

# St James CofE Primary School, Farnworth

Hillside Avenue, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire BL4 9QB

## Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

<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>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The motto of the school, 'Dream, believe, learn and achieve', accurately captures the ethos of high aspirations for pupils that leaders have created.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths. They are ambitious for pupils and are committed to improving the school further.
- There is a sense of calm and purpose which permeates across the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and caring. Consequently, pupils thrive in a nurturing environment where they feel safe and happy.
- Pupils are proud to state that they are part of the big 'St James' family'. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Pupils are highly positive about the school and value their education. They display good attitudes to learning and take great care with their presentation and handwriting.
- Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading across the school. Displays and skilfully planned provision hook pupils into reading. As a result, pupils display a love of reading and make strong progress.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Pupils learn and use skills that support their reading and spelling to good effect.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They appreciate the approachability of staff and feel welcomed into the school. They say that their children are happy, well cared for and safe.
- The early years is a strength of the school. Children get off to a flying start and make very strong progress. Provision inside and outside is inspirational. Adults plan exciting activities and support children exceptionally well.
- The curriculum is well planned. It offers pupils a wide range of exciting and engaging experiences. This helps pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding across many subjects.
- Middle leaders are keen to improve their areas of responsibility in the school. However, several of them are new to the role and are developing the skills they need to be fully effective.
- Pupils' attendance rates are around the national averages. However, too many pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are absent from school.
- The quality of teaching is typically good. However, the progress of lower-ability pupils and pupils with SEND is sometimes hindered by the appropriateness of activities or the support that they receive.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
  - supporting middle leaders, especially those in the early stages of developing their role, so they can take responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in the subjects they lead
  - continuing to improve provision for pupils with SEND and lower-ability pupils, so their progress is further strengthened.
- Continue to improve pupils' attendance and the school's work with families, so that the attendance for pupils with SEND is at least in line with the national average for all pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for pupils and are committed to improving the school further. The motto of the school, 'Dream, believe, learn and achieve', accurately captures what makes the school so special. For example, older pupils told inspectors that they know they must work hard so they can achieve their ambitions for the future.
- The new leadership team has brought about significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The trust has supported the school admirably through a difficult period of change. They have provided staff with high-quality training and support. As a result, the quality of teaching is now good in almost all classes. Where further improvements are required, leaders are providing targeted support. As a result of leaders' work, pupils' achievement is rising across the school.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Through regular checks on their work, they know what needs to be done to ensure that the school improvement priorities are achieved.
- Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading across the school. Displays and skilfully planned provision hook pupils into reading. Pupils have been involved in creating reading areas around the school that are enticing and well resourced. As a result, pupils display a love of reading and make strong progress.
- The curriculum is well designed and promotes pupils' personal and academic development well. It offers pupils a wide range of exciting and engaging experiences. This enables pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects. Teachers also use a range of subjects, such as history and science, to provide pupils with further opportunities to improve their reading, writing and mathematical skills. This is most noticeable in the writing that pupils produce across the wider curriculum.
- Leaders' programme of assemblies complements the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. The school's Christian values of respect, peace, love, forgiveness, honesty and hope emphasise the importance of these values in all aspects of school life. From this platform, British values are actively promoted.
- Middle leaders are keen to improve their areas of responsibilities in the school. However, several of them are new to the role and are still developing the skills they need to be fully effective, for example in taking responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in the subjects they lead.
- The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable and effective in her approach. She is already making improvements across the school. She has established new systems and procedures to support pupils with SEND. However, the impact of additional support and the work of teaching assistants is not yet effectively monitored. Consequently, the progress of these pupils is less strong than that of other pupils in the school.
- Leaders have identified the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Additional

funding is used to provide targeted support, in addition to funding visits and trips. Pupils have opportunities to work in the 'sunshine room' with the learning mentors when they have concerns or they are unhappy. Pupils told inspectors, 'When you are sad or worried you can go to the sunshine room; they make you feel better.' Improvements made to the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in disadvantaged pupils making better progress than they have in the past.

- Leaders make good use of the funding for physical education (PE) and sport, which is used effectively to help pupils to become more active and develop their physical skills. Teachers have had training and support to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and understanding so that the teaching of PE is of high quality. Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective. During a period of significant change, governors have ensured that the school has had the leadership capacity required to address a legacy of underachievement. They have played a key role in the improvements made since the school became an academy.
- Governors display a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They support leaders effectively and demonstrate a clear passion to make the school the best that it can be so that pupils have high aspirations for their future. They ask pertinent questions and provide focused challenge. For example, they hold school leaders to account for the use of additional funding.
- Governors play an important role in ensuring that safeguarding is effective. All governors receive relevant training to develop their skills and knowledge further. They check that school systems are followed appropriately.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding procedures and processes are fit for purpose. They have established a strong culture of safeguarding within the school, and as a result, pupils feel safe and happy and their individual needs are met very well.
- Leaders and staff have relevant and up-to-date training. This is followed up with regular updates for all staff. Staff are alert to any concerns about pupils' welfare and know what to do if they ever have concerns about pupils' safety. Leaders make sure that the pre-employment checks are undertaken before any new member of staff starts at the school. When it is necessary, the school liaises closely with external agencies and families to make sure that pupils are safe.

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

**Good**

- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school. They know where it is strong and where additional support is required. They provide targeted training, coaching and support to ensure that there is a consistent approach to

teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use this information to plan lessons that keep pupils interested in their learning. When teaching is strongest, teachers skilfully question pupils and set tasks accurately matched to pupils' needs. They adapt teaching within lessons to address misconceptions and identify pupils who are ready to move on. However, there are some occasions when tasks do not match the needs of pupils with SEND and lower-ability pupils. Occasionally, these pupils become distracted and lose concentration.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are warm, caring and positive. There is an ethos in classrooms that is focused on learning. Pupils enjoy challenging themselves, especially in mathematics. As one pupil commented, 'It's good to make mistakes and have a go. It stretches your brain.' Pupils work very well together.
- Basic mathematical skills are taught consistently throughout the school. Leaders have prioritised the teaching of times tables and pupils spoke to inspectors about how they were now much more confident with knowing these. Staff are now confident when teaching mathematics because they have had relevant training. Teachers plan daily sessions to develop pupils' fluency and ensure that there are regular opportunities for pupils to use their skills and knowledge in a range of problem-solving activities. Pupils can reason and explain their answers.
- Developing a love of reading has been a high priority across the school. Teachers use high-quality and suitably challenging texts that engage and interest pupils across the curriculum. In this way, pupils are exposed to a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and develop a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary. Throughout lessons, there is a strong focus on improving pupils' vocabulary. Teachers capitalise on opportunities to reinforce word awareness. For example, in one class, the word 'jostled' had been introduced in an English lesson where pupils were reading the text, 'The Firework-Maker's Daughter', by Phillip Pullman. Pupils keep lists of new words and teachers dedicate time so that they can find out what these words mean. Across the school, 'Wordy Wednesday' encourages pupils to use key vocabulary in their writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have had recent training to improve the teaching of phonics. Phonics teaching is systematic, focused and well organised. In the early years and key stage 1, teaching builds on what pupils already know. Leaders have deployed staff purposefully to enable pupils in key stage 1 to make strong progress in phonics. This has been a large part of the drive to ensure that pupils acquire language skills as quickly as possible.
- Across the school, pupils are given a range of opportunities to apply their writing skills in a wide range of genres and contexts. Pupils are keen to write and take great pride in their handwriting. Activities are carefully planned so that pupils can write across the curriculum in a wide range of subjects.
- Teaching across a wide range of curriculum subjects is typically good. For example, in science, pupils have many opportunities to plan investigations and make predictions using scientific language. In history, pupils could recall many interesting facts that they had learned about the early Islamic civilisation.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

## Personal development and welfare

- Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a sense of calm and purpose which permeates across the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and caring. Consequently, pupils thrive in a nurturing environment where they feel safe and happy.
- Pupils whom inspectors spoke with during the inspection were keen to say that they are like one big family. As one pupil commented, 'We are St James' family.' They talk with pride about their teachers and the wide range of opportunities that they have.
- Pupils are highly positive about the school and value their education. They display good attitudes to learning and take great care with their presentation and handwriting.
- Staff know their pupils and their families well. Vulnerable families are well supported, and their needs are met through a range of initiatives. The learning mentors who work in the 'sunshine room' have developed trusting and nurturing relationships with pupils and families. When necessary, leaders work effectively with external agencies to support pupils and families.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and in the wider community. An example of this was the recent work undertaken by the pupil road safety team. They ran workshops across the school, where they taught other pupils how to stay safe in the community. Their good work has been acknowledged and, as a result, they have been invited to meet the mayor.
- Pupils spoken with during the inspection had a detailed understanding of different types of bullying. They were all in agreement that bullying does not take place at the school and that if they have disagreements, staff quickly sort things out.
- There are a range of leadership opportunities for pupils. Pupils thrive in these roles and take great pride in how they have been able to make a difference to life at the school. For example, the eco team have designed and created a reading garden to ensure that pupils have a quiet retreat, where they can enjoy reading throughout the day.
- Through the curriculum and collective worship, pupils develop a deep understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils could explain the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Inspectors observed pupils' good behaviour in lessons and around the school. At breaktimes, pupils play together well. Older pupils support and play games with the younger pupils admirably, as part of their leadership roles. They told inspectors how much they 'enjoy helping the little ones'.
- Positive relationships between adults and pupils are promoted well. Pupils are polite, well mannered and confident. They make sure that visitors to the school and new pupils are welcomed into the family.
- The school's behaviour rules are well established and pupils are clear what teachers'

expectations are for good behaviour.

- Attendance is slowly improving and is now close to the national average because pupils enjoy coming to school. The number of pupils who are regularly absent has declined. Leaders have established clear systems to promote good attendance. When pupils' attendance is causing a concern, staff act swiftly and meet with families to offer support. Families feel able to share information and any concerns that they may have. However, leaders are not afraid to take formal action when attendance does not improve.
- Despite leaders' actions, there are still too many pupils with SEND who are regularly absent from school.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2017 and 2018, the proportion of pupils who passed the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average. Leaders prioritised the teaching of reading across the school. The teaching of phonics is systematic and consistent. Pupils now make strong progress in phonics and use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read and write well.
- From 2017 to 2018 in the key stage 1 assessments, pupils' attainment was in line with or similar to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the 2017 key stage 2 assessments, Year 6 pupils' attainment was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of higher expectations from leaders and improvements in the quality of teaching, attainment rose in 2018. In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils' attainment was in line with the national average at the expected standard. The number of pupils who achieved the higher standard was above the national average in reading and mathematics. This is because there are many successful strategies in place to challenge the most able pupils.
- In 2018, the progress that pupils made by the time they left the school was significantly above the national average in reading and mathematics. It was also in line with the national average for writing. Evidence from pupils' work and from the school's assessment information shows that current pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects. Consequently, pupils are ready for the next stage of their education.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress and attained less well than other pupils nationally. Leaders' actions have addressed this. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved and differences in attainment compared to other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- The majority of pupils with SEND and lower-ability pupils make good progress, some from very low starting points. However, their progress is not as strong as that of other pupils in the school. This is because leaders do not closely monitor the impact of interventions and support that these pupils receive.

### Early years provision

**Outstanding**

- The leadership and management of the early years are outstanding. The early years

leader is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and experienced. She has an accurate understanding of the strengths of the provision and any areas that could be improved further. The early years leader has identified, for example, that boys' achievement in writing was weaker than that of girls. She took part in a project and devised strategies to address this. As a result of her actions, boys' achievement has risen. The early years leader supports other schools and the local authority encourages teachers to visit the school, to learn from the outstanding practice.

- Children enter Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age. A high proportion enter with significant speech and language difficulties. Barriers to children's learning are identified quickly and swift interventions are put in place. As many of these pupils are disadvantaged, leaders use the early years pupil premium funding to support this. Staff have had relevant training to make sure that they have the necessary skills and understanding to improve children's language development. As a result, disadvantaged children make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Assessment procedures are thorough and provide staff with a very detailed knowledge of each child's development. Staff use this information to plan a wide range of exciting activities which engage children. During the inspection, children across the early years were seen completely absorbed and engaged in their learning. This is because adults provide a wide range of skilfully-planned activities. For example, when children play in the outdoor environment, they demonstrate high levels of independence and concentration and an impressive eagerness to learn.
- Relationships between adults and children are nurturing and caring. Staff have created an environment where the youngest children thrive, emotionally and academically. Children behave sensibly and are consistently kind to each other.
- The learning environment, both inside and outside, is impressive. It is vibrant, well resourced and enables children to develop their independence. Children as young as two select their own equipment, play independently and develop their language skills.
- Children benefit from high-quality teaching in the early years. Well-trained teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to probe and deepen children's understanding. Adults are skilled at identifying when to intervene and move learning on and when to step back. Adults skilfully plan learning activities that engage children's imaginations and, as a result, they are completely absorbed in their learning. Children learn how to count, read letters, develop their language and improve their writing across the environment. Consequently, children across Nursery and Reception make rapid progress from very low starting points.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength. Children acquire phonic skills effectively and use these in their reading and writing. Writing seen in children's books and on display demonstrates the strong progress that they make.
- Leaders make sure that parents and carers are welcome in the school. There are a range of activities, from 'stay and play' to English and mathematics workshops. These workshops enable parents to have the knowledge, skills and understanding to support their child's learning at home. Leaders make sure that parents and carers know they have an important role to play in their child's development.
- Transition is well planned. This starts before children join the school, and extends right

up to when they move into Year 1. As a result, children settle swiftly into school and are ready for the next stage in their education.

- All the statutory welfare requirements are met and the school's safeguarding practices and procedures are robust. Children are safe.

## School details

Unique reference number	142944
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10087784

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr J Waring
Principal	Mrs Lisa Belfield
Telephone number	01204 572587
Website	<a href="http://www.st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk">www.st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk">office@st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are broadly in line with national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported because they have SEND is above the national average.
- The school's early years provision includes provision for two-year-olds, part-time and full-time nursery provision, with children attending either for morning or afternoon sessions, and two full-time reception classes.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character took place in March 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class, including undertaking some joint observations with the principal and the senior improvement partner for the trust.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, senior and middle leaders, office staff, lunchtime supervisors and the learning mentors.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority, with the trust's chief executive officer and with the chair of trustees.
- The lead inspector met with a group of pupils. Inspectors also talked with others informally around the school.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work from across the curriculum and talked with pupils about their work. They also considered pupils' behaviour at the start of the school day and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read and talked to them about the books they enjoyed and those they are currently reading.
- Inspectors took account of the four written responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey. They also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils. They also took account of responses from 13 members of staff who completed the staff survey.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, such as the school's evaluation of its own performance and its areas for improvement. They also looked at attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation, considered how this relates to daily practice, and spoke with staff and pupils.

## Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ian Young

Ofsted Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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