

# Inspection of a good school: St James' Church of England Primary School

Off Stopes Brow, Lower Darwen, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 0QP

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Inspection dates:

25–26 September 2019

## **Outcome**

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

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St James' Church of England Primary School is a happy and friendly place. Pupils are enthusiastic to learn. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils respond well when their teachers challenge them to achieve their best. Staff, pupils and parents get on well together because they respect and value each other.

Leaders make sure that pupils behave well and that they have positive attitudes to learning. Leaders also challenge pupils to develop the personal skills and qualities that will help them in later life. Pupils are keen to earn rewards that leaders offer for doing their best every day. Pupils feel safe. Parents and their children agree that bullying is very rare. This is because leaders deal with any incidents that might occur quickly.

Leaders make sure that everyone joins in learning equally well during lesson time. Teachers plan suitable activities for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff use outdoor resources well to support pupils' learning. Leaders understand that for some pupils, working outdoors brings their learning to life.

Leaders know what needs doing at the school to make it even better. They focus on making sure that pupils at the school do at least as well as other pupils in the country. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership. Over time, they have made sure that pupils have got better at reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils achieve well. However, leaders are determined that pupils will do even better. They look carefully at what is working well at the school and what is not. They act quickly to make sure that improvements happen.

Leaders have made sure that pupils learn to read accurately and fluently so that they are ready for secondary school. Children begin the formal learning of phonics in the early years

when teaching staff recognise that they are ready. Staff are skilful at delivering this. Children make strong progress in the early years. Leaders make sure that the pupils in key stage 1 who need the most support to learn to read, get it. They check that pupils are in appropriate teaching groups. Staff also support each other well. They share activities that help pupils to practise and recognise the words and sounds that they have taught them.

Across the school, leaders have made sure that there is a strong team spirit. The school's motto of 'One faith. One family. Our future' is reflected in everything that leaders do. Leaders have worked closely with staff, governors and parents so that everyone is clear what they need to do to make sure that pupils do as well as they can.

Senior leaders are well on their way to improving the curriculum. They are crystal clear about which subjects they are developing and enhancing, for example geography and science. However, some middle leaders are new to role. They are still developing their subject-leadership skills. That said, all leaders are clear about what improvements they need to make to improve further pupils' learning. Teaching staff are well supported so that they can help pupils to learn well across all subjects.

Where leaders have developed the curriculum well, pupils have a deep understanding of what they have been learning about. In history, for example, pupils can recall the order of historical events and why they are significant. In science, however, learning is not as strong. Pupils cannot recall scientific facts as well as they can historical ones.

Leaders focus on developing a wide range of skills and interests in the pupils at the school. Pupils relish the variety of enrichment activities on offer. They also engage well in lessons. This is particularly the case when they can work with their friends and carry out their own research or investigations. Leaders make sure that teaching staff plan activities that help pupils to understand their local community. Pupils understand how they can contribute to their community by fundraising or supporting charities, such as the local hospice. Pupils can explain clearly what it means to be a good citizen. Bullying is rare.

Pupils are encouraged to develop skills such as resilience and independence. They understand how these skills will help them when they go to secondary school. Leaders have made effective use of the expertise of teaching staff to provide activities that motivate pupils. Activities such as growing and preparing food outside helps pupils, especially those with SEND, to build on previous learning.

Leaders are conscious of staff workload and protect their well-being. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Governors work well with leaders. They have developed a strong vision for the curriculum to improve the school further.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know their families well. They make sure that pupils get any support they need. Staff are well trained in safeguarding. Leaders are vigilant and follow up concerns well. They work closely with parents to try and support them, especially in the appropriate use

of social media. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They understand the dangers of sharing personal information. Leaders are aware of local events that could cause community tension. They offer support where this is needed.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In subject areas that leaders have developed well, such as history, there are clear curriculum plans in place. These plans outline the steps of learning that pupils need to make. Leaders have developed teachers' subject knowledge extremely well in these subjects. Teaching helps pupils to learn what they need to know. This is effective because teachers are clear about what pupils need to learn and when. In science, the focus has been on developing scientific enquiry. Plans defining what scientific knowledge pupils should learn are not as well developed as in other subjects. Leaders need to ensure that thorough curriculum plans are in place for each subject area. These will help teachers plan appropriate activities so that pupils know and remember more.
- Some curriculum leaders have well-developed leadership skills. They lead and support curriculum development well. Other curriculum leaders are still developing these skills because they are new to role. Senior leaders need to make sure that all new subject leaders have the skills that they need to improve the curriculum further in their subject areas.

## **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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 16–17 November 2011.

## **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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 119503   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Blackburn with Darwen  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10111003   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 204  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Mrs Jacqui Buckley   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mr Dan Theobalds   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.stjameslowerdarwen.com">www.stjameslowerdarwen.com</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 17 November 2015   |

## Information about this school

- This school is a Church of England primary school.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection was in March 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- I spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator), a group of governors (including the chair of governors and the vice-chair) and a representative from the local authority. I also talked with the school improvement partner.
- I looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the record of required checks carried out on school staff, staff training logs and case files.
- I looked at reading, science and history in depth. I talked to leaders of these subject areas, visited lessons, looked at examples of children's work and talked with teachers and pupils.
- I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. I observed them in assembly and as they moved around the school.
- I also spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.

- I looked at the 19 responses from Ofsted Parent View to find out their views of the school. I spoke with parents as they dropped off their children at school.

### **Inspection team**

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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