

Inspection of a good school: St James Infant School

90 St James Street, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 4AG

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 July 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and carers are proud of their school. One parent, typical of many, commented how they like the school because 'it is supportive and caring'. Pupils agree. They like their teachers. They appreciate the opportunities they receive to work with the school's resident artist. Pupils know the 'Kaleidoscope room' is a safe space where they learn how to talk about, and explore, their feelings.

Pupils are polite and friendly. They move around school in a calm and orderly way. Most pupils concentrate well in lessons. Pupils are respectful towards adults and each other. They live out the school's values of 'be the best you can be' in all aspects of their school day. Pupils like the outdoor areas in school and the activities at lunchtime. They commented that although falling out happens, bullying is rare. They know that adults in school will sort out any worries they have.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They like learning about historical figures such as the Wright brothers or Rosa Parks. However, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough to benefit from the school's curriculum. In some subjects, adults do not address pupils' errors quickly.

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

There have been rapid changes in the school's curriculum this year. Leaders have worked alongside the trust to ensure that the content in all curriculum subjects is well sequenced. Staff appreciate the support they have received to implement the changes. They say that leaders have considered their workload and well-being during this time of rapid change. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to do well. They ensure the curriculum helps pupils to know about their local community as well as the wider world. Pupils with special

educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive a curriculum that is well matched to their needs.

Leaders make ongoing checks to ensure the key knowledge that pupils need to know is identified in all subjects. However, some staff do not have all the expertise to deliver the school's curriculum. Subject leaders do not make rigorous-enough checks to ensure that pupils know and remember more of what they have learned. Leaders have not made the link between pupils who under achieve and the most disadvantaged pupils in school, many of whom do not attend school regularly enough.

The school's early reading programme is relatively new. Leaders have ensured that all staff had relevant training to help them deliver the programme. The trust has supported school leaders to review the strategy for teaching pupils to read. Reading books and teaching materials are appropriate and well matched to pupils' needs. Most pupils benefit from the school's new approach to reading. Pupils with SEND learn to read because adults break down the key knowledge into smaller steps for them.

The school's programme for mathematics is also new. Leaders provide staff with on-going support to understand how to deliver the programme. Some staff skilfully break down key mathematical knowledge into small steps. For example, in Year 2, adults make links between fractions and an analogue clock. This helps pupils to tell the time. However, some pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to develop all aspects of mathematics. Some pupils receive work that is mainly learning mathematical facts. They do not get enough opportunities to deepen their understanding of how to use the facts they have learned in this subject.

Children in the early years develop positive relationships with adults in school. Many of these children are at the early stages of learning English. The school's early years provision does not support children to develop their early communication and language knowledge in a systematic way. Adults do not use all the opportunities available to promote high quality communication in all areas of learning.

Pupils can attend a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. Leaders carefully consider any barriers that pupils may face that may prevent them from accessing clubs after school. Pupils' character development is central to the school's personal development offer. The school's Bramble bear mascot is used to help pupils to understand British values. Pupils learn the importance of honesty, teamwork and cooperation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that pupils and staff know how to report any concerns or worries they may have. Pupils know who their trusted adults are. They understand that an uneasy feeling, like 'Berty butterfly' means they must tell an adult how they feel. Staff have regular training to understand how to identify signs that a child may be at risk of harm. Pupils learn how to stay safe online.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding records help them to understand all aspects of a pupil's life. They ensure that other agencies are involved quickly so that pupils and families receive the right support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders are still developing some aspects of their leadership skills. They do not know how well the curriculum is being implemented for all pupils including the most disadvantaged pupils. As a result, they are not yet identifying precisely what is going well and what actions are needed to ensure all pupils know and remember more. Senior leaders should provide subject leaders with the support and expertise to improve their understanding of how well the curriculum is being implemented. Leaders must check that the curriculum is known well by all pupils.
- Independent activities for children in the early years do not sufficiently focus on the development of communication and language. Adults do not make checks or use opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge in all areas of learning. Misconceptions are not identified quickly enough. As a result, learning slows. Leaders must ensure that all adults in the early years have the knowledge and expertise they need to support children to know and remember more of the early years' curriculum.
- Some pupils do not receive sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge of methods and strategies in mathematics. Sometimes misconceptions are not addressed quickly. This means that pupils cannot apply the knowledge they have learned. Leaders must ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, are provided with opportunities to develop their knowledge of all aspects of mathematics. They need to ensure that all staff have the relevant expertise and knowledge to identify and address errors pupils make.
- Some pupils miss too much of the school's curriculum because they are absent from school. This is leading to gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should continue to identify pupils at risk of being persistently absent and work closely with parents to overcome barriers to pupils' attendance.

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 predecessor school, St James Infant School, to be good on 27 June 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	144178
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10227937
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Linda Brooks
Headteacher	Gail Gynn
Website	www.stjamesinfant.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St James Infant School joined the Inspire Multi Academy Trust on 1 February 2018. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2017, it was judged to be good overall.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2018.
- The school has a federated local academy committee that works over two schools.
- The school uses no alternative providers.

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 school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector undertook deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. The inspector met with the leaders of these subjects and visited classes from all year groups. Meetings were held with teachers to discuss the school's curriculum. Meetings were also held with pupils. Inspectors sampled pupils' work in these subjects.

- The inspector met with those responsible for the governance of the school.
- A meeting was held with representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Information on attendance, behaviour logs and safeguarding records was analysed. Meetings with leaders to discuss the safeguarding of pupils were also conducted.
- Inspectors sampled a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation of current performance and plans for improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour was considered at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime.
- The views of parents were considered through the online survey, Parent View, and by meeting parents during the inspection. The views of staff were gathered as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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