

Inspection of a good school: Sir James Smith's School

Dark Lane, Camelford, Cornwall PL32 9UJ

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 2022

Outcome

Sir James Smith's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Sir James Smith's. They enjoy coming to school and say that it is inclusive and safe. They form strong relationships with staff. Leaders have high expectations, and model the school values of ambition, aspiration and achievement. One parent's comment, that captures the opinion of many, was, 'My children have been given every opportunity to become well-rounded individuals.'

The school is a calm and friendly environment. Pupils move between lessons purposefully. They are polite and well-mannered to each other and towards all staff. They show positive attitudes to their learning. Staff do not tolerate low-level disruption. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They have confidence in staff to address any incidents that do occur.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities beyond the curriculum. For example, there are a growing number of pupils participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Another example is a recent scuba-diving trip which enabled some pupils to achieve open water diving qualifications. Daily, there are many extra-curricular clubs, such as reading, fishing and plastic brick-building challenges. Pupils enjoy these activities and describe them as highlights of their time at school.

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

Leaders ensure there is a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In most subjects, knowledge is central to curriculum planning, and leaders have carefully considered the order units are taught in. However, in some subject areas, the planned knowledge that pupils need to learn is not detailed enough. There is an understanding of the importance of revisiting learning to make sure it is in pupils' long-term memory. Teachers use a range of approaches to check what pupils know and remember. Where this is most successful, any misconceptions that pupils have are quickly addressed.

Pupils with SEND are well supported across the curriculum. They receive mentoring, which allows them to talk openly about their learning. This helps leaders to make changes to further improve their classroom experience. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are quickly identified. They complete a programme of support tailored to their specific needs. This allows them to become confident and fluent readers. As part of the curriculum, pupils in all years are given time to read for pleasure.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to support pupils to manage their behaviour in lessons. Staff understand the system and pupils say it is used consistently. As a result, low-level disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils are keen to succeed, and they make positive contributions to class discussions and group tasks.

Pupils benefit from a rich programme to support their wider development. The curriculum, including the assembly programme, covers essential areas such as relationships, mental and physical health and online safety. Leaders adapt the content to reflect any emerging needs from pupils or in response to local or national events. Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance. They learn about diversity and explore different religions.

Leaders have established strong links with primary schools. This ensures that pupils experience a smooth transition to Sir James Smith's. Pupils' next steps and future careers are also an important part of pupils' experience at the school. Subjects across the curriculum signpost where learning in that area could take them in the future. Pupils attend careers fairs, visit local colleges and complete work experience. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Leaders work in partnership with other schools, both locally and further afield. This supports effective continued professional development for all staff and a sharing of expertise. Most staff feel well supported by senior leaders. They say that workload and well-being are considered when changes are made, or new initiatives are introduced. The school forms strong partnerships with parents. However, some parents feel that communication between school and home could be more frequent and personal.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance around safeguarding at the school. All staff and governors receive appropriate training. Staff value the way that this is adapted to reflect the context of the school. Record-keeping is extremely detailed and the school has effective links with external agencies. This ensures that pupils receive the help and support they need.

Pupils are confident in how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They say they have a trusted adult they can speak to with any concerns. They are taught about sexual

violence and sexual harassment. They say that the use of any sexualised language around school is rare.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subject areas, the core knowledge that pupils need to learn is not broken down into sufficient detail. This leads to some inconsistency in the content being taught to pupils across different classes. Leaders should ensure that all subjects have planned in detail what pupils need to know and remember as part of the shared curriculum.
- A minority of parents say they do not receive sufficient or detailed enough information about their child's experience and progress in school. This can sometimes lead to a breakdown in the partnership between school and home. Leaders should ensure that communication with parents is clear, timely and informative.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2016.

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](#)' 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	146408
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10247056
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	602
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lyn Davis
Headteacher	Kristien Carrington
Website	www.sirjamesmiths.cornwall.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust and a group of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to consider how well the school identifies pupils who are at risk and engages with external services. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Hutchinson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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