

Inspection of a good school: St Germans Academy

School Lane, St Germans, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE34 3DZ

Inspection date: 23 March 2022

Outcome

St Germans Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Germans are friendly. Visitors and new pupils are quickly made welcome. Pupils treat each other with respect and kindness. Bullying is rare, but when it does happen, pupils are confident that school staff will make sure it is dealt with well.

The youngest children get off to a strong start in their education. Children are well supported and cared for. They are kind to each other. They enjoy high-quality activities, and develop early reading, writing and number skills quickly.

As pupils get older, they continue to enjoy their learning. Pupils particularly enjoy the regular opportunities that they get to undertake outdoor learning in well-equipped nature areas. Pupils talked to inspectors about collecting different materials that the Vikings could have found locally for roofing, and were ready to test their properties.

Pupils enjoy sharing stories with each other as part of their school 'families'. They enjoy being part of these mixed-aged groups. These groups talk about the things that are important to them, such as local fundraising activities. Younger pupils have older pupils as 'buddies' to look out for them when they have shared playtimes.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs, trips and visits on offer, including residential trips.

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

Leaders prioritise the development of reading in the curriculum for all pupils. As pupils move through the school, staff ensure that they are taught the exact phonics and comprehension skills they need to make progress. Leaders have carefully designed and amended the curriculum to ensure that any gaps pupils developed during the COVID-19 restrictions when schools were not open to all pupils are being addressed meaningfully and quickly. The vast majority of pupils learn to read quickly. However, on occasion, phonics teaching is not precisely enough focused on the specific gaps that a few pupils have in their understanding. Pupils enjoy the stories that their teachers read to them. The

library is well stocked, and books for early readers are well matched to their reading ability.

The early years environment and curriculum are used skilfully by adults to support early learning. They use stories as the basis for a wide range of activities that develop all areas of children's development. The pupils in key stage 1 also benefit from using the outside area at lunchtime, developing their social skills and enjoying the wide range of play opportunities.

The curriculum is well planned. Lessons are interesting and engage pupils well. Teachers have a good understanding of how learning should build on what has come before. Pupils are able to explain how what they already know helps them. Teachers plan for challenges to help pupils try increasingly complex tasks. However, teachers' use of time in lessons means that few pupils actually get opportunities to attempt these.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs clearly identified. There are clear plans for how they will be supported. Teachers and support staff regularly provide focused teaching on key skills for pupils with SEND. As a result, they do well.

Behaviour is generally calm and well ordered. Pupils understand and respect that they are all different and that others have needs that are different from theirs. Where pupils occasionally are less well behaved, staff act in a positive way to help them rejoin activities as quickly as possible.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of this school. Pupils learn about different cultures and countries. They regularly discuss current affairs. Teachers make sure that this learning is brought to life. For example, one pupil excitedly described their role-play trip to Australia. Learning about water safety is a priority due to the large bodies of water that surround the village. Before COVID-19, all pupils were taught swimming regularly, and this is now being reintroduced.

The school is well led. Staff feel supported. Subject leadership is shared with two other schools from the multi-academy trust. Teachers share good practice across this wider team. The academy review committee is effectively developing its role in school improvement since the change of multi-academy trust.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that effectiveness of specific support for a few pupils in phonics, and ensuring that lessons give pupils sufficient opportunity to tackle more complex activities, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a good knowledge of the pupils in their care. Staff have a clear understanding of the training they have received. Records are detailed and

comprehensive. A joined-up system for recording behaviour, communication with parents and carers and safeguarding concerns enables leaders to spot any emerging patterns.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe, especially in relation to safety when online. Where there have been incidents involving unpleasant behaviour online, leaders act quickly to involve outside agencies to teach pupils about how to keep themselves safe and happy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, teaching does not make the best use of time and resources to support a few pupils in their phonics knowledge and development. Misconceptions or required learning for a few pupils, while being addressed, are not being supported as efficiently as they could be. Leaders need to ensure that monitoring and training for staff help them to be even more effective in supporting a few pupils with the gaps in their knowledge.
- Curriculum planning sets out precisely where pupils can be supported to develop a greater depth of understanding. Teachers are not structuring learning to allow pupils, when they are ready, to have time to attempt these activities. Teachers need to ensure that the way lessons are planned gives more pupils time and opportunities to apply their learning independently and in more complex ways.

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 section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Germans Primary School, to be good in March 2016.

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	145531
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10227569
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	121
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Edward Colman
Headteacher	Suzannah Hayes and Louise Arrowsmith (Co-headteachers)
Website	www.stgermansacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school was previously federated with two other primaries, Magdalen Academy and Wimbotsham and Stow Academy. These schools continue to share leadership across the three schools.
- The three schools have two co-headteachers. This school is managed on a day-to-day basis by one headteacher, although the other headteacher still has leadership responsibilities for aspects of its work.
- The school converted to be an academy on 3 March 2018. When its predecessor school, St Germans Primary School, was inspected on 10 March 2016, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Unity Education Trust. It was previously part of KWEST multi-academy trust. This was merged into Unity Education Trust on 1 June 2021.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteachers, other senior leaders and a wide range of staff. They met with representatives of the academy review committee, trustees and multi-academy trust leaders. Some of these meetings were by video conference call.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. 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 samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's single central record and a sample of safeguarding records. They spoke to staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 14 responses to the parent survey, Parent View, the nine responses to the pupil survey and the 11 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Dooley

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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