

Inspection of a good school: James Bateman Middle School

Park Lane, Knypersley, Biddulph, Staffordshire ST8 7AT

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 July 2023

Outcome

James Bateman Middle School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy and safe in this inclusive school. Relationships between staff and pupils are a real strength. Staff know their pupils well, and pupils know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are respectful, kind and polite. As one pupil said: 'Pupils can be who they want to be.'

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils live up to these. In lessons, staff have created a calm, engaging and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils behave well. The prefects take an active role in maintaining a positive environment at social times by 'patrolling' the corridors.

There are many other leadership opportunities for pupils, and pupils strive to take up these roles. Pupil leaders in the 'reading crew' promote reading across the school and help their peers to select books linked to their interests. Reading is a key part of school life.

There are many extra-curricular activities on offer. These include basketball, football, choir, and arts and crafts. All pupils take part in at least one club. Leaders have made a pledge that all pupils will attend at least one trip per year. Pupils have enjoyed trips and residential to Llandudno and London.

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

The curriculum is suitably ambitious for all pupils. It is planned in a logical order. Careful thought has been put into sequencing the curriculum. This helps pupils to make links between prior learning and new learning. Teachers create many opportunities for pupils to revisit and retrieve existing knowledge. They routinely and regularly check that pupils understand key information. Any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge are rectified and remedied effectively. As a result, most pupils progress well. However, sometimes, teachers do not select activities that match pupils' needs. This means that pupils who have secure understanding miss out on opportunities to deepen their knowledge further.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are involved in all aspects of school life. They participate well in lessons and are keen to share their contributions in class. When needed, staff help to break down the learning into smaller, more manageable chunks. Pupils appreciate this support. However, a few pupils with SEND do not have their needs identified and managed precisely enough once they join the school. As a result, there are a small minority of pupils whose needs are not being met.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure and spend ample time in the school's well-resourced library. They select books which match their reading ability and talk passionately about their favourite books and authors. The 'wordometer' creates a buzz around school. This involves pupils contributing to the school's 'word count' by reading. The rewards include celebrating with a 'beach party'. Pupils who struggle to read are identified and given the help they need. As a result, these pupils catch up quickly and are becoming more fluent readers.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned and sequenced. Pupils have a good understanding of this curriculum, which includes topics such as puberty, fundamental British values and healthy relationships. This is taught during tutor time, assemblies and PSHE lessons. Pupils are kept well informed about current affairs, diversity and what it means to be inclusive. This helps to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. The transition between middle school and high school is done well. Pupils feel confident and are well prepared for their next stages in education.

Teachers feel supported by leaders in managing their workload and well-being. They feel valued, and appreciate the continuing professional development they receive from leaders to help them be the best they can be.

Leaders have pupils' best interests at the heart of all they do. Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use this to refine their school improvement work. For example, leaders are making changes to the behaviour policy to ensure that it includes what behaviour points equate to.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of vigilance across the school. Staff receive regular training and updates. This includes ensuring that staff are clear about procedures and being alert in how to keep pupils safe. Staff are quick to report any concerns they have. These are dealt with in a timely manner and leaders ensure that pupils get the right help at the right time.

Pupils feel safe at school. They learn about internet safety in how to stay safe. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers do not consistently choose activities that match the needs of all pupils. This means that pupils who have a secure understanding of the work are not given opportunities to enhance or deepen their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all teachers develop strategies and teaching activities so that pupils can deepen and enhance their existing knowledge.
- A few pupils with SEND do not have their needs identified and managed precisely enough once they join the school. This limits leaders' ability to meet these pupils' needs. Leaders should ensure that they accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND so they can get the help they need.

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 predecessor school, James Bateman Junior High School, to be good in June 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

Unique reference number	146914
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10269255
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Owen MBE
Headteacher	Tracy Price
Website	http://jamesbateman.staffs.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the chief executive officer of the trust, other senior and middle leaders, the school business manager, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead and leaders of the wider development programme.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chair of governors and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and physical education. 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 reviewed the school's tutor programme.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's reading programme.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to the staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, workload, bullying and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment.

Inspection team

Sultanat Yunus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rob Bourdon-Pierre

Ofsted Inspector

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