

Inspection of a good school: St James Church of England Primary Academy

Brook End, Longdon, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 4PL

Inspection date: 9 July 2024

Outcome

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

The head of school is Sam Hewkin. This school is part of St Chad's Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sarah Cockshott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Orlik. There is also an executive principal, Chris Dobson, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend this happy village school readily and regularly. They are greeted warmly by staff, who know and respond to their individual needs in a highly effective way. This helps them feel safe in school.

Staff look out for pupils. Pupils look out for each other. Play ambassadors support younger children on the playground, but all pupils like to support those younger than them as a matter of routine. Pupils showing a high level of care for each other adds to the family feel in the school. This is particularly true of how pupils support those with additional needs. It is impressive, and adds to its truly inclusive nature.

Pupils behave beautifully at all points of the day. They have a secure understanding of right and wrong. The values of trust, love, honesty and truthfulness, respect, friendship and perseverance are embodied in all pupils do and say.

The school aspires for all pupils to do as well as possible, and they do. This is both in terms of how well they achieve academically and in how they are developed to be responsible and respectable young adults of the future, ready for their next stage of education.

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

The school is highly ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It places a high priority on reading. This starts as soon as children enter school. Staff quickly set about teaching phonics in a highly skilled and

effective way. This leads to the vast majority of pupils being able to read well for their age. Older pupils relish being able to independently choose books matched to their stage of learning, adding to a sense of enjoyment and developing a love of reading. Staff read books from different cultures that expose pupils to circumstances and experiences that are different to their own. Pupils enjoy receiving 'rainbow badges' for reading widely and regularly. They wear them with pride.

Many other aspects of the curriculum have also been well thought out. In some subjects, pupils revisit prior learning and build successfully on what they already know. However, in a small number of subjects, this approach is not yet as embedded as it is in other subjects. Staff sometimes miss the opportunity to enable pupils to apply essential knowledge in different contexts and between different topics. This limits their ability to make meaningful links and deepen their understanding. The school has started to utilise support from the trust and beyond to develop training opportunities to ensure the curriculum is delivered as well as possible. However, plans to widen the opportunities for staff development to ensure all staff adopt current approaches, in line with recent research, to both curriculum implementation and assessment are not yet fully realised.

Pupils with SEND are identified without delay and effective support is put in place. They achieve very well through a determined, individualised approach.

The school's ethos is woven through lessons, assemblies and the wider curriculum. It guides all aspects of school life and steers pupils' behaviour, building supportive attitudes that endure. It is a calm and orderly place that enables all pupils to learn to the best of their ability. Pupils treat their peers and staff with respect. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare.

Outside of lessons, pupils get to experience a range of after-school clubs. They have a say in the clubs on offer through the school council, gaining an understanding of democracy and influence. Other leadership roles also allow them to help shape how things are done. Such roles teach them to take responsibility and develop a sense of duty. They show a keen interest in the lives of others. School trips and visitors to school happen frequently and help to enrich the curriculum offer. For example, the school has worked with a variety of authors and poets. It takes pupils to a range of different places of worship. These increase pupils' awareness of diversity and help them gain an understanding of the wider world in which they live.

The school is led very well. Determined, compassionate and skilful leaders put the pupils at the heart of everything they do. They are well supported by the trust, which reflects the same characteristics. Governors are well informed and knowledgeable, providing challenge in a supportive and considered way. Staff feel cared for and valued because they are. The school is held in extremely high regard by parents. They recognise and appreciate the high-quality care and education on offer. All work together harmoniously and contribute to this small school being the successful place it is in which all pupils thrive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school does not enable pupils to apply essential knowledge in different contexts and between different topics. This limits pupils' abilities to make links with their learning and apply it in different contexts as well as they might. The school should ensure that essential knowledge is revisited regularly, enabling pupils to make meaningful links and demonstrate understanding across the curriculum.
- Some pedagogical approaches staff use are not yet in line with the research-informed practice that the school wants them to use. This means some aspects of curriculum implementation and assessment are not as well developed as they could be. The school should continue to seek ways to develop pedagogical approaches through staff development and wider training opportunities.

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 CofE Primary School, to be good in April 2013.

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	143347
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10344100
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Orlik
CEO of the trust	Sarah Cockshott
Headteacher	Chris Dobson
Website	www.st-james.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The head of school is Sam Hewkin.
- This is a much smaller than average primary school.
- This school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club for its pupils.

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 meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. 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 also looked at samples of pupils' work in a range of subjects including English, science and art and design.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of trustees and four governors, including the chair of the local academy committee.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the diocese.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead 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.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information on the school's website.
- Inspectors talked informally with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. In addition, they took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's and parents' views.

Inspection team

Keri Baylis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martin Pye

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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