

Inspection of St James Church of England Primary and Nursery School

Fort Road, Off Crediton Road, Okehampton, Devon EX20 1GJ

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

What is it like to attend this school?

St James is an inclusive school, and has a caring ethos. Adults teach pupils to be kind and respectful. Pupils are polite, courteous and well-mannered. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere in school. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe.

Pupils' behaviour is positive, and almost all pupils behave sensibly in lessons. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Where there is some low-level disruption, staff swiftly sort it out to enable learning to continue. Children in the Nursery class and the Reception Year quickly learn the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are confident that bullying is extremely rare and that, if it happens, staff resolve it rapidly.

Leaders place a high priority on pupils' personal development. Adults know each pupil well. They quickly spot any changes in their well-being and take swift action.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, and take their roles seriously. Responsibilities include being librarians and school councillors. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, which include sports, drama and music. Pupils' participation in these clubs is high. Leaders closely track attendance to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), attend well.

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

Leaders are ambitious for the children and pupils at this school. The curriculum provides pupils, including those with SEND, with the knowledge they need to succeed in life. Teachers adapt work carefully to allow pupils to experience success and achieve well.

Children and pupils have a wide range of learning experiences from the moment they start school in the Nursery and Reception Years. Teachers revisit prior learning to help the most important knowledge stick in pupils' memory. For example, in mathematics, pupils use their knowledge of number to help them solve problems. Their responses show a secure level of knowledge. They talk confidently about their work. However, leaders rightly recognise that, in some subjects, the curriculum is not clear enough about the knowledge and skills they want all pupils to know. As a result, pupils do not build a deep understanding of these subjects. Leaders have plans in place to strengthen this.

Many pupils show positive attitudes to their learning, and achieve well. When needed, staff help those who face challenges to manage their behaviour. This ensures that pupils can learn without interruption most of the time.

Reading is a priority. Leaders expect that every pupil will be a fluent reader by the end of Year 2. Children in the early years get off to a flying start. Staff have a sharp focus on developing children's language and communication. Children learn phonics

from the first day they arrive at school. They confidently practise saying and writing the sounds they are learning. Staff keep a close eye on pupils who are not keeping up. They provide extra support to help them catch up.

Story time is an important part of the day. Pupils enjoy a range of stories. Adults bring the texts alive by acting out familiar stories. This inspires children to develop a love of reading.

The school's Christian foundation underpins its approach to pupils' spiritual development and the development of pupils' character. Pupils are kind and, where necessary, forgiving of each other. Pupils understand the importance of respect when discussing religions, life choices and different family models.

Adults love working at St James. They greatly admire and respect the leadership of the executive principal. Staff welcome the training they receive, which develops their knowledge and skills. They appreciate the value leaders place on their mental health and well-being. Leaders are conscious of staff's workload, and consider ways to help them manage this.

The relationship between the school leaders and trust staff is strong. Together, they work closely with subject leaders. Leaders provide training and guidance to ensure staff have the necessary knowledge and expertise to support pupils' learning.

Governors know the school well. They hold leaders to account for the quality of education and care pupils receive.

Some parents have mixed views about communication and the decisions made by trust leaders about the school. However, many parents are happy with the school and would recommend it. Inspectors received a number of positive comments, which include, 'My child is happy and thriving at the school,' and 'Staff go above and beyond.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders create a strong safeguarding culture. They ensure that keeping pupils safe is everyone's responsibility. Staff are well trained and know the procedures to follow. They are confident in the actions to take if they identify any concerns. Leaders respond swiftly to support pupils and families in need of help. Together, they carry out the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

Leaders provide a curriculum that teaches pupils to understand age-appropriate risks, including knowing what healthy relationships are. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any worries or concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge they want pupils to know. As a result, pupils do not build a deep knowledge and understanding in these subjects. Leaders must ensure that all subjects identify the key knowledge pupils need to learn so that they learn well across the curriculum.
- Some parents expressed concerns about communication. Leaders need to build on the work that has already started to strengthen links with parents so that any concerns raised are dealt with quickly.

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 | 145912 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 10256596 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 155 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Tania Skeaping |
| Principal | Suzie Stevens |
| Website | www.stjamesokehampton.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2018. It is part of Dartmoor Multi-Academy trust. It joined the trust in October 2020.
- The school educates children and pupils from Nursery to Year 4.
- The school is temporarily accommodating a class of primary-age pupils from The Promise School until completion of its new building. This is a new, specialist school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs within the trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 executive principal, the associate principal, leaders from the trust, school staff and two members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chief executive officer and the chair of trustees.
- The lead inspector met with the executive principal of The Promise School.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and French. For each deep dive, the 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.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult. Inspectors visited story time in Reception Year and Year 1.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding lead acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff, governors and trustees about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including the school achievement improvement plan and governors' minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. An inspector met with the associate principal to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies, and responses to the staff survey. Inspectors spoke with parents at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Bray

Ofsted Inspector

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