

Inspection of St James's CofE Primary School

Kingsway, Wollaston, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 4RU

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this welcoming school, and they greet each other cheerily. They enjoy learning new things and playing with their friends. Pupils live out daily the school's vision of faith, friendship and fulfilment. These permeate school life and support pupils to thrive in their learning.

Pupils are happy and safe. They know there are many staff to speak with if they have concerns or worries. It is rare for bullying to happen. If it does, staff deal with it speedily. Some parents comment favourably on how fast the staff react to ensure that pupils are not picked on by their peers. Most pupils know the schools' behaviour expectations. They behave well, and they are polite and well mannered.

Leaders, including governors, have high expectations of pupils. In response, pupils work hard in all year groups. They reach the high expectations set by leaders.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and activities available to them. These include a building brick club, school choir, cooking club and a range of sports clubs. The before- and after-school clubs are well attended. Pupils enjoy the fun activities on offer.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad, ambitious and well sequenced. The curriculum design helps pupils to know and remember more in different subjects as they progress through the school. In most cases, pupils know the 'golden nuggets' of key knowledge that they must learn and remember.

Senior leaders ensure that children get off to a positive start to their learning. Provision for two-year olds, managed by the governing body, is effective. In the early years, many children establish the good learning habits they need in preparation for joining Year 1.

Pupils learn to read well at this school. The teaching of early reading skills is a very high priority. If pupils are at risk of falling behind in their reading, they receive extra help to catch up quickly. The teaching of phonics is effective. Pupils learn to read with fluency. High-quality key texts underpin the curriculum in all subjects. Staff work diligently to ensure that pupils develop a love of reading. Pupils read a wide range of books from a range of authors. Pupils speak in an informed way about enjoying books written by a variety of authors.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified through careful screening programmes. They are well supported to be successful in their learning. School leaders go above and beyond to help pupils with SEND succeed in their learning, and they do.

Leaders have put systems in place for teachers to assess how well pupils are learning in different subjects. Many teachers use assessment well to identify the next steps in learning for pupils. However, this is inconsistent. Some teachers do not make learning links explicit enough for pupils. In a few subjects, pupils are not sure how their current learning links with what they should know and remember over time. At times, this hinders aspects of their learning.

Pupils have many opportunities to widen their experiences beyond their classroom learning. The school has very close links with the parish church, where pupils regularly lead services. Pupils undertake various activities to develop their social consciousness. These include studying the amount and types of litter in a local canal. Pupils have opportunities to become Junior Police Community Support Officers, and they learn about road safety. Pupils study texts by authors from a diverse range of cultures. Pupils learn effectively about fundamental British values through a range of practical activities across the curriculum. For example, they vote for pupils to join pupil-led committees.

Since the arrival of a new headteacher, leaders have made effective changes to strengthen the quality of education. Leaders have been tenacious in their approach to ensuring a high-quality curriculum for pupils to study. Subject leaders have an informed understanding of how their subjects build knowledge for pupils over time. Their knowledge of how the early years paves the way for the national curriculum is less strong.

Leaders carefully consider the workload of staff to ensure that staff are not overburdened. Establishing a working party, for example, has helped to reduce workload for staff. Teachers share ideas, which are then carefully considered by the working party before making effective changes to working practices.

Governors have a clear strategic overview of the school's performance. They check carefully on how well the school continues to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe in school is a key priority. Staff are well trained in what to look out for to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. They know how to report any concerns in school. Records show that incidents are diligently followed up by safeguarding leaders. If necessary, staff work with external providers to offer extra support for pupils.

Leaders make appropriate checks on staff to ensure they are suitable to work with children.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. This is part of the school's well-designed safeguarding curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment consistently to check on how effectively pupils are learning. As a result, some teachers do not match new learning activities well enough to the learning needs of all pupils. Leaders should ensure that assessment consistently informs future learning for all pupils.
- Some pupils do not know how their current learning links to the key knowledge they should know and remember over time. This is because teachers do not make this explicit enough for pupils, so pupils do not always remember the right things. Leaders and teachers should review how they identify and emphasise the most important learning so that it sticks in the long-term memories of more pupils.
- Subject leaders do not have enough knowledge of how the curriculum in early years prepares children for what is to follow in key stage 1. This restricts their oversight of how learning across the whole school builds securely and sequentially over time. The early years team should work with subject leaders to establish more joined-up curriculum thinking between early years and the rest of the school. They should do this to ensure that the learning journey for all children is as smooth as possible.

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' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	103851
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10269113
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lee Salton-Mclaughlin
Headteacher	Natalie Sefton
Website	www.st-james.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in April 2022.
- Governors manage provision for the pre-school for two-year olds upwards and the before- and after-school childcare clubs.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school awaiting a section 48 inspection. The previous section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in March 2019.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and a range of staff.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, inspectors reviewed school policies, procedures and records. The inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leaders and spoke with staff, governors and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, physical education, music and geography. For each deep dive, an inspector met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum and spoke with teachers and with pupils about their learning. Inspectors visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. They considered responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, including free-text comments, letters and emails from parents.
- The inspectors met with parents, groups of staff and pupils and considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Declan McCauley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Darren King	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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