

Inspection of St James CofE Aided Primary School

Thursley Road, Elstead, Godalming, Surrey GU8 6DH

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy and joyful school. Pupils describe it as having 'a family feel' because they are well cared for and valued. Pupils rise to the high expectations staff have for both their behaviour and learning. Their behaviour is exceptionally positive. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning and trust teachers to help them learn and achieve.

From the very start, children in Nursery are taught to value and respect each other. Pupils help each other wherever they can. For example, Year 6 buddies support younger pupils, and this often results in caring friendships. Sports leaders play an important role in ensuring everyone can access and use the fun equipment at break and lunchtime.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know who to go to if they have any concerns and are familiar with the different methods for reporting worries. Pupils of all ages understand the importance of staying mentally healthy. They value the school's programme which equips them with ways to cope with life's ups and downs. Pupils frequently use the techniques that they are taught if they are anxious or worried.

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

The school is highly ambitious for all pupils. Everyone is dedicated to giving pupils a wide-ranging education. This contributes to the school's exciting atmosphere. Pupils have a deep understanding of the school's values of 'safe, respectful, responsible and ready'. They know how shared values help to build a positive community. Pupils frequently use the school values to consider their own behaviour and conduct.

Much of the school's curriculum is carefully considered to meet pupils' differing needs. For example, in computing and mathematics, the knowledge that pupils should learn is clearly sequenced. In these subjects, regular training helps teachers maintain their strong subject knowledge. Pupils' knowledge is frequently checked and targeted activities help pupils apply their prior learning to new ideas. As a result, pupils' knowledge builds steadily over time. Where pupils need extra help, personalised plans are used effectively. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who are supported effectively. The school precisely identifies their needs and makes sure that teaching helps these pupils also achieve well.

However, in a few subjects, the curriculum currently requires further improvements. In these subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is less strong and lesson activities do not consistently help pupils to learn well. The school is aware of this and has rightly prioritised continued training and curriculum improvements to ensure pupils know and remember more across the full curriculum.

The school's early years provision is exciting and welcoming. When children join, they are quickly integrated into the school. The strong links between Nursery and

the Reception Year help children to build their learning quickly. They are supported when moving up through the school by staff who know them well. Developing children's communication is a priority leading to children confidently speaking, willingly taking turns and sharing during play.

Reading is highly prized at this school. In Nursery and Reception, children enjoy plentiful stories and start to use sounds. These activities prepare them well for their future phonics sessions. Pupils identify the library as one of the most important places because it represents the joy and range of reading that they do. Pupils are keen to read with adults and talk about their favourite books. Pupils regularly present book reviews in assembly and class. This inspires others to read more widely and raises the profile of reading further. Pupils of any age who find reading more difficult are supported with both individual and group sessions to ensure they can also learn to read effectively.

The school knows its families well. Helping all pupils to attend regularly is a priority. Where some find this more difficult, individual assistance is in place, and has been effective in reducing absence.

The wider personal development of pupils is exceptional. Teaching about the wider world is seamlessly integrated into pupils' learning. Teachers help pupils explore and understand how people's lives may be different to their own. Pupils show empathy towards others. They are interested in the world around them and have a strong sense of equality and fairness. The school's clear and consistent values help pupils to be respectful and welcoming. Parents are very positive about how the school balances academic and wider learning for their children. They recognise the caring culture that the school has developed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the specific knowledge pupils need to learn is not identified precisely enough. Additionally, some teacher's subject knowledge is not as secure as it needs to be. Consequently, pupils do not always build knowledge consistently well across all subjects. The school should ensure that the knowledge and skills which pupils need are precisely identified, taught, and then checked in every subject across the curriculum.

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	125176
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10321883
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rosemary Geffen
Headteacher	Valerie Elliott (Executive headteacher)
Website	http://www.st-james-elstead.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Surrey Oak Church of England Schools Federation, comprising an infant school and this primary school. The executive headteacher, as well as other members of the leadership team, have joint responsibility for both schools in the federation.
- The governing body is shared between both schools in the federation.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Guildford. The school's last section 48 inspection was carried out in March 2017.
- The school uses one alternative education provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection of the school 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 held meetings with the headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders, and other staff.
- The inspectors met with the chair of governors and other members of the governing body, and a representative of the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read. Inspectors also viewed a sample of work from other curriculum areas.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Newberry

Ofsted Inspector

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