

Inspection of St James Church of England Primary School

Harlestone Road, St James, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN5 7AG

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 October 2021

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 like their lessons. They like to learn. Pupils enjoy being at school. They work and play happily with each other throughout the school. They know that the staff care for them. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils are highly motivated. They contribute positively to the life of the school.

Pupils have strong relationships with staff. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils behave well in and out of class. They concentrate well on their learning. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is mostly good and that bullying is not tolerated. Most pupils say that they feel safe.

Pupils are good at listening to the ideas of others. They talk about why it is good to be different. Pupils' knowledge of British values such as democracy is strong. However, their knowledge of the rule of law and individual liberty is weaker.

Most parents and carers are very pleased with what the school offers their children. One parent's comment summed up the views of many: 'The school is like an extended family. They go above and beyond to help pupils and families.' Parents appreciate how the staff put the pupils' well-being and education at the heart of the school.

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

The school provides a good quality of education. Leaders have developed an effective curriculum in some subjects. They have set out what they want pupils to know and remember from Nursery through to the end of key stage 2. In some subjects, curriculum plans are at an early stage of development. In these subjects, including personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), the key content and knowledge that pupils need to learn are not explicit enough.

Reading is prioritised across the school. In Nursery, there is a sharp focus on ensuring that children acquire a wide vocabulary. Staff share rhymes and songs to develop children's communication skills. Leaders have ensured that pupils learn to read in a systematic way, including from the moment they start in Reception. Staff are trained well. They teach pupils to use decoding skills to sound out unfamiliar words. Books are matched to the letters and sounds that pupils are learning. Staff are quick to provide support when pupils fall behind.

The mathematics curriculum is well organised. It allows pupils to build their mathematical knowledge and skills securely. Pupils remember what they have learned. They appreciate that teachers help them to remember important facts. Children in Reception are given a broad range of mathematical tasks that deepen their understanding of number.

Teachers have a clear understanding of most of the curriculum, including in science and physical education (PE). They know what pupils should learn and when. Staff

subject knowledge is generally strong. They ask questions that support pupils to understand the learning. However, there is not a sharp enough approach to assessment across the school. Teachers do not routinely check what pupils know and remember from the lessons. For example, in some subjects, leaders do not know precisely enough the reasons for some gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Staff adapt the curriculum well for pupils with emotional and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that staff provide high-quality support in lessons so that all pupils can access the curriculum. All pupils engage well with their learning.

The quality of education in early years is strong. Relationships are very positive between children and adults. Leaders provide an engaging environment inside and outside the classroom. Leaders have set out how learning in Nursery and Reception connects with learning that pupils encounter as they move through the school. This is very clear in plans for phonics, reading and mathematics. However, leaders have not yet set out the knowledge that children should learn in all areas of learning.

Opportunities to learn beyond the classroom reduced due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. However, leaders are now increasing such opportunities. Pupils have experienced 'careers in the classroom' events. They have enjoyed working with the Royal Marines and Professor Robert Winston. Pupils take part in a wide variety of sports. Other clubs are planned, such as 'eco club' and a 'green fingers' gardening club for younger pupils.

Trust leaders are very knowledgeable about the work of the school. They play an important role in supporting leaders and holding them to account. They support leaders to develop the curriculum. Trust leaders and those responsible for governance understand their statutory duties.

Leaders engage well with staff and take account of their workload. Staff appreciate leaders' support. Leaders consider staff well-being and provide professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of care at the school. Leaders provide strong support to vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders ensure that all staff are knowledgeable and receive frequent training. Staff pass any concerns on quickly. Record-keeping is robust. Trust leaders and governors regularly check the school's safeguarding procedures.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils told inspectors that they know whom to go to if they have a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects, such as PSHE, computing and design technology. In these subjects, it is not yet fully clear what pupils should learn and when. However, it is clear that leaders have already begun to review and plan the curriculum in these subjects. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- Teachers do not routinely assess pupils' understanding across the different subjects. As a result, teachers and leaders do not always know where and why there may be gaps in pupils' knowledge, including whether these gaps are a result of pupils' learning during the COVID-19 national lockdown restrictions. Leaders should make sure that teachers' use of assessment is sufficiently sharp to identify when there may be gaps in pupils' knowledge and why these gaps exist, to inform subsequent learning.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	141724
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10200074
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Holman
Headteacher	Sarah Beach
Website	www.stjames.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust in March 2015.
- The school has Nursery provision on site, as well as provision for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the leader with responsibility for pupils with SEND, the early years leader and a sample of teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with a governor, the trust governance and safeguarding lead from the academy trust, the chief executive officer of the academy trust and the director for learning and achievement from the academy trust.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading; mathematics; science; PE; and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans and documentation relating to attendance and behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and the family support worker. The safeguarding policy, training records and examples of safeguarding concerns were scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the 58 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 57 responses to Ofsted's free-text service. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff survey and the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Damien Turrell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

Christopher Wheatley

Ofsted 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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021