Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St James' CofE Primary School

West Malvern Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 4BB

Inspection date: 7 May 2025

Outcome

St James' CofE Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love being part of this friendly and welcoming school. There is a sense of family here because staff know pupils very well. Pupils flourish and become confident individuals. Pupils embrace the school's high expectations for their learning. They achieve well. Pupils are excited by their lessons and curious to learn more. Parents and carers are highly positive about the care and support their children receive.

Pupils and staff have warm, respectful relationships. Older and younger pupils play happily together and look after one another. They respect each other's opinions. Pupils are confident that staff will sort out any worries and they feel safe in school.

Pupils behave very well. They understand and follow the school rules, which are consistently applied. There is a busy working atmosphere in classrooms. This enables pupils to focus on their learning.

Pupils develop resilience through outdoor learning and residential trips, where they experience activities, such as high ropes and canoeing. They participate in activities and sporting competitions with other schools. Pupils become responsible citizens through activities in the community and by fundraising with local organisations. They develop wider responsibilities through roles as school councillors and by helping around school as line leaders or assembly helpers.

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

The school has ensured that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. It has identified the subject knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which they should learn it. This works effectively in mixed-age classrooms. Pupils know how their learning builds on

what they have learned before. For example, in key stage 1 pupils use maps to learn about different countries and continents. They refer to their previous learning when comparing the positions and relative sizes of different places. Further developments to the curriculum in recent years, support pupils to understand and retain important knowledge. As a result, pupils can talk enthusiastically about their learning. They produce high-quality work in their books.

Children get off to a strong start in the Reception Year, where they learn the basic skills they need to successfully build further knowledge. The youngest children play cooperatively and happily take turns. They show perseverance and concentrate on self-directed activities for sustained periods of time.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Learning activities are interesting and encourage pupils to think independently. For example, when learning about medieval crime and punishment, staff challenge older pupils to justify their opinions using examples from their previous learning in history. This helps pupils to make links and interpret new information effectively. In most lessons, teachers present subject matter clearly. They skilfully identify pupils' needs and adapt learning to enable pupils to succeed. Staff check what pupils know and remember. This allows pupils to recognise and correct their mistakes. However, there is some variability in how effectively the school delivers the curriculum. This means that on occasion in lessons, information is not as clearly presented, and learning is less engaging.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs swiftly identified so they can learn alongside their peers. The school makes sure that pupils receive support with adapted tasks, additional resources or extra adult help.

Pupils talk proudly about their school library and how the school encourages them to love books and enjoy reading. Well-trained staff teach children phonics from the start of the Reception Year. Children quickly learn the sounds that letters make. Pupils who need help to catch up with reading get effective support to become fluent readers.

Pupils who find it challenging to manage their emotions receive sensitive and helpful support to help them re-engage with their learning. Pupils try hard in lessons and have positive attitudes to their work. They generously celebrate their classmates' achievements when receiving weekly awards and eagerly collect house points.

The school provides a comprehensive programme to support pupils' personal development. Pupils understand how the fundamental British values are relevant to them. They are excited to learn about diversity and other cultures. This widens pupils' experiences and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils respect and value differences. They learn how to keep themselves physically healthy and to recognise risks to their well-being. Pupils develop their aspirations through events, such as 'When I grow up day'. This encourages them to aim high and have ambitious goals for later life.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders do all they can to reduce staff workload and they consider their well-being. As a result, staff are highly positive about their work. They are proud to be members of a united and happy team.

Governors have a secure understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas to develop further. They receive helpful information that enables them to challenge school leaders. This means the school has effective governance to ensure that leaders continue to make decisions in the best interests of children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not ensure that the curriculum is consistently implemented as well as it is intended. In a small number of lessons, information is not presented as clearly or built on effectively. In these lessons, pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff are supported to implement the curriculum effectively.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in March 2020.

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	116903
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10378224
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Reverend Paul Folland
Headteacher	Liam Hanson (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.stjames.worcs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England Academy and is part of the Diocese of Worcester. The school's last section 48 inspection was in May 2024. The next section 48 inspection will take place within the prescribed period.
- The school makes use of one registered provider of alternative provision.
- The interim headteacher, who was previously Head of School, was appointed in September 2023.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors had meetings with the interim headteacher, subject leaders, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority and from the diocese.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance, and documentation relating to attendance.
- The inspectors took account of responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector spoke informally with parents on arrival to school.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of staff and took account of views shared through the staff survey.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with groups of pupils, both formally and during less structured times of the day. The inspectors took account of the responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Anne Potter	Ofsted Inspector

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