

Inspection of a good school: St James' CofE Infant and Nursery School

High Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 7PZ

Inspection date: 27 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this welcoming school.

They enjoy exceptionally warm and nurturing relationships with adults, who know them well. Pupils said that they feel happy. They know that there is always an adult available to help them if they are ever worried.

The school is highly ambitious for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils rise to this challenge, typically achieving exceptionally well across the curriculum. This is also true for children in the early years, who are incredibly well prepared for all that key stage 1 has to offer.

Pupils behave impeccably. They pride themselves in living out the school's values, including showing respect and kindness in the way that they play and talk with each other. For example, pupils help others if they fall over in the playground. Older pupils befriend their younger peers.

Pupils learn to be well-rounded and responsible members of the school community. They enjoy the wide range of experiences that staff organise to bring the curriculum to life. These opportunities include trips around the local area and, in Year 2, an exciting overnight residential to broaden pupils' awareness of the world around them.

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

The school is highly successful at ensuring that pupils get the very best start in life. The school has carefully considered pupils' needs and what they should learn and when this should happen. In all subjects, pupils gain the knowledge and understanding that they

need to become confident and motivated learners. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stages in their education and for life in modern Britain.

Teachers explain new ideas clearly. They are highly knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. Staff are experts at helping pupils to revisit and remember important learning. They use a range of strategies to ensure that pupils make secure connections between new and previously learned concepts. Teachers use assessment information to great effect to establish what pupils know and where there might be gaps in their learning. This helps teachers to shape pupils' future learning.

The importance of reading radiates throughout this school. There is a rich and diverse range of books available for pupils to select from. The school encourages the enjoyment of reading in many ways. This includes by creating cosy corners where pupils can sit and enjoy a story. Pupils also have the opportunity to take 'Buddy the teddy bear' home, with a book, a blanket and a sachet of hot chocolate, to encourage families to enjoy the magic of reading.

Children in the early years love sharing picture books with adults and with their friends. As soon as they start in the Reception class, children learn letters and the sounds that these represent through well-crafted activities. Staff use their specialist knowledge of early reading extremely effectively. Most pupils achieve well in their early reading. They become confident readers by the time they leave key stage 1. Staff help pupils who find reading more difficult to quickly catch up with their peers and to read confidently and fluently.

The school is highly ambitious for the high number of pupils with SEND. It identifies their additional needs accurately. This enables teachers to give these pupils the help that they need. The school ensures that pupils with SEND build their confidence and their self-esteem. These pupils are successful and learn all that they should. They participate fully in the same curriculum and opportunities as their peers.

Pupils are highly motivated to learn. They work hard during activities and listen to adults attentively. Pupils are keen to achieve their very best. The school prioritises attendance. Staff analyse and track absence thoroughly. There is a very effective range of strategies that ensure positive attitudes and habits about attending school. Consequently, pupils attend school regularly. Parents and carers typically said that their children 'cannot wait to come to school' and that they come home 'full of tales about the wonderful and varied things' that they experience.

The school prioritises pupils' wider development. Pupils enjoy many after-school clubs, including in sports, music and dance, dressing up and role play and clay model making. In addition, movie and bingo nights are enjoyed by all.

Governors share staff's ambition for pupils. Staff morale is high. They value the support that they receive for their well-being and workload. For example, staff appreciate the time that the school gives them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2014.

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	112297
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10321347
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pat Smith
Headteacher	Alex Moore
Website	www.st-james-inf.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- This Church of England school is in the Diocese of Carlisle. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in July 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of 2024.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. They

spoke with pupils about their learning. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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 spoke with pupils about school life.
- The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, and other school leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with a range of school staff about their workload and well-being.
- An inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority, a school-improvement adviser and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to school improvement.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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