrington, Cheshire WA5 1XE

---

Inspection dates:

23–24 June 2021

## **Outcome**

Sankey Valley St James Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This school is a calm, safe and welcoming place where pupils love to learn. Pupils enjoy their learning because it captures their interest. Everyone is expected to do their best. Pupils achieve well. They talk confidently about the many things that they have learned during their time at school.

Leaders ensure that pupils are supported to learn as well as they can. Parents and carers commend staff for the support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive. Leaders make sure that everyone has the chance to be involved in all aspects of school life.

Pupils enjoy playing with their friends at breaktimes. They understand that following the school's rules keeps them safe. Staff encourage pupils to share worries. Staff listen to pupils and sort problems out quickly. Leaders deal with any incidents of bullying thoroughly.

Pupils uphold the school's values. They behave well. Pupils remind one another to keep up their good behaviour as they move around the school. They are supportive and considerate of others. Pupils particularly enjoy Friday afternoons when they take part in activities focused on well-being and when they contribute to the work of the school council.

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

Leaders and governors have designed an ambitious curriculum. They have set out clearly what pupils are expected to learn and in what order. The school's well-thought-out curriculum has enabled teachers to focus on the most important things that pupils need to learn next. Teachers are clear about what their pupils already know. No time has been

wasted in getting pupils back on track with their learning as COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions have eased.

The carefully crafted curriculum ensures that pupils have secure reading knowledge. Pupils love to read. This prepares pupils well for all aspects of their learning. Children begin to build up their ability to hear and recognise sounds as soon as they start to attend in the Nursery Class. Teachers are skilled at teaching pupils how to use phonics knowledge to read. They provide effective support for pupils who need to catch up quickly. Teachers make sure that the books that pupils read help them to become fluent and accurate readers.

Pupils are able to remember what they have learned of the curriculum over time. They make links between new learning and what they have learned previously. For example, pupils can describe the different burial customs from the ancient civilisations that they have studied in Years 3 and 4. In the Reception Year, children are able to spot and describe mathematical patterns. By the time pupils are in Year 6, they are able to solve complex written mathematical problems with confidence.

Pupils work cooperatively with each other in class. They listen to their teachers and each other respectfully. Time is used well to ensure that pupils learn as much as they can.

Leaders have maintained a focus on pupils' wider development and well-being throughout the pandemic. Pupils are able to take part in a wide range of sports clubs. Some older pupils are chosen to be librarians. They deliver books to each class from the school's well-stocked library that the school council helped to set up. The school has close links with its parish church and local community. Pupils take an active part in liturgical services. They raise money for local charities. They perform an annual musical play for older citizens at the nearby community centre. These activities help pupils to build their confidence in making a positive contribution to their wider world.

Staff know pupils well. They understand the differing needs that pupils have. For example, leaders have ensured that the school's indoor environment is conducive for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Leaders provide additional support for pupils when this is needed. This includes pupils with SEND or those who have recently arrived from another country. Leaders ensure that teachers act on advice from specialists, such as speech therapists, when they adapt their curriculums.

Governors are generally well informed. They support leaders in making sure that the curriculum is delivered as it was intended. However, the pandemic has made it more difficult for leaders and governors to make the same checks on the quality of the curriculum that they carried out previously. Currently, leaders and governors do not have the same level of information about how well staff are delivering the curriculum.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff and governors are well trained. They ensure that pupils are safe. Staff know their pupils well. They are vigilant in looking out for signs that pupils need extra support. Leaders are tenacious in putting the right support in place. They made sure that any pupils who would benefit from a place at school during periods of national lockdown got one. Staff work closely with different agencies to maximise pupils' safety.

Pupils learn about how to protect themselves from potential harm. This includes while they are using social media or other technology. They respect rules that keep them safe.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Prior to the pandemic, leaders and governors made regular checks on the quality of the curriculum. They ensured that staff followed their guidance about how the planned curriculum should be delivered. Leaders have not carried out the same level of checks during the pandemic. Leaders need to return to their previous high-quality checks so that ongoing improvements to the curriculum continue apace.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 18 March 2011.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133676
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	10193947
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	220
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Reverend Martin Thorpe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deb Feltham
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sankeyvalleystjames.org.uk/">www.sankeyvalleystjames.org.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 February 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There have been changes to the senior leadership since the time of the previous section 5 inspection. A new headteacher has been appointed. There is also a new deputy headteacher and a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) in post.
- A new chair of governors has also been appointed during this time.
- Sankey Valley St James is a voluntary aided Church of England school. Its last section 48 inspection took place in July 2016. The next section 48 inspection is due in 2022.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The impact of the pandemic was discussed with the headteacher. This was taken into account by the inspector in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders, the SENCo and a group of governors, including the vice chair of governors.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including: the school's central record of staff and visitors; training records of staff; records of safeguarding; and samples of records of individual pupils.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. She talked with leaders of these subject areas. She also visited lessons, looked at examples of children's work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. She watched pupils as they moved around the school.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- The inspector looked at the 38 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 26 free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. She also considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:  
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2021