Inspection of a good school: St James' Church of England Aided Infant School

Leonard Street, Derby, Derbyshire DE23 8EG

Inspection date: 9 May 2024

Outcome

St James' Church of England Aided Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming, inclusive school at the heart of its community. Pupils feel safe and happy. They know that they can talk to an adult if anything is worrying them. The school expects pupils to work hard and behave well. Most pupils meet these high expectations. They are friendly and respectful, behaving well in lessons and around the school.

Most pupils engage well with their learning activities. For example, in the early years, children enjoy learning new sounds and words. They find it exciting to explore items in their teacher's 'special bag'. Staff take care to meet the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school makes sure that it includes all pupils in everything that it does.

The school provides a variety of activities outside of the classroom. Visits help to broaden pupils' experience and build their confidence. For example, pupils enjoy visiting a museum and a dairy farm. Many attend clubs which cater for interests, such as construction, athletics and baking.

Parents and carers appreciate the care and education their children receive. As one parent said, 'My child is more confident in herself now.'

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum that begins in the early years. Clear plans identify the key knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which they need to learn it. The school has developed effective ways of checking pupils' learning. These checks help teachers to understand how much pupils know and can remember.

Pupils are enthusiastic. For example, pupils explained that they enjoy solving problems in mathematics. They can talk with confidence about their learning. Attendance is high. This helps pupils to achieve well across the curriculum. Most pupils try their best in every lesson. On occasion, a small number of pupils do not concentrate on their learning as well

as they could. When this happens, their off-task behaviour is not always addressed by staff.

Children in the early years are quick to learn the routines of school life. They are happy to play and work together. A well-planned curriculum helps children to make connections in their learning. Well-thought-out activities bring this curriculum to life. Whether making a starfish model or exploring outer space, children enjoy their learning. Staff encourage children to think things through for themselves. This helps to prepare the children well for key stage 1.

Reading is a top priority in this school. For most pupils, English is not their first language. Many of these pupils join the school at different times in the year. Leaders have given careful consideration to helping these pupils learn to read. The school's approach to phonics teaching is working well for all pupils. The programme is thorough, and staff delivering the phonics programme are knowledgeable. They provide timely support for any pupils who need help to keep up. As a result, pupils learn to read well. The school promotes a love of reading in many different ways. For example, the school takes pupils to the local library, where they are all given a library card. As part of the Derby Book Festival, pupils from the school help to decide which author wins the prize. Pupils enjoy reading and understand its value. As one pupil said, 'I like reading because it can help to make me a scientist.'

Meeting the needs of pupils with SEND is also an important priority. There is a shared determination for all pupils to have a successful education. Some pupils with SEND have made significant progress. However, the goals set for a few pupils are not precise enough to ensure that they make the most of each lesson.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. The school provides many activities outside of the classroom. These help pupils understand the importance of key school values, such as 'our best'. Pupils enjoy leadership responsibilities. Some pupils contribute their ideas as team captains. Others serve as buddies for new pupils joining the school. Pupils learn about people from different backgrounds and with different religious beliefs. They can discuss fundamental British values, such as mutual respect, in an age-appropriate way.

This is a school where leaders are reflective. Governors have an accurate view of the school and a clear vision for future priorities. The local authority has provided support and encouragement. Staff say that they are proud to work at the school. They value the work of leaders to support their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- For a few pupils with SEND, goals set are not always precise enough or broken down into small enough steps. This means that some learning opportunities for these few pupils are not always maximised. The school needs to ensure that precise learning goals are set for all pupils with SEND so that they achieve as well as they could.
- On occasion, some pupils' low-level, off-task behaviour goes unchallenged. As a result, a small number of pupils do not always participate fully in lessons and could miss out on learning. The school should ensure that all staff have the same high expectations of behaviour, and that the behaviour policy is consistently applied so that pupils can make the most of the good quality of education on offer.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2018.

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	112915
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10324075
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Edward Nkwelle
Headteacher	Luisa Pancisi
Website	www.stjamesinfants.derby.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since May 2021.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Derby. The most recent section 48 inspection of this Church of England school, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in November 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.

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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. The inspectors spoke with groups of staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading with a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead 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 inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school site.
- The inspectors spoke with parents and carers at the school gate. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, and to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school improvement plans and attendance data.

Inspection team

Martyn Skinner, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Fearns-Davies	His Majesty's Inspector

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