

Inspection of a good school: St James and St John CofE Primary School

Main Street, Chackmore, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire MK18 5JE

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 September 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Every day, pupils walk excitedly into their welcoming school. They greet each other with a warm smile and a kind wave. Pupils feel safe. They trust that adults will help them deal with any problems or worries they have. Pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and prejudice. They insist that there are hardly any incidents of poor behaviour.

Playtimes are happy occasions. Pupils enjoy catching up with their friends in the gazebo. They are pleased with the newly installed planters in which they will grow flowers to make their school environment 'even more colourful'. Pupils take delight in their roles and responsibilities such as eco-warriors, school council members, charity reps and being part of the worship council.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils learn to take responsibility for themselves and the community. For instance, pupils raise funds for charities and collect donations for the food bank.

Leaders and governors are ambitious for all staff and pupils. However, the curriculum is not well structured in most subjects. Teaching is not consistently strong, including in phonics. Leaders know they need to tackle this quickly for all year groups. They have begun to make the necessary changes.

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

The newly appointed headteacher is working resolutely to make the necessary improvements to the quality of education. Rightly, she has brought much-needed rigour and has prioritised the areas that need to improve swiftly. However, most of the actions have only just been introduced and are not yet fully embedded. There is a palpable sense

of team spirit and collaboration in the team. Staff feel rejuvenated, valued and motivated. Governors show an unfaltering commitment to pupils and staff. They are working successfully to further enhance their skills to challenge leaders on the impact of their actions.

Many subject leaders are new to their roles. They have begun to make improvements to the curriculum. However, across most subjects, leaders have not set out clearly and precisely the order in which pupils should learn the important knowledge. As a result, most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Across the curriculum, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough. Too often, teachers do not check how well pupils understand the information taught. They introduce new ideas too quickly and do not help pupils to make links in their learning. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. As one pupil said, 'We get confused because teachers move us on to new work too fast. Most of the time we are not done with learning. We can't keep up, so we give up.'

Leaders nurture pupils' love of reading. Pupils look forward to listening to the range of stories staff read. Children are introduced to phonics as soon as they start in the Reception Year. The phonics programme is well sequenced. However, some staff do not teach phonics successfully. The books that the weakest readers in key stage 2 read do not help them practise their phonics knowledge and strategies effectively. This slows some pupils' ability to read quickly and with increased fluency. Leaders are in the process of addressing these issues as a priority.

Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND, to learn an engaging curriculum. They have ensured that all pupils have opportunities and experiences that bring their learning to life. For example, pupils visit museums, the farm, the local railway station, the theatre, art galleries, the library and the church.

Leaders carefully consider pupils' wider development. Pupils are encouraged to care for others. They make cards and write messages to bring cheer to the residents at the local care home. Pupils showcase their talents by participating in national events such as sports tournaments and singing concerts. They talk knowledgeably about topics such as the rule of law and individual liberty. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a well-established culture of vigilance in school. Leaders make sure pupils are safe and know how to stay safe in the local community. They ensure that all staff are well trained to help them spot the slightest signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders make referrals and escalate their concerns promptly. They seek advice from external agencies effectively. This ensures that pupils and families get any help they may need.

Pupils have a mature understanding of the importance of maintaining good mental health. They know well what to do to keep safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In most of the foundation subjects, leaders are new to their roles. They have not identified clearly and precisely enough the order in which pupils should learn the essential knowledge in their subject areas. Leaders need to make sure that the curriculum in all foundation subjects is well structured and helps pupils build their knowledge progressively.
- Across the curriculum, teachers' subject knowledge is too variable. In too many lessons, teachers do not make sure that pupils embed the important ideas and make links in their work. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are well trained and have strong subject knowledge.
- Some staff do not teach the phonics programme effectively. They do not always check that all pupils learn the right sounds and blends. The books that some of the weakest readers in key stage 2 read are either too easy or too hard. Leaders need to make sure that all staff are trained to teach phonics effectively and that the books older pupils read help them practise their phonics knowledge and strategies.
- Governors recognise that in the past they have accepted too readily what leaders tell them about the quality of education. Governors need to continue to enhance their skills and hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions more rigorously.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged St James and St John Church of England Primary School to be good in December 2012.

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.

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	110410
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10211533
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jo Coxall
Headteacher	Louise Woods
Website	www.stjamesjohn.com
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This small village school is located on two sites which are two miles apart. Children in early years and key stage 1 attend at the Akeley site. Pupils in key stage 2 are taught at the Chackmore site.
- As a Church of England school, St James and St John's is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The most recent section 48 inspection was in November 2017.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher. She also met with other school leaders, staff and pupils.

- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. Telephone discussions were also held with a representative from Buckinghamshire local authority and the Diocese of Oxford.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. The inspector also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- The inspector considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school. She took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses. The inspector talked with some parents on the first morning of the inspection.
- The inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's development plan and pupil premium funding plan.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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