

St James Church School

Cranmer Road, Taunton, TA1 1XU

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Early years provision	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The relentless efforts of the headteacher have secured improvements in the quality of teaching across the school.
- Pupils have made swift progress since the school opened. The standards pupils attain in reading, writing and mathematics are improving rapidly.
- The senior leadership team have supported the headteacher very effectively. They have provided effective training and support which has raised teaching quality in reading, writing and mathematics. The quality of teaching is good.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is good. As a result, children make good progress. They are well prepared for the move into Year 1.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They work hard in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is good in class and around school.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Pupils work well together. Older pupils take good care of the younger ones when they work together.
- The school has worked closely with parents and has gained their confidence. Parents' views are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school and the progress pupils make.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed successfully. Caring relationships are fostered because staff are positive role models.
- The school works closely with other organisations to access support for individual pupils to help them improve their readiness to learn.
- The academy trust has provided good support to the headteacher in her efforts to improve the school. The school no longer relies on this support and is beginning to offer guidance to other schools in the academy trust to help them to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always adjust activities in lessons to make sure that they are hard enough for the most able and not too demanding for others.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 25 lessons or small-group activities. Some of these sessions were jointly seen with members of the senior leadership team. An inspector also observed a school assembly.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. He also met with senior representatives of the Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust.
- An inspector listened to pupils from Years 2 and 6 read. Samples of pupils' workbooks were scrutinised.
- The inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including the school's information on pupils' recent progress. They also looked at planning and documentation about checks on teaching, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- There were 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of the second day. The inspection considered 33 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The school shares its site and some of its resources with St James Church School Nursery. The Nursery was not included in this inspection.

Inspection team

David Hogg, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lucy Maughan	Additional Inspector
Stephanie Matthews	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St James Church School converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2013 as part of the Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has two classes in each year from Reception to Year 2. There are three mixed-age classes in Years 3 and 4. In Years 5 and 6, there is one class in each year group. Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club each day.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of the pupils who receive support funded by the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The proportion of children who are not from a White British background is lower than that seen nationally. The proportion of all of the pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The governing body and the academy trust oversee the work of St James Church School Nursery that shares the school site. The nursery was not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - adapt tasks to make sure all pupils are sufficiently challenged or supported in their learning
 - use additional adults more effectively to support the progress of all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's drive and strategic vision has been instrumental in transforming the school over the last two years. The support she has received from the senior leadership team has been vital in securing the significant improvements that have occurred. As a result of this work, the quality of teaching has improved and this has led to rapid improvements in pupils' achievement. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils behave well and are keen to succeed.
- Middle leaders play a key role in helping the school to improve. Leadership of teaching is strong. Through regular checks on teaching quality and pupils' progress, middle leaders help to raise standards of learning across the school. Through their ongoing monitoring of the progress made by groups of pupils or that of individuals, middle leaders have been able to provide additional support for groups of pupils when necessary. As a result, the progress pupils make has improved over the last two years and now is good.
- Leaders are determined to tackle discrimination and make sure that all pupils have an equal chance to achieve as well as they can from their individual starting points. The school uses the pupil premium very effectively to support disadvantaged pupils.
- The academy trust has provided the school with strong support in order to improve the quality of teaching. As a result of sustained improvements, the academy trust has reduced the support the school receives. The school is now involved in supporting other schools within the academy trust.
- Senior and middle leaders rigorously check teachers' performance against ambitious targets. Senior leaders and the academy trust have provided training and support to help teachers improve their skills. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and weak teaching eradicated. All staff work successfully together to improve standards.
- The curriculum covers a broad range of subjects including Italian. Pupils enjoy the interesting activities in lessons that capture their imagination. For example, pupils in Year 6 examined an old Box Brownie camera and this led to them making and testing their own pinhole cameras. Pupils are encouraged to upload blogs about their work to the school website, which they can share with their parents at home.
- The school uses the primary sports premium funding to good effect. Staff have been trained to run clubs and to deliver high-quality physical education lessons. The school has carefully reviewed the impact of the additional funding on participation rates. The uptake has risen substantially and now nearly three quarters of the pupils participate in a sports club or activity. The school has received a national award for promoting active and healthy lifestyles.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well promoted. Pupils are helped to understand and respect the diversity that exists within the school and the wider world. The school has strong links with the local church and develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of a wide range of other cultures and faiths. The school promotes British values and helps pupils understand key institutions so they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, the school council took part in the County Wide Young Children's Parliament where they presented a talk on how to stay safe. Through this work, the school fosters good relations effectively and encourages tolerance.
- The school has worked hard to build relationships with the parents and the local community. Workshops and social events have helped to engage parents in their children's learning. The staff, especially the senior leadership team, make themselves available to meet parents to discuss how well their children make progress. This has raised parents' confidence in the school. As a consequence, the school now has a waiting list for places in the Reception classes.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements. Senior leaders are very clear about the school's responsibility in this area. They have made sure that all staff are fully trained and are aware of their roles in protecting pupils from harm. As a result, pupils are very well looked after. The governing body checks procedures and policies rigorously to support the school's work in this area.
- The school's breakfast and after-school clubs are managed well and provide pupils who attend with a safe and friendly start and end to the school day.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors and the academy trust hold the school's leaders to account over the quality of the school's effectiveness. They scrutinise the work of the school closely and provide rigorous challenge alongside support. The governing body and academy trust check the progress different groups of pupils make. Governors and the academy trust compare how the school performs against national averages. They visit the school regularly to meet subject leaders and take part in reviews of pupils' work. As a result, they have a good knowledge of the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school. They understand how the school is tackling underperformance and what is done to reward good teaching.

They understand the link between teachers' targets, pupil achievement, and teachers' salaries and promotion.

- Governors and the academy trust carefully check the use of the primary school sports funding to ensure that resources are used to raise standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Pupils are enthusiastic to come to school.
- Pupils focus on their work and try hard in lessons. Occasionally, pupils' learning is disrupted but teachers manage any incidents well so that no learning time is lost.
- Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They are caring and look after each other. For example, during the inspection, Year 6 pupils helped supervise younger pupils watching the solar eclipse to ensure they wore their special solar glasses correctly.
- Pupils take pride in their work. Their workbooks are neat and tidy. Teachers celebrate the high quality of the pupils' presentation. Pupils are proud of their work on display in classrooms and corridors.
- Attendance is improving rapidly and is broadly in line with national averages.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Systems to ensure that pupils are well looked after are robust. Child protection and the safeguarding of the pupils is a high priority of the school.
- Pupils confirm they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of different aspects of personal safety. Their e-safety awareness is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using computers and information technology.
- Pupils get along well together. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and addressed quickly, as the school's records show.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is increasingly effective across the school so that pupils in most year groups are making good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The work seen in pupils' books confirms this good progress and that the quality of teaching is good.
- The school has recognised the need to challenge the most able, especially in Year 6 in mathematics. Selected pupils complete demanding work to help them reach the highest standards.
- Pupils' work is very well marked. Teachers provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work further in the feedback they give pupils in their books. Pupils respond systematically to teachers' advice and make the necessary improvements.
- Teachers have high expectations of what the pupils must achieve. They plan lessons to challenge different groups of pupils. However, on some occasions, the match of activities to pupils' abilities is not precise enough. Teachers do not 'fine-tune' the work sufficiently during lessons to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, sometimes, some pupils do not have the extra support they need to achieve well, and at other times, the learning of the most able is not accelerated.
- Teachers do not always use teaching assistants effectively to support the learning of pupils of different abilities. At times, some teaching assistants do not have a clear role in lessons and are underused. As a result, the progress of some pupils, including the most able, is reduced.
- The teachers look to widen pupils' experiences and stimulate their interest in different subjects. They draw on a range of resources and local companies to bring activities to life. Pupils from the mixed Year 3 and 4 classes were inspired by a visit to a local chocolate factory to design and make their own chocolate products.
- The school makes sure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have additional support tailored to their individual needs so they achieve well.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is improving strongly in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. The school's assessment information shows current pupils make good progress. The quality of work in pupils' workbooks this year also shows pupils learn well.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in national assessments in 2014 was below national averages. Current pupils' assessment information shows that standards are rising rapidly in all year groups.
- The progress boys and girls make is broadly similar. The quality of work seen in pupils' books did not show any significant variation between boys and girls.
- The support the school provides to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. The progress they make is typically good.
- Pupils develop their understanding of the sounds that link to groups of letters (phonics) quickly through effective teaching. Pupils apply this knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. Pupils from all year groups enjoy reading. They have opportunities to read regularly at school to build their skills. In the Year 1 phonics screening check, more pupils than the national average reached the expected standard. Pupils in Year 6 talk confidently about their favourite authors and discuss at length the books they prefer.
- The most-able pupils in Year 6 make accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, 10% of pupils attained the highest standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling, which was well above the national proportion.
- The school provides good support to pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. As they acquire skills in speaking English, and through the support they receive in class, they gain in confidence. These pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and make good progress.
- The school makes good use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. The school's information indicates that last year disadvantaged pupils in each year group made similar or better progress than that of other pupils in school and nationally. The picture for this year is similar. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6 were three terms behind other pupils at the school in writing, mathematics and in reading. When compared with other pupils nationally, they were just over two terms behind in writing and reading, but nearly four terms behind in mathematics.

The early years provision

is good

- Children join the Reception classes with skills that are lower than those typical for their age, especially in the areas of reading and writing. Through effective teaching, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was in line with national averages in 2014. Most children are ready for the move into Year 1.
- The early years team is led very effectively. All staff have a very good understanding of the early years and make sure that children learn well in a safe and caring environment. Through coordinated planning, learning activities are matched to the needs and interests of groups of children or specific individuals. The progress children make is checked carefully and teachers keep detailed records. Journals and workbooks are shared with parents and provide a clear picture of the progress the children make. The school successfully develops strong links with parents.
- The school works closely with the nursery that shares the school site and with other pre-school settings. This helps children to settle quickly when they join the school. Teachers share good practice with other pre-school settings.
- Children work well together on learning tasks or in small groups with an adult. They are keen to talk about their work and are very proud of what they achieve. The children are happy to share resources and take turns readily. They are polite and behave well. Adults model good manners for the children to copy. The children's social skills are nurtured and they understand how to play safely.
- The outdoor area is excellently used to offer a wide range of learning activities. Children cooperate well together. For example, a group of girls built an exercise circuit using wooden blocks and short planks, and carefully used it to practise balancing skills.
- Teachers and teaching assistants in early years promote children's understanding of phonics very well. Staff help the most-able children to extend and develop their skills quickly. The support offered to those children who need a little extra help, or are less confident with their letters and sounds, is good. This enables them to develop their basic reading skills swiftly.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139324
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	449886

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Smart
Headteacher	Heather Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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