

East Crompton St James CofE Primary School

St James Street, Shaw, Oldham, Lancashire OL2 7TD

Inspection dates	26–27 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the last inspection, the senior leaders, under the decisive leadership of the executive headteacher, have succeeded in making significant improvements to the school. The staff in the two schools within the Dove-Shell Federation work well together, including by sharing ideas and resources.
- The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are planned very carefully to make sure that pupils of all abilities are given work that matches their ages and abilities and challenges them to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Governors bring a range of skills and expertise to the school. They are increasingly effective in driving improvement.
- The pupils are kept safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The pupils behave well, show pride in their work, their appearance and their surroundings. They get on well with each other and with staff and other adults. They can express their own opinions clearly while at the same time respecting those of others.
- Results have improved and are set to improve further because of the changes that have been made to the curriculum. This is broad and balanced and is enriched by a wide range of extra activities which help pupils to develop spiritually, morally, social and culturally.
- The leadership of early years is strong and pupils make good progress in a safe and stimulating environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not leading to consistently outstanding achievement, particularly in mathematics for boys in Years 3 and 4.
- The new tracking systems are not being used to their full effect to allow for rapid collation and analysis of information on pupils' progress.
- The school's self-evaluation is too generous and school improvement plans do not consistently include targets and milestones to determine whether enough progress is being made over particular periods of time.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the quality of teaching so that it is consistently outstanding, by sharing the best practice within the school and federation. Focus particularly on improving the performance of boys in mathematics in Years 3 and 4.
- Improve teachers' understanding of and skills in using the tracking systems, so that the information on particular groups of pupils can be rapidly retrieved and the progress of individual pupils can be assessed against specific milestones.
- Improve leadership and management further by:
 - ensuring that the school's performance is assessed against national figures
 - arranging further training for governors in analysing data and other information, so that they can provide consistently rigorous challenge to the school on its outcomes
 - ensuring that improvement plans include milestones to measure the speed of progress towards meeting the specified targets.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Under the decisive leadership of the executive headteacher, supported by the head of school, East Compton St James has continued to build on the strengths that were praised in the last inspection. Weaknesses that were identified at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. As a result, it is now good.
- The federation arrangement into which the school has entered since the last inspection is working effectively, with expertise and resources being shared and staff working together on planning, training, curriculum development, monitoring and moderation. Care has been taken to ensure that this is not a one-way process and each school has benefited from the good practice in the other.
- To bring about the required improvements, the executive headteacher has not shied away from making some very difficult decisions, including changes to staffing, structures and procedures. He has been supported in this by the governing body and, prior to that, by the interim executive board that was in operation until last year.
- For a variety of reasons, the school does not currently have a permanent member of staff in every class, although it will do so in September. Temporary staff have received good support from teachers within the school and across the federation. This has ensured that overall the teaching has remained good, as the school's records show.
- The new policies which have been introduced have led to clear improvements in teaching, behaviour, attendance and outcomes. The quality of education received by pupils has improved considerably.
- The curriculum has been thoroughly revised in line with the new national curriculum and the move to assessment without levels. As a result, it is broad and balanced and enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are well attended and valued by the pupils. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is a strength of the school.
- Leaders have made a considerable investment in new technologies to support developments within the curriculum and in other aspects of the school's life. For example, through the virtual learning environment, teachers are able to set homework, including new spellings, for the pupils. The new system for tracking pupils' progress is a valuable asset but is not yet being used to its full effect, for example to provide rapid access to information on the attainment and progress of specific groups of pupils.
- The school has clear and appropriate processes for safeguarding its pupils and checking on the suitability of adults to work with children. All staff have recently received additional training on safeguarding, including how to protect pupils from extremism and radicalism. Recent training has also focused on increasing understanding of gender identity and combating homophobia and transphobia. The school's policies are being revised to give greater focus to these aspects. The equal opportunities policy has already been updated to include a very useful and clear section on how to identify particular types of discrimination. The new electronic system is being used effectively to alert staff immediately about any concerns relating to children, so that swift action can be taken. As a result of the e-safety training that they have received, the pupils are very well aware of what is expected of them. All staff and pupils have to sign an internet usage agreement. Built-in checks on the virtual learning environment ensure that any abuse of the system can be quickly identified, tracked to its source and tackled in a timely way. The school employs a counsellor and a pastoral leader to work with potentially vulnerable families and pupils. They, and other staff, also liaise closely with external agencies where this is necessary.
- The systems for managing teachers' performance are clear and used to reward effective teaching, as well as to identify and tackle areas for improvement. Staff receive support and encouragement to extend their expertise and to gain further qualifications that will be of use to them in developing their careers, as well as in enhancing the provision within the school. The interchange of staff and expertise between the two schools has also been effective in developing the skills and expertise of middle leaders.
- The school makes good use of the primary sports funding. A sports coach, who is employed across the federation, has succeeded in extending the range of sporting opportunities to include football, athletics, fitness training, basketball, cross-country and orienteering. The comments made by pupils and observation of those involved in circuit training showed how enthusiastic they are about this provision.
- Most of the parents who spoke to the inspectors were positive about the school, particularly the teachers. A few parents who completed the online questionnaire felt that the school did not respond well to their concerns and would not recommend it to others.

- Leaders and governors are rightly proud of the considerable improvements that have been made in the school in recent years. These are clearly identified in the self-evaluation document. However, the overall judgement arrived at is too generous. In part, this results from the way that the school compares its performance with schools in the local authority rather than across the country. The development plan gives a clear indication of where the school intends to go next but does not include clear milestones to assess progress on the way to achieving the stated goals.
- The school has received good support from the local authority and the diocese. As improvements have gathered pace and the school has become self-sufficient, this support has been scaled down appropriately.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is shared with the other school in the Dove-Shell Federation. Its members offer a wide range of expertise to the school. They are very committed and are taking an increasingly active role in its everyday life.
 - They have clear systems for managing the performance of the executive headteacher and have provided him with good support in tackling the areas for improvement identified in the last report.
 - The governors are rigorous in ensuring that the decisions on finance are strategic and that resources are deployed efficiently. They have not been as rigorous in challenging the overall conclusions of the school's self-evaluation.
 - The additional pupil premium funding is used appropriately and is having a clear impact on improving provision for the relevant pupils. However, the plans do not state what the intended outcomes are. Therefore, it is not possible to determine to what extent the school has achieved its intentions in this area of its work.
 - When omissions on the website were pointed out to them, the governors acted quickly to begin to rectify the situation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The school's own records indicate that teaching is good and, in some cases, outstanding. This was borne out by the inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work, which indicated good progress across classes and subjects.
- The planning of lessons is of a high quality. The teachers have worked together to produce a very clear policy for teaching, learning and marking which is applied consistently across the school. As a result, they are meeting the needs of pupils of varying abilities well and ensuring full coverage of the national curriculum.
- Examination of books and observation of lessons show that pupils of higher ability are being challenged to make good progress. For example, in a lesson on 'time', the most able were given word problems to solve and then had to devise their own problems in order to extend their ability to calculate the length of time between two or more events. Key stage 2 pupils' books showed that those of higher ability were expected not only to use extensive vocabulary and accurate grammar and spelling but also to convey a vivid sense of mood and atmosphere.
- Most pupils approach their lessons with enthusiasm and work diligently on their own and in groups. Occasionally, however, some pupils lose concentration when, for example, an explanation is unclear or too long. They do not disturb their fellow pupils but they are not learning as much as they might.
- The quality of questioning is variable. There are examples of good use of questioning that enables pupils to clarify their own thinking and to identify and correct errors for themselves. However, this is not consistent.
- Teachers assess pupils regularly and track their progress, using the recently introduced electronic system. While final targets are clearly identifiable, the lack of interim 'milestones' makes it difficult to determine whether individual pupils have made as much progress as they should over a particular period of time.
- Across the school, pupils take great pride in their work and the standard of presentation is generally high. Occasionally, in mathematics books, pupils' decision not to use a ruler when drawing a diagram detracts from the accuracy of the work and the quality of presentation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All the pupils who responded to the online questionnaire say that they feel safe at school and almost all say that they enjoy coming to school. All the staff and almost all the parents who responded to the online surveys are also confident about children's safety. The pupils who spoke to the lead inspector said that they felt safe when travelling to and from school. They had a good understanding of road safety, including when cycling. They also knew how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media. They were enthusiastic about the e-safety day that they had attended and were very supportive of the home-school contract that they, their parents and their teachers have to sign to ensure safety in this aspect of their lives.
- Involvement in the anti-bullying events ensures that pupils understand what constitutes various types of bullying. A small number of those who spoke to the inspector had experienced name calling and bullying over their appearance but these incidents were rare and had been resolved. This again reflected the responses to the online questionnaire. The pupils knew whom to contact if they had any worries or concerns and were confident that they would receive the help and support they needed.
- The illegal parking of cars within the restricted parking areas outside the school poses a risk to pupils at the beginning and end of the school day. The school is tackling this but some parents are still not cooperating.
- A strength of the school is the provision that it makes for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have opportunities to develop spiritually and morally, not only through the regular assemblies run by local clergy but also through the weekly philosophy for children sessions, where they examine a number of world issues. Just before the inspection, for example, they had been considering the causes and implications of the recent terrorist attacks in Brussels. Pupils have many opportunities to develop socially and to contribute to the leadership of the school. Younger pupils take registers to the school office and participate in the school council. Older pupils have further specific roles as class prefects, hall and computer monitors, and playground buddies. At the time of the inspection, the school council was organising a number of events to raise money to support various local charities. The prominent display in the school hall showed how the parents' association is fast meeting its first target to buy additional computing equipment for the school. Pupils take the school's '12 values' seriously and are clearly endeavouring to live by them. They are supportive and tolerant of each other.
- The pupils study a wide range of cultures. During the inspection, one key stage 2 class was involved in a project on Brazil. A class in key stage 1 had recently been involved in producing African masks. The art work and models on display around the school are of a high standard and are treated with pride, respect and care by the pupils. The school makes strong music provision. In addition to class music, there is a choir of 60 pupils who sing in unison, and two or three parts, as well as a large orchestra that recently received high praise at a non-competitive festival. Of the pupils in key stage 2, 40% receive instrumental lessons from visiting teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The pupils are friendly, polite and confident and relate well to each other, to staff and visitors to the school. In discussions, they present their ideas clearly and are also respectful of views which might differ from their own. They take pride in their school and respect the environment, which is kept in a good state of repair and cleanliness by the site manager and cleaning staff.
- The school has established clear principles and expectations for behaviour, based on 'five golden promises' and a rewards system. These are clearly understood by the pupils and implemented consistently by staff. Most of the pupils who spoke to the lead inspector were in favour of the system and were proud of their 'always' badges and their 'stars' for effort.
- Considerable focus has been placed on ensuring that all staff, including midday supervisors, have a consistent approach to managing behaviour. This is proving successful. Behaviour in the playground is good, with older pupils supporting and showing care for younger ones.
- Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons and organise themselves well. Attendance has improved and is in line with the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has risen. Almost all the pupils who spoke to the lead inspector said that they experienced some interruption in lessons. This accords with responses to the online pupil questionnaire. In lessons, a small number of pupils lost concentration when explanations were too long or when the work was not sufficiently challenging.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' command of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is good. Results in the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1 have fluctuated since the school was last inspected. In 2013, they were above the national average but fell below that average in 2014. In 2015, they rose to well above average, with boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language all outperforming their counterparts nationally. The school's own data indicates that most of the pupils currently in Year 1 will achieve the required standard this summer. The lessons seen indicate that this prediction is well founded. Therefore, the improvements in this area are set to continue.
- In 2015, results in the national tests for seven-year-olds were broadly in line with the national average in reading and above average in writing. In mathematics, they were below average. This represented a fall from the previous four years, where results were significantly above the national average. The school's analysis shows that this was the result of the composition of the cohort, which had a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability than in previous years. Because of the additional focus that the school is placing on mathematics and the revisions that it has made to its scheme of work, the indications are that this summer's results for seven-year-olds will return to their previous level. However, in Years 3 and 4, mathematics continues to be a weakness for boys.
- Results in the national tests for 11-year-olds have been strong, with all pupils exceeding the average in all subjects last year. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are performing well, with the great majority on track to reach the standards expected of their age at the end of this school year. This was borne out in the work seen in pupils' books and in lessons. At both key stages, they are developing a good command of the elements of grammar. They can apply technical terminology accurately and confidently. For example, pupils in Year 2 are able to identify that a verb is in the 'past progressive tense', while those in a Year 6 lesson explained the difference between prepositions and coordinating conjunctions and applied their knowledge of grammar to revising and improving a piece of writing that they were discussing. Examination of books showed that pupils have a rapidly growing vocabulary, as well as an increasing command of different styles of writing and the ability to apply their skills in appropriate contexts. For example, they were able to write letters, supposedly from a Victorian child, using vocabulary and expressions that were totally in keeping with the period.
- Pupils read with increasing confidence. By the time they reach Year 6, they are able to capture the interest of an audience by reading out their work with clarity, making effective use of well-timed pauses and dramatic changes of volume. The extra help that has been provided for particular pupils across the school is proving effective. They are developing a growing confidence in reading and talk with enthusiasm about the books that they like reading in school and at home.
- The mathematics work examined showed growing confidence in pupils' understanding and application of concepts and methods in a variety of contexts.
- The work seen in books showed that the most-able pupils are making good progress over time. This is as a result of the focus in planning on ensuring that all pupils are given work that challenges them. Vulnerable pupils are progressing in line with other pupils.
- In 2015, 11-year-old pupils who have special educational needs had made better than average progress and, like the other pupils in their year group, they all reached the expected standard in all three subjects. The results for seven-year-olds who have special educational needs were below those of other pupils of their age in the school. The school's records show that the additional support being provided for specific pupils is leading to a narrowing of this gap.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years leaders have a firm command of their subject and a clear vision of how they wish to develop provision within the school. This is set out in a well-constructed action plan which is based on a careful analysis of children's past and present performance.
- Relationships within the setting are very good and staff work in close partnership with parents, who are very appreciative of what is being done for their children. Many parents come into school to listen to children read, to help with the weekly forest school or with trips and to attend the 'Wow!' events that are held to enthuse children at the beginning of a new topic. One such event, that had taken place just before the inspection, was 'Cinderella's Ball'. Judging by the displays in the setting, this had proved very successful and had led to very productive work on the theme of the fairy story.

- The environment in and outside the setting is attractive and stimulating for the children.
- Parents are kept regularly informed about their children's progress and are very supportive of the school's approach to homework, which prepares them and their children for each new half-termly topic.
- Safeguarding arrangements are sound. The early years leader has attended the relevant training and the online system is used to report any safeguarding concerns quickly, so that appropriate partnerships can be set up with the parents and relevant agencies to tackle any problems in a timely way. The children behave well in school and are aware of how to avoid risk. During the inspection, children were seen applying what they had been taught about safety when picking up and carrying scissors and when deciding whether it was safe to stand on a log seat. A major contributor to children's awareness of safety is made by the forest school which takes place one half-day a week. There, before embarking on an activity, the children draw up their own rules on how to keep themselves safe.
- The proportion of children who reached a good level of development by the end of their time in the Reception class has been above the national average for the last two years. It improved from 2014 to 2015 but at a slower rate than across the country. Last year, boys were below the national averages in physical development, personal, social and emotional development, understanding the world and expressive arts and design. Girls were below average in physical development and one aspect of expressive arts and design. In response to this, several changes have been made, such as extending the outdoor area, providing additional equipment and putting additional emphasis on the areas where children have been underperforming. The impact of these improvements is being monitored using the new online tracking system, to which parents have access and which keeps them informed. At present, the data on the early years is not analysed in such a way as to ensure that the progress of individual pupils is tracked in detail.

School details

Unique reference number	105710
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10012103

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathryn Jackson
Headteacher	Adam Laskey
Telephone number	01706 847630
Website	www.stjames-primary.co.uk/
Email address	info@st-james.oldham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the government's pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is slightly below average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage with English as a first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- Very few pupils enter or leave the school at other than the usual times.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, the school has entered into a formal federation with St Thomas' Moorside and the two schools now have a shared executive head and governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes. This included a joint observation with the executive headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work. They listened to pupils reading and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- The inspectors talked to parents as they brought their children to school and examined their responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents (Parent View).
- They examined the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and spoke to the staff.
- The lead inspector met seven governors, including the chair and vice-chair, and spoke to representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with eight pupils chosen at random from Years 3 to 6.
- The inspectors also spoke to pupils in class and around the school.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and policies.
- They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Aelwyn Pugh, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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