

# St James Church of England Primary School

Paringdon Road, Harlow, Essex CM18 7RH

## Inspection dates

10–11 January 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher is a highly effective leader. She has very high expectations for the school, its staff and its pupils. Her positive impact on continual school improvement is very clear.
- Safeguarding is highly effective. The school has a very open culture that encourages pupils to share their worries and concerns. Prompt action is taken to protect pupils when necessary.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school. From below average starting points, by the time pupils reach Year 6 their attainment compares well with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils behave very well. They understand the school's rules and follow them in their classrooms and during less structured parts of the school day.
- Teachers know their pupils very well. They ensure that pupils' individual needs are met and this enables them to make good progress.
- Assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is underdeveloped.
- The early years class provides children with a good start to their education. Staff focus well on helping children to develop good speaking and listening skills in readiness for Year 1.
- Governance is strong. Governors have a good range of skills and experiences that enable them to hold the school's leaders to account and to support them well.
- Subject leadership is underdeveloped. Leaders do not have a clear enough impact on improving standards in the subjects they lead.
- Leaders do not track closely enough the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Absence rates are too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- A small amount of weaker teaching remains. Teaching of reading and phonics is improving as a result of the actions taken by leaders. These improvements have not yet had time to impact fully on outcomes.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the quality of leadership and management by:
  - improving the skills of subject leaders so that they have a demonstrable impact on the subjects they lead
  - developing the existing tracking systems so that the progress that pupils make is examined more closely.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more pupils make rapid progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects by:
  - developing assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics
  - continuing the improvements to the teaching of reading and phonics that have already started
  - eliminating the small amount of weaker teaching that still exists.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has very high aspirations for the school and expects the best of herself, her staff and pupils. The headteacher focuses on the right things, taking prompt and decisive action to tackle weaknesses when necessary. As a result, this school is good and improving.
- The headteacher is ably supported by the two assistant headteachers. They know the school well and are deeply committed to its continual improvement. The assistant headteachers share the headteacher's vision for the school and her commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as they possibly can.
- Leaders focus well on developing and improving the quality of teaching. They know the strengths of each teacher and where further development is needed. The headteacher does not shy away from making difficult decisions or taking prompt action when it is necessary, to ensure that teaching continues to improve.
- Leaders have created a school with a very welcoming and inclusive culture. The school has six core values, chosen by staff and pupils, which permeate every aspect of the school's work. Pupils understand the importance of respect, responsibility, community, forgiveness, friendship and courage. These values shape their attitudes and behaviour, giving the school a notably kind and caring ethos.
- Pupils are prepared very well for life in modern British society. They are taught to treat everyone as equals and not to judge people, particularly on the characteristics protected by law. Pupils are taught about issues such as democracy and the rule of law, through discussions, assemblies and visits, including to the Houses of Parliament.
- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The school uses a topic-based approach and leaders have found that pupils enjoy their learning more as a result of this. Leaders ensure that there is good coverage of all national curriculum subjects and that links between these subjects are meaningful rather than tenuous.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a range of educational visits and visitors to the school. Each class visits a place of interest each term, such as a castle or a museum, connected with the topic that they are learning about. Other topics are brought to life by visits to the school by, for example, the fire service and the police.
- The pupil premium grant is used effectively and helps disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. Leaders identify disadvantaged pupils' individual barriers to learning and put measures in place to tackle them. They monitor closely the progress that pupils make and change approaches quickly when they do not have enough impact on helping pupils to make faster progress.
- Sport funding is spent effectively. The school has increased pupils' participation in physical education and sports. For example, more sports clubs are now available to pupils, covering a wider range of sports and physical activities. Pupils also now have more opportunities to take part in competitions, both in their own school and with other schools locally.

- Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is led and managed well. The SEN coordinator (SENCo) is determined that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities will make the good progress that they should. The SENCo ensures that, where appropriate, small steps of progress are identified for individuals so that all pupils are able to be successful, whatever their needs.
- Subject leadership is developing but is not yet fully effective. Leaders are committed to their individual subjects but the impact of their work is limited. For example, assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is yet to be developed. As a result, subject leaders do not have enough impact on the standards that pupils reach and the progress they make in the subject each leader is responsible for.
- Leaders do not track the progress that pupils make closely enough. They focus too much on attainment and whether or not pupils are working at the expected level for their age. This means that leaders are not able to be forensic enough in their analysis of data and to use this to help them to ensure that more pupils make more rapid progress.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors have a wide range of experiences and backgrounds, providing the necessary skills to fulfil their corporate responsibilities. For example, one governor was previously a primary headteacher and another is a current secondary headteacher. This provides the governing body with strong knowledge about education.
- Governors understand their role well. They know that it is not to manage the school and to interfere with the day-to-day running of it. Governors know that their job is to keep a strategic overview and to hold the school's leaders to account for its leadership and management. Governors do this effectively, treading the fine line, between supporting leaders and holding them to account, very well.
- Governors give safeguarding an appropriately high priority. The safeguarding lead governor meets regularly with the headteacher to check that statutory obligations are being met and that child protection procedures are secure. As a result, governors are right to be confident that safeguarding in the school is effective.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's single central record of pre-employment checks meets statutory requirements. The document is well maintained and reflects the school's robust approach to ensuring that only suitable people are employed to work with children. The headteacher and chair of governors check regularly that the single central record is correct and up to date.
- The designated safeguarding lead has excellent knowledge of her role. She undertakes relevant training regularly to ensure that she remains up to date with changes in safeguarding guidance. The designated safeguarding lead understands fully the vital importance of her role in keeping children safe. There is clear evidence that she takes

decisive action when necessary, no matter how challenging that might be.

- The school has a very open culture and pupils know that they can talk to staff about anything. This means that pupils are more likely to speak to a member of staff if they are worried about something, or if they are being neglected or abused. This is a key element in helping to keep pupils safe.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Relationships between teaching staff and pupils are particularly strong. Teachers and support staff know pupils very well. They make it clear to pupils that they enjoy working with them, through, for example, the appropriate use of humour. As a result, pupils like coming to school and are keen to learn.
- Staff focus very well on ensuring that the pupils feel safe in their learning. That is, they ensure that the environment in each classroom is one where mistakes are seen as a crucial part of the learning process. This has had a strong impact on improving pupils' confidence and self-esteem throughout the school.
- Routines are well established throughout the school. Pupils know what happens when, and what is expected of them at different points in the day. This enables them to respond quickly so that transitions between and during lessons happen quickly and smoothly. This means that little learning time is lost unnecessarily.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively both to check whether pupils have understood and to deepen their learning. For example, teachers question pupils carefully in order to identify misunderstandings so that they can be addressed promptly. Teachers know pupils well and ask questions that challenge them appropriately.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils both in terms of how they should behave and what they can achieve. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding frequently and well. This enables them to move pupils on quickly, when appropriate, and to provide different or additional support where necessary.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. Teaching assistants are provided with the information they need in order to carry out their roles efficiently. They know the pupils who they work with well and provide them with good-quality support that enables them to be successful. Teaching assistants encourage pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to be independent and not to become overly reliant on adult support.
- Teachers use a good range of equipment and other resources to enhance pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics pupils are provided with apparatus to help them to understand calculations and carry them out correctly. Staff use equipment such as interactive whiteboards and visualisers effectively to demonstrate and explain.
- Assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is underdeveloped. Conversations with pupils and the work in their exercise books shows that pupils are making good progress overall in subjects such as history and geography. However, teachers do not assess pupils' attainment, and the progress they make, in these subjects as routinely or systematically as they do in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A small amount of weaker teaching remains. Where this is the case, pupils do not

make the same good progress as in the rest of the school. For example, where teaching is weaker, teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to meet all pupils' needs. As a result, a few pupils 'switch off' and do not take a full part in lessons, limiting the progress they make.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils show good attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school and are keen to find out more about the interesting topics that they learn about. They support each other in their learning and they know that it is 'okay to get things wrong'.
- Pupils are kind and supportive to each other. When discussing the things they like about the school, with the lead inspector, pupils said that what they love most about it is that the school is 'friendly', 'loving' and 'caring'.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They said that 'the teachers look after you' and 'you can open up to teachers'. One pupil spoke for many by saying of teachers that 'they'll make time for you' when pupils are worried or concerned. This trust in staff plays a key part in helping to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils learn about a wide range of safety issues. For example, pupils in Year 6 take part in first aid training sessions. Pupils in Year 5 work with the police to identify and tackle drivers who drive too fast outside the school. Pupils are given frequent reminders about e-safety and how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Pupils know about bullying and the forms it can take. They said that there is very little bullying at the school and when it does happen it is sorted out quickly by staff. Parents and carers said that they feel that their children are safe at school and most said that the school deals effectively with bullying when it occurs.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards other people. They understand that there are differences between people, such as someone's religion or the colour of their skin. Pupils said that 'nobody can judge you' on your physical characteristics or your beliefs. They are taught about fairness and equality very effectively through assemblies and work in their classrooms.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very well behaved throughout the school. They know the school's rules and they understand the reasons why rules are necessary. Pupils encourage each other to do the right thing. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly place.
- Leaders give attendance an appropriately high priority. Effective procedures are in place to tackle repeated absence. In some cases, pupils' attendance has improved greatly as a result of actions taken by the school.
- Absence rates are too high and overall attendance is below the national average. The

attendance of some disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is too low.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Results of the key stage 2 national tests in 2017 demonstrated this clearly. The progress that pupils made in writing was some of the strongest in the country and pupils made above-average progress in mathematics. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' exercise books shows that current pupils are making equally good progress throughout the school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. The SENCo ensures that, where necessary, pupils' learning is broken down into small, achievable steps. This enables staff to track pupils' progress accurately and to ensure that they are achieving well.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their starting points. Their needs are known well by staff who ensure that they are provided with the support that they need. Published data does not fully reflect the good progress that disadvantaged pupils make.
- The most able pupils achieve well. Expectations for this group are high and teachers provide good opportunities for most-able pupils to extend their learning. The most able key stage 2 pupils attained highly in the 2017 national tests in English and mathematics.
- The work in pupils' exercise books is of good quality. In some year groups, particularly Year 4 and Year 6, pupils' work is notably well presented with neat, joined handwriting. Pupils do their best and teachers expect the best from them.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum. This is evident in pupils' work and in conversations with pupils. Assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is underdeveloped.
- Published data shows a downward trend in progress in reading, although progress in the subject remains average. Leaders identified this trend and took action to reverse it. As a result, pupils are now showing more interest in books and reading. Pupils' reading skills are now improving at a faster rate.
- Results of the Year 1 phonics screening check are below the national average. Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve teaching in this crucial area. Phonics teaching is improving as a result of the actions taken but this has not yet had full impact on pupils' reading skills.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter the Reception Year with skills and abilities below those typical of their age. Some children's language and communication skills are underdeveloped when they join the school. Staff focus well on providing children with opportunities to develop their speech and language skills. This helps children to be ready for Year 1.

- From below average starting points, children make good progress during their time in the Reception Year. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was similar to the national average in 2016. A below-average proportion of children achieved a good level of development in 2017.
- The early years staff form an effective team. They work well together to meet children's individual needs. Staff plan a mixture of adult-led activities and learning opportunities that children choose and shape for themselves. Children enjoy their learning and make good progress as a result.
- Children behave well in the early years class. They learn the rules quickly and follow them well. Children are kind to each other and work well together. Most children persevere with activities for extended periods of time and do not flit from task to task.
- A great deal has been done to improve the early years environment. The classroom and outdoor area are now bright, attractive and well equipped, providing a suitable and stimulating learning environment.
- Children are looked after well in the early years. The same stringent approach to safeguarding children is apparent in the Reception Year as in the rest of the school.
- Leadership of the early years provision is developing. The early years leader has an increasingly good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. She knows that there is more to do to develop the use of learning journals, particularly in terms of involving parents.



## School details

Unique reference number	141657
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10041747

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Ann Bard
Headteacher	Georgina Bailey
Telephone number	01279 432 459
Website	<a href="http://www.stjameschool.co.uk">www.stjameschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@stjames-ceap-harlow.essex.sch.uk">admin@stjames-ceap-harlow.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school became a sponsor-led academy in March 2015, led by an interim executive headteacher. The headteacher joined the school, as head of school, in May 2015. She became substantive headteacher in April 2016.
- The school is sponsored by the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust. The school has a local governing body which is responsible to the trust's board of trustees.
- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' progress and attainment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 21 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information. They checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with: the headteacher, both assistant headteachers, other leaders, governors, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust, the trust's improvement lead and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection and with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors considered 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and nine free text comments.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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