

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

Old Jamaica Road, Bermondsey, London SE16 4SU

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 July 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

This school, on either side of St James's Church and Gardens, is a welcoming place where pupils' well-being thrives in a happy and supportive environment. Staff and parents and carers work closely together to ensure that pupils achieve their best. Pupils feel safe at school, knowing they are supported by a dedicated staff team.

The broad and balanced curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and 'grit'. Pupils achieve well and show enthusiasm for learning and interacting with each other. High expectations are set for all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils receive support to access the curriculum and meet classroom expectations, allowing them to work well alongside their peers. Pupils are well prepared for each stage of their education, including moving from the Reception class to Year 1.

Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school, and in the playground. They are motivated, kind, and respectful to each other. They often resolve disagreements independently but knowing that they can rely on adults when needed.

The school fosters pupils' 'social intelligence' and character, with opportunities for leadership roles such as house captains and buddies. Older pupils relished sharing their solar system projects with younger children, discussing their models and what they had learned.

Pupils enjoy being part of a vibrant and inclusive community that fosters both academic and personal growth.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. In many subjects, they have thought carefully about what pupils should learn at each stage and have sequenced this carefully. Leaders have ensured that there are opportunities for pupils to revisit and recap their learning, swiftly addressing any gaps in

their understanding. In some subjects, curriculum changes are recent and have not been fully embedded. The school is currently determining what needs to be taught and when. Pupils' learning in these subjects is not as secure as it is in others. Leaders have planned work to address this. This is well focused on making sure that pupils are helped to learn all of the curriculum effectively.

Teachers possess good subject knowledge. They usually use a variety of effective strategies to ensure that pupils know more and remember more. Pupils, including those with SEND, have opportunities to show what they have learned during their lessons. For example, in design and technology, some pupils demonstrated to their class how to carry out the activity successfully, explaining to others how to work as 'builders, engineers, and suppliers' to complete the project as a team.

The school identifies carefully how to support pupils with SEND learn the knowledge that they require to achieve positive outcomes. Staff are ambitious for these pupils, most of whom follow the same curriculum as their peers. They help pupils to work as independently as possible, adapting activities and resources as needed so that pupils succeed and also see themselves as successful.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. Pupils learn to read using phonics, developing the knowledge that they need to read fluently. Pupils who join the school later, as well as those who need additional support, follow the same highly structured phonics programme. Staff have received training to ensure that they teach this programme with clarity and consistency. They ensure that the books pupils read closely match the letters and sounds that they know. This approach means that pupils, including those with SEND and those at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language, become confident readers. The school's effective work on reading supports their learning in other areas of the curriculum and fosters a love of reading.

The school places a strong emphasis on mathematics, ensuring pupils develop solid foundational skills from the early years. Here, children receive very secure foundations in number. This builds confidence and competence, preparing them well for their future learning.

The school has carefully considered how to teach a well-thought-out and age-appropriate programme to support pupils' wider development. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures, healthy relationships, and personal safety, both in school and in their community. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to engage in the performing arts. Examples of this include the recent school performance of *Bugsy Malone*, and music lessons, where pupils learn to play instruments like the recorder and violin.

Pupils attend school regularly, motivated by a welcoming and supportive environment. The school works closely with parents to build strong relationships and emphasise the importance of regular attendance. Pupils said that they want to come to school because it is a great place to be.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They appreciate how leaders consider their views when implementing changes to the curriculum and other aspects of school life. Governors and

leaders are mindful of staff workload while ensuring the quality of education remains high. This approach fosters a positive and collaborative work environment, ultimately benefiting the pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Revisions and refinements to the curriculum have not embedded fully in some subjects. At times, what needs to be taught and when is not identified as consistently as it could be. In these subjects, this means that there are instances where pupils' knowledge and understanding of subject content is not secure. The school should continue its work to refine and embed its curriculum to ensure that, across all subjects, pupils consistently achieve highly. This includes supporting staff's understanding of what needs to be taught and why.

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 school to be good in November 2014.

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	100829
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10323261
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Penny Molyneux (Acting Chair of the governing body)
Headteacher	Michael Oliver
Website	www.stjameschoolbermondsey.com
Date of previous inspection	22 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Diocese of Southwark and has a Christian character.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in January 2019. This is an inspection of the school's religious character.
- The headteacher took up his role in May 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 the headteacher and other senior staff. The inspector also held separate meetings with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Southwark.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and art and design. During each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils about learning. The inspector also reviewed samples of pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as part of this inspection.
- 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.
- The inspector also spoke to some parents and considered the responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. He also reviewed the responses to the Ofsted staff online survey.

Inspection team

Adam Vincent, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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