

Inspection of The Academy At St. James

Chelwood Drive, Allerton, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD15 7YD

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff have a spring in their step at this school. They enjoy being part of a school community that cares for each other. As one pupil told an inspector, 'This school is a happy place.' The school community is motivated by the school slogan, 'Aspire, Achieve, Believe'.

Reading is a thread running through the whole school. Pupils love to read, and speak with enthusiasm about the books they have read. They can describe the characters and storylines with a strong grasp of vocabulary.

The school is calm. Pupils say bullying is rare but if it does happen they know it will be dealt with quickly. Pupils feel supported by their teachers. Opportunities to talk about their feelings in circle time are frequent. Kindness is seen as a strength at this school.

The curriculum is planned and sequenced from early years through to Year 6. Leaders have taken care to ensure pupils develop knowledge over time. The journey through subjects is supported by a wide selection of fiction and non-fiction books.

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

Leaders and staff are proud of the school. They are focused on creating an exciting and stimulating education for all. Leaders realise the importance of providing clear direction. They identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school through honest self-reflection. Leaders provide staff with professional development opportunities to meet individual and whole-school needs.

Subject leaders are passionate and enthusiastic. They have created plans with staff that identify the knowledge they want pupils to remember, and built in opportunities to revisit and recall previous knowledge. 'Flashback Friday' is a whole-school initiative providing a weekly focus on remembering learning that has previously been taught. Pupils are keen to show what they remember. Teachers use assessment to help pupils in the moment. In English, assessment is used to inform planning and help teachers refine activity choices to ensure knowledge is acquired securely.

In geography and science, the curriculum is brought to life in the local community, using the nature reserve and brook which runs close to the school. Staff are knowledgeable and understand the needs of the pupils in their class. This is reflected in the reading spine, where the books chosen are relevant to the pupils of the community and selected to represent the diversity of modern Britain. Physical education is a real strength of the school. Leaders have planned a curriculum that gives pupils an excellent experience of sport and physical activity. The planned curriculum is also complemented by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

Reading is a high priority in this school. Leaders are focused on ensuring all children read with confidence. The reading curriculum is carefully considered to engage and

challenge pupils at all stages. Books are matched to support pupils at the early stages of reading. Pupils feel empowered through reading and enjoy reading to adults on a regular basis.

The special educational needs coordinator knows the school and community well. Meeting the needs of pupils is the key driver in the work undertaken. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have high aspirations, which are supported by staff who have high ambitions for all pupils.

In the early years, leaders have created an environment for pupils which is exciting and stimulating. The focus on communication and interacting with each other is valued by all staff.

Pupils learn about many different aspects of life in modern Britain. They experience different beliefs and are accepting of different views. The opportunities pupils have to go on trips, visits and work with the local community are wide-ranging. Pupils discuss and debate frequently in class, showing respect for each other's opinions. Extra-curricular opportunities, ranging from the academy brass band to the bike and scooter club, are open to everyone. Pupils enjoy the offer and feel there is something for each of them to do at this school.

Behaviour across the school meets the high standards leaders have. Pupils are polite and respectful. The school has a positive approach to behaviour. Pupils settle quickly at school and engage in their learning from the start of to the end of the day. When pupils need support to correct their behaviour, this is done in a calm and supportive manner to which pupils respond positively. Leaders are working with families to promote the highest levels of attendance. A small number of pupils are persistently absent from school, creating gaps in learning that staff work hard to address.

Parents who completed the online survey, and those who met with inspectors, were overwhelmingly positive and feel that the school and the staff are supportive, caring and have the best interests of their children at heart.

Governors are extremely knowledgeable and know the school well. They have a vision for the school which has been developed over time with the headteacher and the trust. They all work together, offering support, challenge and guidance. When changes and developments are made, they are supported with professional development and discussions with staff. The staff at this school are exceptionally positive about the school and its leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school safeguarding team approaches its role with diligence and expertise. Training is delivered to all staff, and regular updates ensure staff have the knowledge to keep pupils safe.

Leaders are quick to act, and support pupils who need support. They are persistent in their work with external agencies and are determined to meet the needs of pupils in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In English and mathematics, assessment is used to inform next steps, planning and activity choices. This is not consistent in some other subjects. Leaders need to work with teachers to ensure that the same high consistency of assessment is applied across all areas of the curriculum to inform ongoing planning.
- Leaders have developed clear systems to engage with families and encourage pupils to attend the school regularly. There has been some marked success in this area; however, a small number of pupils are persistently absent from school. Leaders are tenacious in following up on persistent absences and in working with the families concerned. Leaders should continue to work with families to reduce persistent absences and ensure pupils do not miss important aspects of 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.

If you are the school and 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

Unique reference number	143847
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10233268
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	305
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Liz Lawley
Headteacher	Chris Tolson
Website	www.academystjames.com
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of 17 schools in the Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive, the headteacher, trustees, governors, senior leaders, the early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and administrative staff.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, geography, science and physical education. They met with subject leaders, carried out lesson visits, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.

- An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. The single central record was also scrutinised. Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding records.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff, as gathered through discussions and Ofsted's surveys, were considered.

Inspection team

Richard Jones, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gill Holland

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