

Inspection of St James CofE Primary School, Farnworth

Hillside Avenue, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire BL4 9QB

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Belfield. This school is part of the Archbishop Temple Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jill Pilling, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Walsh.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of this welcoming school. Children in the early years settle in quickly and get off to a flying start. All pupils, including children in the early years, strive to live up to the school value of respect. Pupils appreciate the importance of treating others in a way that they would like to be treated themselves. This helps pupils to feel happy at school.

A significant number of pupils join the school part way through their primary education. Some pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The school holds high ambition for its pupils to achieve well. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils make the most of the opportunities that the school provides for them. They behave well in lessons, work hard and achieve well.

Pupils learn about the positive difference that they can make for others in their local community. Charitable activities, such as providing donations to a local food bank, helps pupils to develop their understanding of empathy. Pupils benefit from opportunities to take on responsibilities in school. These include being part of the eco committee, becoming a junior leader, or joining one of the pupil groups linked to the religious character of the school.

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

The published performance data in 2024 shows that by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading was significantly below the national average. Some of these pupils missed considerable amounts of time in school as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, a number of pupils joined the school midway through key stage 2 and were new to learning English as an additional language. Pupils who attend the school for the majority of their primary education are well prepared for secondary school by the end of Year 6.

The school has considered the important knowledge that pupils should learn across the curriculum, beginning in the two-year-old provision. Typically, teachers use this information well to design learning activities that deepen pupils' knowledge. This is done with a high level of precision in the early years, where children are given the best possible start to their education. Nevertheless, some of the learning activities that a few teachers design do not support pupils to successfully build on what they already know. As a result, some pupils do not deepen their knowledge as well as they could.

Across many subjects, teachers use effective checks to identify and address any gaps in knowledge that pupils have. That said, in a small number of subjects, some pupils have gaps in their understanding. These gaps are the result of weaknesses in the previous curriculum. Although the school has improved the curriculum, these gaps in knowledge remain unaddressed. At times, this hinders pupils' ability to make sense of new learning.

The school has put effective systems in place to accurately identify and meet the additional needs of pupils. In the early years, many staff are experts in educating young children, including two-year-olds. This knowledge helps them to identify and effectively support the additional needs of children with SEND at an early stage. Across the school, well-chosen resources ensure that pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their classmates.

The school prioritises the teaching of phonics. The phonics programme is delivered consistently by well-trained staff. Staff ably support those pupils who need extra help in learning phonics. New arrivals to the school, including those pupils who speak English as an additional language, learn phonics quickly and successfully. Many of the pupils who join the school in the early years become fluent readers by the end of Year 2.

Children in the early years are exceptionally well behaved. They follow established routines and learn cooperatively alongside one another. Behaviour across the school is generally positive and learning is rarely interrupted. Pupils who need extra support in managing their emotions are well supported by nurturing staff. Previously, too many pupils have been absent from school. The school has put in place a range of effective strategies that are reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

The school has carefully selected opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development. They experience activities in school that bring fundamental British values to life. For example, junior leader candidates participate in hustings before voting begins. Such opportunities help pupils to become well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Trustees and school governors are effective in monitoring how well the school operates at all levels. They have a strong focus on the quality of education. Parents value the support that the school offers to help them reinforce learning at home. Staff appreciate the school's actions to keep paperwork to a minimum. This ensures that staff use most of their time helping pupils learn.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In one or two subjects, some of the learning activities that a small number of teachers provide for pupils do not effectively build on what they already know. As a result, some pupils do not deepen their understanding as well as they could. The school should ensure that teachers have the knowledge that they need to design learning activities that help pupils connect learning and build up a deep body of knowledge.
- In a small number of subjects, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge as a result of weaknesses in the previous curriculum. Some of these gaps have not been identified or

addressed. Consequently, this hinders the ability of some pupils to make sense of new learning. The school should ensure that teachers are equipped to swiftly remedy these gaps in pupils' knowledge. This is so that pupils can build and further strengthen their knowledge in these subjects.

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	142944
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10348336
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	335
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Walsh
CEO of the trust	Jill Pilling
Headteacher	Lisa Belfield
Website	www.st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Manchester. The previous section 48 inspection took place in March 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of July 2025.
- The school is part of the Archbishop Temple Multi Academy Trust.
- The local governing body operates a breakfast club.
- The school provides educational provision for two-year-old children.
- The number of pupils attending the school who have an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, computing and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also looked at the curriculum and pupils' work in some other subjects. The lead inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the local governing body, including the chair. He also spoke with the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer, a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They also considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Robinson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Metcalfe	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Finlay	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Peters	Ofsted Inspector

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