

Inspection of a good school: St James C of E Primary School

Wolverley Crescent, Oldbury, West Midlands B69 1BG

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 March 2022

Outcome

St James C of E Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St James is a very inclusive school, which welcomes everyone. Pupils thrive because all staff want the best for them. Pupils come to school happy and want to learn. They behave well in lessons and at social times. Pupils are confident to talk to an adult if they have any concerns. Incidents of bullying are uncommon, and staff sort out any disagreements. Pupils feel safe in school.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils respond well. Staff are well trained and they work together as an effective team. They all know what they want pupils to learn. Pupils study all the subjects in the national curriculum. In every subject, leaders have planned each step of the learning with great care.

Staff have a good understanding of how learning can help to grow pupils' personal and social skills. For example, pupils learn to become more independent and to cooperate with one another. Pupils can take part in a variety of activities after school. They benefit from school trips to places such as the Black Country Museum and residential visits.

Leaders know their school very well, so they are strongly placed to make further improvements.

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

The curriculum is very well organised. In each subject, leaders have identified what pupils need to learn before they leave the school. They have broken the learning down into smaller steps for pupils to follow. Teachers understand how they can build up pupils' learning over time, starting in the early years. They have worked out what pupils may have missed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and have adapted the work programme when necessary. Learning in different subjects links together well. Teachers check on what pupils have learned and help them to remember more of what has been taught.

Leaders place the highest priority on reading. Starting in the Nursery class, a structured programme ensures that children learn about letters and sounds in an effective sequence. Staff have established strong routines and use good resources in a consistent way. They make sure that pupils read frequently to an adult and become fluent readers. Staff help pupils who find reading more difficult to keep up. Books for younger pupils are well matched to their knowledge of phonics. Pupils across the school are encouraged to love books and read widely.

Pupils really enjoy learning mathematics. Teachers make sure that all pupils think about how to tackle mathematical questions, as well as ensuring that they can calculate fluently. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, having an 'odd one out' when sorting two-dimensional shapes made pupils think hard.

Leaders have provided very effective staff training, so teachers have a first-rate understanding of how to plan the day-to-day learning for pupils. They are knowledgeable and draw on good resources. For example, in an orienteering lesson, pupils used laminated maps and high-quality compasses. Everyone knows the importance of building up pupils' vocabulary and using technical terms accurately. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in the classroom. However, teachers are sometimes not clear enough about what they want the teaching assistants to do.

Leaders identify pupils' additional needs as soon as they become clear. They are ambitious for pupils with SEND and make sure that they study the full curriculum. Staff have taken particular care to meet the complex needs of a group of pupils with autism spectrum disorder. However, on occasion, teaching assistants' work can have a limited effect on supporting pupils' learning.

Pupils understand the school's rewards and sanctions and think that they are fair. They work hard in lessons, and disruption is rare. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils play happily together. Pupils often join the school part way through a key stage. Staff work well with those who have behavioural needs so that their attitude improves. Leaders use suspension as a last resort and do so appropriately.

Teachers identify opportunities for pupils to learn specific personal and social skills in lessons. For example, in physical education (PE), pupils learn to listen to one another and to work as a team. Work in religious education, history and English ensures that pupils learn about a range of cultures and experiences different from their own.

The curriculum is relatively new. As a result, subject leaders have not had much opportunity to monitor its implementation. There are minor inconsistencies in the ways in which staff put the curriculum into effect.

The headteacher has established a strong sense of common purpose in the school. Teachers believe that leaders are always ready to help and are considerate of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff are well trained in safeguarding so that they are well placed to identify pupils at risk. They take the right actions to help children, some of whom have complex needs. Leaders take appropriate steps to involve other agencies that work with children. They are persistent when the need arises. Teachers make sure that pupils learn about the risks that they may face, including sexual harassment.

The school keeps the necessary records. Leaders make the right checks on the staff who join the school. Governors provide effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements.

Pupils know that there is always an adult to talk to. They feel safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The current curriculum is in its first year of operation. As a result, there is some work to do to refine the curriculum in some subjects and to enhance its implementation. Senior leaders have adapted the arrangements for the leadership of individual subjects. They should make sure that subject leaders have the skills and opportunities to check on the implementation of the subject for which they have responsibility. This will enable them to make those refinements to the curriculum and to provide staff with additional guidance.
- In classrooms, teaching assistants' work can sometimes be limited, which reduces their role in supporting learning. The number of pupils in the school with significant additional needs is considerable. Leaders should make sure that all teachers are aware of the most effective ways in which teaching assistants can be deployed and of their responsibility to guide and monitor their work. This will enable staff to provide all pupils with the most effective support.

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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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	131673
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10212493
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	483
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Sale
Headteacher	Camilla McGregor
Website	www.stjamesprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St James C of E Primary School is a voluntary-controlled Church of England faith school within the Diocese of Birmingham. The religious character of the school was last inspected in March 2020. The next such inspection is therefore due before 2028.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- A small number of pupils benefit from full-time alternative provision with two registered providers.
- A significant number of pupils join the school other than at normal points of transfer.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.

- The chair and another two members of the governing body met with the inspector. The inspector spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority and with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspector spoke with pupils at social times, and with groups of pupils more formally.
- When inspecting safeguarding, the inspector looked at the school's procedures for recruiting and checking on staff. He also considered the effectiveness of staff training and the procedures to keep pupils safe.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' plans to improve the school and records of governing body meetings. The inspector also reviewed the school's attendance and behaviour records.
- The inspector took account of responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. He met with parents outside the school at the start of the second day of the inspection. The inspector also considered responses to the survey for staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also met with pupils and teachers to discuss learning in these subjects.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 reading to an adult.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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