

St James Church of England Primary Academy

High Street, Isle of Grain, Rochester, Kent ME3 0BS

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have a strong commitment and relentless ambition to continually improve the school and secure aspirational outcomes for pupils.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have established policies and procedures to keep children and pupils safe. Consequently, all staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Teachers plan a wide range of activities, both indoors and outdoors, that interest children and enable them to learn well.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills. However, some do not ensure that pupils secure spelling, punctuation and grammar skills quickly enough.
- Leaders have successfully addressed the school's three-year coasting trend in its outcomes for key stage 2. Despite this, the proportion of pupils who achieve a high standard remains low.
- The school's strong Christian values underpin the ethos of the school. Pupils are polite and welcoming and they value the kind, caring relationships that they have established with their teachers and their peers.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to school because the curriculum meets their needs well. They are enthusiastic and approach their learning with concentration and perseverance.
- Pupils secure good phonics skills and are confident to use and apply their knowledge when reading and writing unknown words.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development in the early years is higher than the national average.
- Some teachers do not identify and address misconceptions in pupils' learning quickly enough. As a result, some pupils continue to make similar mistakes in their work over time.
- Pupils do not have a secure understanding of fundamental British values.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that pupils’ misconceptions are identified and tackled swiftly
 - ensuring that there is sufficient challenge for the most able pupils, so that more achieve at a high standard
 - improving the teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values and of how these influence their daily lives.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The head of school is relentless in her determination and ambition to drive school improvement in order to secure the very best outcomes for pupils. She has high expectations of what pupils can achieve and a clear vision for the future development of the school.
- Leaders at all levels share the head of school's ambitious vision for the school. They are committed in their determination to achieve high standards for the pupils. Leaders work collaboratively both within the school and across the trust, embracing the support and challenge that this offers.
- The devastating fire, which destroyed much of the school in October 2016, did not distract leaders' focus from the school improvement agenda. Leaders pursued their plans effectively, taking robust actions that have secured further improvements in outcomes for all pupils.
- The Diocese of Rochester and the Williamson Trust provide useful challenge and support to school leaders. Leaders welcome working collaboratively with staff from other schools, and have found this challenge and support valuable in raising standards.
- Leaders, including subject leaders, have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use this information to plan effective actions to address the variance in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have put in place improved assessment procedures that have enabled them to more accurately identify where pupils are underachieving. As a result, they offer good challenge and support for teachers to put in place the necessary provision for underachieving pupils to catch up in their learning.
- The school's strong Christian ethos and values contribute well to the development of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This ethos is very important to the pupils. They value the messages it teaches them about how to respect and care for one another as part of the school community.
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding to provide appropriate support for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning.
- The school's curriculum is well balanced. Pupils have the opportunity to learn a breadth of knowledge and skills through a range of topics. Pupils find these topics, for example 'The Titanic' and 'A Journey to India', interesting, and are keen to share their learning. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise, use and apply their reading and writing skills through their topic work.
- Pupils are not secure in their knowledge and understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils are unable to articulate what these values mean or how they impact on their daily lives as members of the school and wider community. As a result, pupils are not fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors are effective at holding senior leaders to account for standards in the school. Governors constantly scrutinise information given to them by the head of school. They are not afraid to raise questions that challenge the information that they have been given. They also request supplementary information and interrogate the impact of leaders' actions when required.
- In addition to governing body meetings, governors also make routine visits to the school to monitor the impact of policies and check the information the head of school provides. As a result, governors have an adequate grasp of the quality of education on offer. However, on occasion, governors' reports from these visits are not evaluative enough. As a result, they do not always understand clearly enough what leaders are doing to improve the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established effective policies and procedures for recording and reporting safeguarding concerns about pupils.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular, up-to-date training. As a result, all staff have a good understanding of safeguarding practice and their responsibilities when it comes to reporting concerns.
- Leaders have established a culture in the school whereby staff routinely record and report their concerns. Designated safeguarding leads in the school follow up these concerns appropriately.
- Leaders ensure that all the appropriate checks are undertaken when recruiting adults to work in the school.
- Although pupils are safe in this school, some of the procedures that are in place for ensuring pupils' safety need to be tightened, for example first aid reporting.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Across the school, leaders and teachers have established a very positive learning culture where pupils are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Pupils want to do well, they concentrate and persevere when challenged and show great delight when they succeed.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting. As a result, pupils take a real pride in the presentation of their work across all subjects. The quality of most pupils' handwriting is of a high standard.
- Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills. Pupils respond to challenges with confidence, using their mathematical knowledge and calculation skills to reason and solve problems. Most teachers intervene skilfully to support pupils when they find these challenges difficult, using clear explanations and effective resources to model answers.

- Most teachers and teaching assistants make effective use of questioning to consolidate and deepen pupils' understanding. They give pupils the opportunity to explain their ideas and their reasoning, and question pupils well to extend their learning. Pupils are able to use their knowledge and key vocabulary to articulate their responses to these questions with confidence.
- The effective teaching of phonics means that younger pupils develop a secure understanding of letters and the sounds they make. Pupils are able to use their skills to decode words when they are reading and to spell unfamiliar words in their writing.
- Some teachers do not give explanations which are sufficiently clear or accurate when teaching new concepts or addressing pupils' misconceptions. As a result, pupils do not develop a secure understanding of the knowledge or skill that is being taught, and this slows the progress that they make.
- On occasion, teachers do not routinely identify pupils' errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation or inaccuracies in calculations. When this happens, pupils are at risk of making the same mistakes over time.
- Sometimes, teachers do not plan learning that consistently challenges the most able pupils. Pupils are sometimes presented with work that they can already do. When this happens, their progress slows. As a result, not enough pupils achieve a high standard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils exhibit very positive attitudes to their learning. They work with great concentration, persevering when they find work challenging and taking great delight when they succeed. Pupils are proud of their own achievements and the achievements of others. They are quick to congratulate and praise one another when they have succeeded in their learning.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. They also have a secure understanding of the local risks, having learned, for example, how to keep themselves safe in and around water.
- Pupils who attend breakfast club enjoy the activities and healthy breakfast at the start of the day. Pupils settle quickly when they arrive and said that they feel safe and happy.
- Several pupils reported that bullying happens in school, and some parents and carers share these concerns. Most pupils believe that teachers deal with this effectively, but a small minority feel that this is not always the case.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils offer a very warm, friendly welcome to visitors to their school. They are incredibly thoughtful, and go out of their way to ensure that visitors are included as a part of their school community. For example, one pupil offered to find a chair for an inspector to sit on when she joined them in their lesson.

- Pupils work well together, listening to each other's ideas and supporting one another by explaining their learning. Pupils welcome the opinions of others asking, 'What do you think?' but are also confident in politely challenging ideas when they disagree.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school most of the time. Most are respectful of one another, playing and working together with care and kindness. Pupils value the school's ethos that 'You should treat others how you would like to be treated'. Some talk of the strong, caring friendships that they have established at school.
- Instances of unkind behaviour are uncommon, but on the occasions when they do arise, pupils trust teachers to respond to these matters quickly and fairly.
- Leaders have taken robust action to address pupils' absence from school. As a result, there has been an improvement in the overall attendance of pupils. However, there are still a small number of pupils who have high rates of absence. Leaders are aware of this and taking appropriate action.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils currently in the school make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have taken effective action to reverse the three-year coasting trend in outcomes for pupils in key stage 2. In 2017, pupils' progress improved in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 and was above national averages.
- Pupils' attainment in reading and writing was also above national averages by the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Attainment in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in phonics has been improving steadily over the last three years. In 2017, a higher proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard than seen in other schools.
- Disadvantaged pupils in this school achieve well overall. This is particularly the case in reading and writing, in which they make progress that is at least in line with that of other pupils.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to reading and read with fluency and enjoyment. Pupils are confident in tackling challenging texts because they have a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. Some pupils, however, are not challenged enough by the books they are reading, finding them too easy. While pupils generally make good progress in reading, this is not as strong as the progress that pupils make in mathematics and writing.
- The achievement of pupils in grammar, spelling and punctuation is not as strong as in other subjects. Pupils do not secure a strong understanding of these elements. As a consequence, they do not apply them consistently in their writing.
- The most able pupils across the school do not consistently perform well enough and do not achieve at the standard of which they are capable. As a result, the proportion of

pupils who achieve a higher standard at the end of key stage 2 is below national averages.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders and teachers have established a safe, effective learning environment, where children of all ages play and learn well alongside one another. Children are polite, kind and friendly to one another and to the adults and visitors in the setting.
- Teachers establish clear routines that children understand and follow quickly. These routines make transitions throughout the day safe, quick and seamless.
- Staff establish very positive relationships with children and are supportive, encouraging and full of praise. Children also support and encourage one another in their learning, as when one child praised his friend for correctly sounding out a word saying, 'She did a good job!' As a result of these positive relationships, children are confident and happy and flourish during their time in early years.
- Teachers skilfully engage children in their learning. They plan thoughtful, interesting and fun activities, using a wide range of resources, both indoors and outdoors. Because of this, teachers sustain children's interest and curiosity. As a result, children focus on their learning with eagerness and concentration, persevering when it is challenging.
- Leaders and teachers make effective use of assessment. Teachers know the children well and use this knowledge to plan activities that target what the children need to learn next. Teachers use their assessments to question children skilfully to develop their understanding.
- Leaders and teachers quickly identify those children who need extra support with their learning. Teachers plan effective, well-targeted interventions to support children to catch up when required.
- Children know how to keep themselves safe and are confident and keen to make healthy food choices.
- The proportions of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception have steadily improved over the last four years. In 2017, it was above the national average. Very few children, however, exceed this, particularly in writing.
- Although staff in the setting support and encourage children well through the conversations that they have with them, some staff do not use questioning effectively enough to extend the knowledge and understanding of children.

School details

Unique reference number	138974
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10040710

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Laura Smith
Head of School	Mrs Ruth Sivarajah
Telephone number	01634 270341
Website	www.stjamesisleofgrain.org.uk
Email address	office@stjames.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 May 2014

Information about this school

- In October 2016, the school suffered a fire that destroyed much of its building. As a result, staff and children in Years 1 to 6 were relocated to another local primary school, Allhallows Primary Academy. The early years foundation stage remained on the school site, as it was unaffected by the fire. Following restoration work, Years 1, 5 and 6 have moved back to St James. Until building work has been completed, pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 continue to be educated by the staff of St James Primary Academy, at Allhallows Primary Academy.
- St James Church of England Primary Academy is the sole academy in the St James Church of England Primary Academy Trust. The academy is co-sponsored by the Diocese of Rochester and the Williamson Trust.
- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Some pupils are taught in split-year groups.

- The early years incorporates a Nursery for two- to four-year-old children, and a Reception class for four- and five-year-old children.
- The school provides a breakfast club on its site.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 13 sessions across a range of subjects and year groups, across both sites of the school. All sessions were observed jointly with the head of school or the executive headteacher. Inspectors looked at the quality of pupils' work during lessons and through a focused analysis of books.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, staff, governors and representatives of the Williamson Trust, and a telephone conversation with a representative from the Diocese of Rochester.
- Inspectors took into account the views of the 19 staff who completed Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also took into account the views of the 98 pupils who completed Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also met formally with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents during the inspection and considered the 17 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, including 13 free-text comments.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, around the school, during collective worship, at breakfast club, and during play, break and lunchtimes.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website and records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of the governing body, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary, school development plan and supporting evidence were scrutinised.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Leah Goulding, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mineza Maher

Ofsted Inspector

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