

Inspection of St James's Church of England High School

Lucas Road, Farnworth, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL4 9RU

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff at St James Church of England High School have extremely high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils get the care and support they need to overcome challenges and strive for excellence.

Pupils are motivated to work hard by teachers. They are keen to do well. In most subjects, pupils benefit from teaching that helps them to achieve well or better.

The vast majority of pupils behave extremely well. Pupils are courteous and care for each other. They contribute to a school environment that is calm and orderly. Pupils do not experience much bullying, name calling or other unpleasant behaviours. When they do occur, pupils report them quickly. Staff deal with these with care and skill.

Pupils feel happy in school. They value their strong friendships and warm relationships with staff. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging. This helps them to feel safe.

Pupils value the diverse range of wider opportunities they get. These support pupils to develop their skills and interests in many areas such as sport, music and drama. Teachers go beyond the expected, for example by providing pupils with opportunities to learn about and care for exotic animals. Staff ensure that all pupils feel welcome at these opportunities.

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

Governors, leaders and staff at St James Church of England High School ensure that pupils benefit from exceptional pastoral care and personal development provision. They are taking impressive steps to ensure that pupils receive a consistently high quality of education.

Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a suitably aspirational curriculum. Many pupils, including those that are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are successfully motivated to study a broad and balanced range of subjects.

Leaders and staff are successfully strengthening subject curriculums. In most subjects, many year groups learn important subject content that is delivered in a carefully considered order. In these cases, pupils make impressive gains in what they know and remember. Elsewhere, some pupils are yet to benefit from this new, more refined curriculum. In these cases, pupils learn well but they are not as consistently secure in what they know and remember as they are in other subjects.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They explain subject matter clearly and select activities that help pupils to gain, recall and use new knowledge well. Teachers and teaching assistants skilfully use their specialist subject knowledge to support all pupils effectively, including those with SEND.

Leaders and staff are in the process of strengthening the assessment strategies that they use. In some subjects, new carefully focused approaches to assessment are helping teachers to more precisely identify what pupils know and remember. However, this is not fully implemented across all year groups in all subjects. Furthermore, in a small number of subjects, existing assessment strategies do not focus enough on checking that pupils have remembered the important knowledge that they have learned.

Leaders have thorough systems in place to identify pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. These pupils are expertly supported to strengthen their knowledge of phonics, fluency and comprehension. This ensures that pupils are quickly able to learn and achieve well across the full wider curriculum. Pupils regularly practise and strengthen their reading across the subjects they study.

Leaders accurately identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND in a timely manner. They support teachers and teaching assistants to help these pupils to learn well in lessons. Pupils who need it are nurtured with additional, well-focused support. Staff expertly ensure that these pupils get the experiences they need to cover the full curriculum.

Teachers support pupils well with helpful routines. This helps the majority of pupils to understand teachers' expectations in lessons. The vast majority of pupils live up to this. Staff carefully support pupils who find this harder. This is highly successful. Pupils' learning is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour.

Staff work with pupils to design and provide a wide and rich set of additional experiences. Specialists expertly deliver a coherent and well-structured personal development programme. Pupils acquire a strong understanding of personal, health, social and economic education. They understand positive relationships and develop extremely well as young citizens. Staff make sure that pupils of all ages rigorously explore their next steps in education, employment or training. When doing so, they carefully consider pupils' individual needs.

Leaders carefully ensure that staff get the time, opportunities and guidance to develop their teaching practice. Staff feel extremely well supported. They appreciate what leaders do to listen to them. Staff highly value what leaders do to help them manage their workload and support their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a deep understanding of the risks that pupils may face in their lives. Leaders train staff well to understand these risks. Staff have the knowledge they need to look out for pupils and report concerns in a timely way.

Leaders ensure that pupils are well supported when they need it. They carefully match support to pupils' needs. Expert staff skilfully support and mentor pupils. Leaders make highly effective use of wider support from external agencies where necessary.

Staff successfully ensure that pupils benefit from a caring culture. They skilfully teach pupils how to stay safe. Pupils readily share concerns with staff. They trust staff to help them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not benefit from curriculum content that is as rigorous or carefully sequenced as it could be. This affects how well teachers provide pupils with opportunities to learn and practise using new knowledge. Pupils in these subjects cannot recall and use important knowledge as well as they can in other subjects. Leaders should continue with their plans to implement strengthened curriculums across all year groups in all subjects.
- Teachers' approaches to assessing what pupils know and remember are variable. In some subjects, teachers are still developing assessment strategies that are carefully focused on the important knowledge that pupils have learned. Elsewhere, newly designed assessment approaches are not securely in place in every year group. This means that pupils are not always benefiting from assessment that clearly identifies what they know and remember. Leaders should continue their work to ensure that all subjects get the support they need to design and implement effective approaches to assessment across all key stages.

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

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| Unique reference number | 144046 |
| Local authority | Bolton |
| Inspection number | 10242460 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1057 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Lesley Durusomo |
| Headteacher | Catherine Anderson |
| Website | www.st-james.bolton.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- St James's Church of England High School converted to become an academy school in December 2017. When its predecessor school, St James's Church of England High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of The Bishop Fraser Trust, a local multi-academy trust.
- St James's Church of England High School is a faith school. It is part of the Church of England diocese of Manchester. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in November 2016.
- The school makes use of three registered and one unregistered alternative providers to provide full- and part-time education for 14 pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 headteacher and senior leaders. They met with representatives of the academy trust, the local governing board, the local authority and the Church of England diocese of Manchester.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors looked at samples of work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the comments received by the free-text facility.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Michael Pennington, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Jane Holmes | Ofsted Inspector |
| Paula Crawley | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jenny Jones | His Majesty's Inspector |

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