

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

Sandwell Road, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 8NH

Inspection dates:

9 to 10 July 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

St James sits firmly at the heart of its community. The school's core value of love underpins everything that happens here. Most children join the school below the level expected for their age and/or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All adults have the highest expectations of every child and work as a team to give pupils the best possible start to education. As a result, children overcome many of their barriers, flourish and achieve well. This includes disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils behave well. They enjoy attending and are happy. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming. Lessons are generally free from disruption. Purposeful and positive relationships between staff and pupils are commonplace. Pupils know that their teachers care about them and will swiftly deal with any issues if they ever happen.

Staff pay serious attention to pupils' personal development and provide wider opportunities. Pupils go on many exciting trips and visits and speak passionately about them. Furthermore, they learn about healthy relationships and different faiths. Pupils say that everyone is different but also equal. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern British society.

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

The school has high aspirations for all pupils. These aspirations are driven through a well-designed and sequenced curriculum. The curriculum has been developed with pupils and the school's context in mind. For instance, school leaders are aware that many pupils join with lower levels of development than is typical for their age, leading to barriers in their learning, such as speech and communication delays. Therefore, the curriculum is focused on language and encourages verbal communication. This approach is helping pupils catch up quickly.

Staff have strong subject knowledge and present learning in a clear and logical way. This means that pupils grasp concepts quickly and build up their learning over time. Pupils make strong progress and leave the school achieving well. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Support for pupils with SEND is strong. Staff get to know children and their families exceptionally well. They understand any existing barriers and work effectively to provide the help the child and family needs. Leaders share clear information about pupils with staff so that they know how best to support them. Pupils receive targeted supported in lessons and intervention sessions. As a result, pupils with SEND flourish and do well.

Assessment is generally used well. Teachers quickly spot anyone who may need extra support in lessons and staff act swiftly to provide it. However, at times, staff are not so effective in spotting the pupils that have finished their work and are ready to learn new things. Often, these pupils are left waiting for the rest of the class to finish and this slows their learning.

The reading curriculum is very effective in ensuring that pupils gain the knowledge they need to become fluent readers. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read or those who have fallen behind are effectively supported. Pupils in all years enjoy daily reading time and class novels that foster a love of reading. Because of this work, most pupils read at a level appropriate for their age.

Children in Reception settle quickly and begin learning as soon as they arrive. Strong care and nurture ensure that children swiftly learn the routines of school life. Adults quickly build strong relationships. They model language and speech very well. Children are happy and well prepared for Year 1.

The school's offer of wider opportunities is strong. Pupils have many varied and interesting opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom. All topics are linked to trips, visits and external speakers that are carefully chosen to reinforce the learning from lessons. There is a plethora of after-school clubs and activities that many pupils enjoy. In lessons, pupils learn about values such as respect, equality and personal safety, including online safety. All of this means that pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in life and education.

The school and governors have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and what needs improvement. They work hard to improve continuously. Staff speak highly of the support they receive, including about their well-being and workload. Parents are complimentary about the school and say that their children are very well looked after.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, staff do not deepen or move on the learning of pupils when they are ready to learn new things. This slows pupils' learning. The school should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching so that all pupils are consistently well supported in their learning.

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 May 2019.

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	103401
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10336848
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Marcia Hare
Headteacher	Sarah Smith
Website	www.stjamesce.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-size Church of England primary school.
- The school runs daily breakfast and after-school clubs for its pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders. The inspector held a meeting with the governing body including the chair of governors. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked

at samples of pupils' work. The inspector visited the early years for each of the deep dives. The inspector considered the curriculum offer in other subjects.

- The inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at break and lunchtimes and spoke to many pupils during the 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 considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. The inspector also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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