

Inspection of a good school: St James' Church of England Primary School

Paringdon Road, Harlow, Essex CM18 7RH

Inspection dates:

10 to 11 October 2023

The headteacher of this school is Gina Bailey. This school is part of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Emma Wigmore, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Caroline Haynes.

Outcome

St James' Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St James' Church of England Primary School feel like they are part of a family within the school. They feel safe and they know that staff care about their welfare. Pupils are happy and confident about coming to school. Pupils know and follow the school's four 'Golden Rules' to be respectful, kind, safe and individual. Staff know the pupils, families and the community well.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Staff expect the best of pupils' behaviour. Pupils play happily at playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils say that staff are very good at resolving any conflicts or disagreements.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond with positive attitudes. The school ensures that pupils experience leadership roles such as worship and well-being ambassadors or serving on the school council. These roles, alongside other responsibilities that pupils take on, prepare them well to be active citizens. The school wants pupils to be aspirational and staff believe they can achieve great things. Pupils learn about different jobs and careers and the routes that they can take to find success in life.

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

The school has planned an ambitious curriculum. There is a clear sequence of learning that runs from Reception to Year 6. Staff have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know. The curriculum is designed so that pupils' knowledge builds

over time. In a small number of subjects, the school is fine tuning their plans so that they focus more squarely on the key concepts that will help pupils to achieve success in the future.

The school supports teachers to continually strengthen their knowledge of the subjects they teach. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' knowledge so that they can identify any gaps, and adapt lessons accordingly. Effective adaptations are also made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils are supported well by receiving additional support or by accessing an adapted curriculum.

The school has prioritised reading. Following some lower outcomes in national tests for phonics and reading in recent years, the school has intensified the focus on helping pupils to learn to read. The school has introduced a new phonics scheme and ensured that teachers have received training in the teaching of phonics. The school provides regular support and guidance to teachers. The phonics scheme is taught consistently well. Pupils are now doing well in learning to read. However, there are still some pupils who require additional support to ensure they catch up with their peers.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Adults interact purposefully with the children. They share rhymes and stories and support the children in a wide range of activities, such as building rockets with construction toys and counting how many acorns they can use to fill an egg box.

There is an extremely strong curriculum for personal, social and health education. Pupils are inclusive and respectful of others and their opinions. They know about protected characteristics and stereotypes. They learn how to keep themselves healthy and about healthy relationships. Opportunities for personal development, including learning about people of different faiths and cultures, prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils look forward to the trips and visits, such as going to Colchester Castle to learn about the Romans. These, together with a range of clubs, enrich pupils' learning and broaden their horizons.

Staff report that they enjoy working at the school. They talk about how well supported they are by leaders. Staff describe the workplace as 'incredibly positive'.

Trustees and governors share the high ambitions of school leaders. They understand their roles well and provide school leaders with appropriate support and challenge. Governors and representatives of the trust make regular visits to the school to check on the work of school leaders and the implementation of policies and procedures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In key stage 2, some pupils do not read fluently. This hinders their access to the wider curriculum. The school should ensure that pupils who are behind with their reading receive the support that they need to catch up with their peers.
- The curriculum in a small number of subjects is not fully developed. The school is refining these curriculum plans to ensure that they precisely identify the key knowledge that pupils must know and remember. The school is at the very early stages of introducing these new plans. The school should complete this work and ensure that teachers are supported to implement these changes.

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 January 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 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	141657
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288539
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Caroline Haynes
Headteacher	Gina Bailey
Website	www.stjamescofeprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- There is an early morning childcare club run by school staff.
- The school is part of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust.
- The school's religious character was last inspected in February 2017.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with members of the school's leadership team, which included the executive headteacher and the head of school. The inspector also met with 2 representatives of the school governance board, including the chair.

- The inspector held a virtual meeting with the trust school improvement leader and the trust's chief executive officer.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with the subject leader, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation, including development plans, curriculum documents, governor visit reports, trust visit reports and minutes of governor and trust meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- To gather and consider the views of parents, the inspector spoke to parents on the playground at the start of the school day. The inspector considered the 20 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including 18 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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