

Inspection of a good school: St James the Great Academy

Chapman Way, East Malling, Kent ME19 6SD

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 September 2023

Outcome

St James the Great Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Tamasin Springett. This school is part of Academies Enterprise Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rebecca Boomer-Clark, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this caring school. They are happy, and adults keep them safe. As one pupil said, 'There is always someone to talk to if you are worried about something.' Pupils form positive relationships with one another in class and while at play. They show a genuine compassion for one another. Pupils enjoy taking Snoopy, the school dog, for a walk around the school field during playtime.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Trust leaders work closely with the school to ensure that pupils experience a curriculum that inspires them to learn and develops their interests well. Pupils are encouraged by the school vision to 'choose a remarkable life'. This is enacted through the variety of opportunities provided by the school.

Children in the early years explore new learning with one another in their well-resourced outdoor area. Older pupils take on roles of responsibility involving them in the running of the school. For example, 'pupil leaders' attend meetings with senior staff and show visitors around the school. Pupils are proud of undertaking these roles, which help to build their confidence and a sense of pride in their school.

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

The school provides a curriculum that is broad and matches the needs of all pupils well. The school helps pupils to learn about diversity. For example, in art, pupils learn about artists from a range of cultures. The school and trust regularly review how well the curriculum is being taught. They coach teachers to help them to refine their teaching, ensuring that the workload required of staff is manageable. This creates a culture where staff feel supported to strengthen their teaching.

Pupils develop the skills needed to become confident and fluent readers. Children in the Nursery and Reception class learn to listen, and develop a love of exciting stories. Staff receive helpful training that creates a consistent approach to the delivery of the phonics programme. Pupils listen in phonics and reading lessons attentively. Teachers regularly review how well pupils develop their reading skills. They use this information to target support that ensures pupils who have fallen behind in their reading catch up quickly. Staff support pupils who read less frequently at home with additional opportunities to read in school. This ensures that pupils rehearse their reading skills in order to build their reading fluency.

Teachers help pupils to gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in most subjects well. They encourage pupils to draw on what they have learned before, for example through the use of quizzes. As a result, in most subjects, pupils remember what they have learned and apply this to new learning. Teachers identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Teachers provide helpful adaptations in most subjects to ensure that pupils can access what is being learned in class. For example, in mathematics, pupils use a range of equipment to help them to count. In science, pupils with SEND are taught about scientific words they will meet in class before the lesson begins. However, the adaptations needed in some subjects are less well refined. This means that some pupils with SEND struggle to fully understand what they are learning.

Teachers check what pupils know carefully. They use questioning to help pupils to affirm their understanding and to explore new vocabulary. Teachers use this information to adapt lessons to support pupils who have gaps in their knowledge. However, in some subjects that have been recently restructured, teachers' questioning is less effective. As a result, some pupils do not always gain the vocabulary and knowledge needed to clearly explain their thinking.

Pupils behave well. Children in the early years listen attentively and learn to follow instructions. Pupils learn about positive behaviour in assemblies and through personal, social and health education lessons. While some pupils can become distracted in class, teachers gently remind them of how to behave to regain their focus.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom. Pupils, including pupils with SEND, are keen to attend the clubs on offer. Pupils experience trips beyond the school and visitors to the school that enhance the curriculum. For example, local magistrates spoke to Year 6 pupils about the rule of law and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution spoke to pupils about water safety. Pupils are appointed to roles such as 'well-being ambassadors'. This models the democratic process and supports pupils who have emotional well-being needs effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently provide the adaptations needed to help pupils with SEND to succeed in some subjects. As a result, some pupils with SEND struggle to fully understand new learning in some subjects, particularly subjects that have been recently reviewed. Teachers need to ensure adaptations are made that help pupils with SEND to access the learning alongside their peers in all subjects.
- While leaders have introduced strategies to strengthen questioning in class, this has not yet been consistently implemented by teachers in all subjects. As a result, some pupils do not develop their understanding well enough in some subjects. Leaders need to ensure that the school's approach to questioning is implemented consistently across all subjects.

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 March 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138074
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10288016
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hall
CEO of trust	Rebecca Boomer-Clark
Principal	Tamasin Springett
Website	http://stjamesthegreatacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Academies Enterprise Trust, a large national trust with 57 academies.
- The school runs a nursery on the school site.
- The school provides wraparound care on site for up to 30 pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal, other leaders and a range of staff at the school. The inspector met with representatives from the trust.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.
- The inspector considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector spoke to staff and pupils during the inspection and took account of their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and considered safeguarding documents and records. This included the school's records and plans for supporting pupils who have been referred to outside agencies. The inspector also talked to pupils, staff, trust staff and parents.

Inspection team

Graham Chisnell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023