

# Inspection of a good school: St James' CofE Primary School Gorton

Stelling Street, Gorton, Manchester M18 8LW

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

## **Outcome**

St James' CofE Primary School Gorton continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St James' is a warm and welcoming school. Parents and carers value the efforts that leaders make to involve them in the life of the school, such as 'stay and play' opportunities in the early years.

Teachers have increasingly high expectations of all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders recognise that, in the past, pupils have not achieved as well as they should. They have made rapid changes to successfully address areas of weakness in the curriculum. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They know that staff expect them to treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils told the inspector that this is a school where everyone is treated equally, and that discrimination is unacceptable. Incidents of bullying are rare and are resolved quickly and effectively by leaders. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe.

Pupils benefit from a wide variety of sporting opportunities, including a popular and successful cheerleading team. In addition, they can join the choir, and can participate in activities such as mindfulness and French club. Pupils develop their leadership skills by acting as representatives of the school council and by becoming school prefects and worship leaders.

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

Leaders have made swift and successful changes to the curriculum, including in the early years, to address gaps in pupils' learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have provided effective support for pupils who were most affected by disruption to their learning. This is helping these pupils to catch up quickly with their peers.

Leaders have implemented a broad and creative curriculum which, for the most part, supports pupils' learning well. They have identified and ordered the knowledge that they

expect pupils to learn in each topic. Leaders support teachers well to develop the knowledge and expertise that they need to deliver the curriculum with confidence. Teachers use effective strategies to check that pupils understand their learning.

In a minority of subjects, leaders have not given equal consideration to the development of pupils' knowledge and skills. In these subjects, teachers are not as successful in helping pupils to remember their previous learning. As a result, some pupils find it difficult to remember the knowledge required for subsequent learning.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have been well trained to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Children in the Nursery class are well prepared to learn phonics through activities that promote sound and letter recognition. Skilled staff support older pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge to catch up with their peers. Leaders prioritise time for pupils to rehearse their reading using suitable books. This helps pupils to develop into fluent and confident readers.

Leaders strongly promote a love of reading. For example, weekly reading cafés provide an opportunity for parents to read with their children. Leaders have identified the important quality texts that they want pupils to encounter during their time at St James'. Teachers supplement these texts with carefully chosen stories that engage and enthuse their pupils.

Leaders have rigorous systems in place to identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers make appropriate adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can learn well. Pupils who access the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) are supported by expert staff who are well trained to meet their needs. Pupils with SEND are fully involved in the wider life of the school, including with regard to extra-curricular trips and visits.

Teachers create positive climates for learning in classrooms. Pupils are clear about teachers' expectations and the consequences for any poor behaviour. Leaders provide extra help for pupils who sometimes find it more difficult to regulate their own conduct. As a result, disruption to pupils' learning is rare.

Leaders have designed an appropriate programme to support pupils' personal development. For example, they ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn about the culture and heritage of the local area and to engage with the local community. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy visiting local care homes, where they sing and chat with the residents.

Staff are happy and proud to work at the school. They value leaders' strong support for their well-being, as well as the opportunities for professional development that the trust provides. Leaders are well supported by trustees to evaluate and improve the quality of education for pupils.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. They ensure that staff receive regular training which equips them to recognise and report signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Leaders have strong systems in place to record and monitor safeguarding concerns. They respond promptly to any concerns about a pupil's welfare, working collaboratively with a range of external partners to secure appropriate support for pupils.

Pupils are taught about online safety, including the importance of online privacy. They also learn about how to stay safe in the community. Pupils are confident to report any concerns that they may have to an adult in school.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not support pupils to remember their prior knowledge as effectively as they should. As a result, some pupils have gaps in the knowledge most useful for subsequent learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers are equipped to help pupils to revisit and remember their learning securely.

## 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2018.

## 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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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 141689   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Manchester   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10283618   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy sponsor-led  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 449  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Leslee Draper  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Michael Connolly   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.stjames-gorton.manchester.sch.uk">www.stjames-gorton.manchester.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 14 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005                                    |

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on the school's roll has increased from 270 to 440 pupils.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision for any pupils.
- The school has specially resourced provision for 12 pupils with autism or development language disorder. There are 12 pupils with education, health and care plans currently using this provision, aged from four to 11 years.
- The school is part of Vantage Academy Trust.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. The last section 48 inspection took place in June 2016.

## 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 her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the headteacher, and a range of staff. She also spoke with representatives of the multi-academy trust, as well as a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. She observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. She met with leaders, staff and pupils to understand how pupils are kept safe.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers and pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed children reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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