

Inspection of a good school: St James School

Summer Lane, Exeter, Devon EX4 8NN

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 November 2023

Outcome

St James School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Emily Harper. This school is part of The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Moira Marder, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Mulcock. There is also an executive headteacher, Lindsay Skinner, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school motto of 'work hard, be kind' is lived by the pupils and staff at St James School. It is an inclusive school built on warm, respectful relationships. Pupils feel safe and supported by adults. Pupils are proud of their school and welcome visitors with enthusiasm. They enjoy being members of Bristol, Bath, Oxford and Goldsmiths houses. Pupils collect house points for their work and conduct, in good natured competition with each other.

The school has high expectations for behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The school teaches pupils to understand why certain behaviours are unacceptable. When disruption does occur, there are clear consequences. Those pupils are supported to help them behave well in the future. The calm and purposeful environment enables pupils to focus on their learning.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to have new experiences and develop their talents. All pupils take part in an extensive range of weekly creative, active and service electives. For example, pupils learn about bike maintenance, sign language and sea safety while others prepare for the school show, learn to knit and create artwork inspired by performance poetry. Pupils enjoy physical challenges such as taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils in different year groups work together well, along with staff and volunteers. This adds to the sense of community at the school.

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

St James school has planned an ambitious curriculum. Subject areas have deliberately sequenced what pupils will learn to build on prior knowledge. This helps pupils to remember their learning well over time. Pupils study a broad range of qualifications, including high numbers of pupils completing the English Baccalaureate.

The school accurately identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers know the needs of these pupils well and support them to learn the curriculum. Assessment strategies enable teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Sometimes the curriculum is not implemented effectively to ensure that pupils can learn as well as they might. As a result, outcomes are not consistently high across all subject areas. Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils read a wide range of books as part of the 'St James canon'. Books have been deliberately chosen to represent a range of authors and cultural experiences. The school identifies the weakest readers and the reasons for their difficulties. It provides support for pupils to build their accuracy and fluency with reading. Leaders show a determination to ensure that pupils catch up and keep up with their peers.

The 'St James baccalaureate' is the planned personal development curriculum. Pupils value these lessons as an opportunity to prepare for adulthood and life in modern Britain. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and look after their physical and mental health. Events such as 'culture day' as well as groups such as 'culture club' and the 'diversity group' help pupils to understand and celebrate difference.

Pupils are keen to take on leadership responsibilities. Prefects act as role models for other pupils. Elected members of the school parliament represent the views of pupils to school leaders. Pupils feel heard and appreciate the changes that the school has made because of their feedback.

Pupils in all year groups have opportunities to engage with local employers. The school provides impartial careers advice for all pupils. It proactively works with local education and apprenticeship providers to support pupils' transition to post-16 education. Pupils feel confident in making choices about their future.

The school actively promotes the importance of regular attendance. Staff work with pupils and their families to provide the support needed to overcome any barriers they might have to coming to school. As a result, attendance continues to rise.

The school and trust are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Staff are proud to work at this school. The trust-wide professional development opportunities provided mean staff feel invested in. Teachers who are new to the profession are well supported. The trust recognises the need to continue to engage with the local community, holding events to gather parental views.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some areas of the curriculum are not implemented effectively to ensure that all pupils are able to learn as well as they might. The trust should ensure that the implementation of the curriculum across all subject areas supports pupils to achieve well.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St James School, to be good in March 2015.

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	142805
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10298050
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	986
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Mulcock
CEO	Moira Marder
Headteacher	Lindsay Skinner (Executive Headteacher) Emily Harper (Headteacher)
Website	www.stjamesexeter.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust.
- This school uses two registered alternative providers and six unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met staff and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, physical education and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans that support pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of the governor and trustee meetings and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sara Berry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gemma Tatlow

Ofsted Inspector

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