

Sir James Smith's Community School

Dark Lane, Camelford, Cornwall PL32 9UJ

Inspection dates	19–20 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The work of the headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body has been effective in raising the achievement of pupils throughout the school.
- Senior leaders have promoted a culture of collaborative improvement that continues to have a positive impact on teaching, behaviour and pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective in their contribution to school improvement.
- Teaching is well planned and improving. Teachers are keen to learn from one another and to try new approaches to help pupils succeed.
- The results that pupils achieved in GCSE examinations in 2015 show that, overall, their progress exceeded that of their peers nationally. Evidence shows that all groups of pupils are on track to sustain this trend of improvement.
- The school cares well for its pupils; staff know the academic and pastoral needs of each child very well. Pupils' safety is central to the school's ethos.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour; pupils behave well both in social time and in lessons.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers are equally skilled in checking that pupils are keeping up during lessons or over time; some act more quickly than others to close any gaps in learning.
- Good practice in improving teaching has not yet had an equally strong impact in all areas, so differences in achievement between subjects remain.
- The overall attendance figure remains too low, and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national figure for this group.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use information accurately to identify underachieving pupils and then support them effectively in lessons
 - ensuring all teachers routinely check pupils' gains in knowledge, skills or understanding and act quickly to close any gaps in learning.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - identifying precise strategies to bring about equally strong improvement in all subjects
 - checking that the school's system for assessing pupils' learning is consistently applied in all subjects and has a positive impact on raising pupils' achievement
 - continuing to take all possible steps to ensure that all groups of pupils meet the appropriately high attendance targets that have been set.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The drive and ambition of the headteacher and senior leadership team continue to improve the quality of education provided by Sir James Smith's School. Leaders promote a culture of collaborative and continuous development for all staff. They consistently model the high-quality leadership they expect from others. Senior leaders demonstrate a detailed and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Middle leadership has improved steadily. Middle leaders raise pupils' aspirations by setting appropriately challenging targets in their subjects and they are ambitious for all pupils to succeed. They also work effectively to strengthen the link between teachers and parents, such as by giving presentations to parents about the characteristics of successful learning.
- Despite the growing strengths in middle leadership, a small number of subject departments have been unable to develop the same culture of continuous improvement as found in the rest of the school.
- Nonetheless, training to improve teaching is increasingly effective. For example, teachers enthusiastically share and discuss best practice in the professional learning group meetings which the deputy headteacher has established as part of the school's routine.
- All staff are set suitably challenging targets linked to the teachers' standards and pupils' progress as part of the performance management system. This is also used appropriately to inform pay progression.
- The school's collaborative culture helps to create a positive and caring atmosphere with a strong sense of community for teachers and pupils alike. Comments made on Ofsted's Parent View survey indicate that parents value the work done by the school to raise pupils' aspiration and achievement. Parents say they find the school staff approachable and efficient, consider the school to be safe and supportive for pupils, and would recommend it to other parents.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils value the range of clubs and activities on offer. Subject teachers organise frequent trips and visits to enrich pupils' cultural experience and to build their aspirations. For example, in English, pupils described their visit to a local stately home as 'bringing learning to life' for them. A parent praised the additional encouragement provided by their child's experience of mathematics masterclasses at Plymouth University. Pupils were extremely proud of their school for winning the 2015 International Final of the World Greenpower Kit Car Championship in their first season.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and the school actively promotes British values. For example, recent whole-school assemblies focused on the themes of 'democracy – getting your voice heard' and 'tolerance and respect', which included discussion of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Assemblies are used well to raise pupils' aspirations.
- The arrangements for safeguarding in the school are effective, well organised and carefully monitored. Training for all staff is up to date and records indicate that all staff have read the relevant statutory documents. Both staff and pupils are aware of whom they should go to with safeguarding concerns, with pupils expressing complete confidence that the school will deal with any issues they have. There are effective links to external agencies.
- Additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils and those that need to catch up is used effectively by the school, with pupils in these groups monitored carefully. Extra support is then provided as necessary, so these pupils are helped to make good progress while at Sir James Smith's. However, more needs to be done to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors hold school leaders to account effectively. They have developed an in-depth understanding of the school's assessment information and are well informed about pupils' progress, both for different pupil groups and in different subjects.
 - Governors have a sound understanding of the current position of the school and, based on this, have worked well with the headteacher and senior team to set a clear strategic direction. Governors are ambitious for the future of Sir James Smith's School.
 - The governing body has also been proactive in commissioning appropriate training, to which they have also invited governors from the school's partner primary schools. Recent training has ensured that governors know about the government's 'Prevent' duty and other issues linked to effective safeguarding. The governors' awareness, regular focus and careful monitoring of safeguarding in the school are a strength of their work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- All teaching staff are involved in high-quality collaborative work to share and develop the best aspects of their teaching practice with each other. This has continued to be a valuable part of the school's routine.
- Teachers have increasingly high expectations of pupils' achievement. Their planning is underpinned by good subject knowledge. They actively and enthusiastically develop their practice and are keen to share the best and most innovative practice in the school.
- Teachers ensure that planned work challenges pupils across the range of attainment, including the most able, and builds their resilience. In mathematics, for example, work is designed so that the most-able pupils are expected to reach solutions by problem solving and explaining their reasoning to each other. Pupils said that this approach deepened their understanding of the work being covered.
- The good progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or disability is the outcome of effective teaching which takes account of their different starting points and learning needs. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils.
- Assessment practice, in line with the school's policy, provides pupils with useful and specific feedback that they use effectively to improve their work. In English, for example, pupils made good use of teachers' feedback to write more in-depth descriptions of the characters in 'Othello', or to develop precision in applying grammatical rules. However, the policy is not consistently applied across the school so that some work goes unchecked, with some misconceptions uncorrected.
- Some teachers are less adept than others at checking that all pupils have grasped the essential knowledge, understanding or skills being taught, so misunderstandings or developing gaps in knowledge occasionally limit pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The personal development and welfare of pupils is good.
- Pupils feel well supported by their school and describe the sense of community it provides for them. They understand the work done to keep them safe and all pupils know whom they can report to with any problems that arise. Pupils state that they are confident that any issues will be dealt with effectively by staff.
- Pupils appreciate that they are well known to their teachers. They like the personal approach taken in the school and the willingness of teachers to work with individual pupils.
- Pupils say that they like the 'HERBs' system which rates them on their homework, effort, readiness for work, and behaviour. Year 11 pupils are motivated by the extra incentive of access to a common room for good 'HERBs' scores. Throughout the school the focus 'HERBs' places on having good attitudes to learning is supporting pupils' good progress.
- High-quality advice and guidance is provided for pupils to help them into the next stage of their education. Pupils are positive about the range of options they have available for their GCSEs, about their work experience in Year 10, and about the use of assemblies to inform them about the education options available to them when they leave Sir James Smith's.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils are confident that the school will deal with any incidents effectively, and know whom to see about any concerns they have. Pupils understand how to stay safe online, including awareness of cyber bullying.
- The progress, behaviour and welfare of the small number of pupils currently placed in off-site provision is carefully monitored by the school. Active links between the provider and the families of these pupils are in place to support their development, both in terms of behaviour and academic progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the school calmly and sensibly. They are positive about their school and take pride in the school environment and the facilities provided for them. They interact well with each other during social time.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and implement the school's policy for positive management of behaviour consistently, with the result that good behaviour is the norm.

- The school works hard to improve attendance. Clear systems are in place to monitor any absence, and the attendance team works intensively with some individuals and families. Despite this, attendance remains lower than the school's appropriately ambitious targets, especially for disadvantaged pupils. The school is aware that a continued focus on improving attendance is required.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Since the previous inspection, pupils have made increasingly rapid progress across a range of subjects.
- From low starting points, pupils in Year 11 in 2015 made good progress. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, equalled the national average. Although girls' attainment was well above that of boys, boys made the same rates of progress as girls from a much lower prior attainment on entry to the school.
- In 2015, a higher proportion of pupils made the expected progress in English than nationally and the proportion exceeding expectations was similar to the national figure. In mathematics, although the same proportion made the expected progress as nationally, a lower proportion exceeded this. Accordingly, the school has put measures in place to ensure all pupils, but particularly the most able, are suitably stretched in mathematics.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils made the same good progress as their peers, as a result of the careful monitoring and support that the school has put in place for this group.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are well supported at Sir James Smith's. The needs of individual pupils are considered carefully so that appropriate plans are put in place. As a consequence, these pupils make good progress at school.
- The school has put in place extensive and in-depth work to ensure that assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is reliable, and the school is confident that information on current cohorts is an accurate indicator of future outcomes. The information indicates that progress is now strong across all year groups in the school
- The school uses reliable information effectively to carefully target intervention to help pupils with English and mathematics; the impact of this intervention is carefully monitored. This work has contributed to pupils' good achievement in English and mathematics.
- Funds to support year 7 pupils who need to catch up are appropriately used. The school carefully monitors the impact of this spending by assessing the progress made by these pupils during the year and the strategies put in place are effective.
- When asked to reflect on the progress they have made in their first year at the school, year 7 pupils agreed that they had 'made more progress this year than they thought possible'.
- A small number of pupils are educated at Acorn Academy Cornwall. The progress of these pupils is carefully monitored, with the school regularly reviewing their academic achievement information, ensuring that they make good progress. School leaders also carefully monitor their behaviour, attendance and the support they receive from Acorn Academy.

School details

Unique reference number	112039
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10017401

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	Cornwall Local Authority
Chair	Ruth Krolik
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Jon Lawrence
Telephone number	01840 213274
Website	www.sirjamesmiths.cornwall.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@sirjamesmiths.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–26 September 2014

Information about this school

- Sir James Smith's Community School is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and a small number speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is slightly above average. This is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well above average. An average proportion has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school met the current government floor standards in 2015.
- A small number of pupils are currently educated off-site at Acorn Academy Cornwall.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 22 lessons, most of which were observed jointly with senior leaders from the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors also met with four members of the governing body including the chair. A further meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed 26 responses from Parent View, and from pupil and staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, documents concerning safeguarding, monitoring records and minutes of governors' meetings.
- A work scrutiny was carried out to evaluate the quality of work in pupils' books.

Inspection team

Jerry Giles, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Harris	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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