

The Academy At St. James

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

Unique reference number (URN): 143847

Inspection report: 7 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	●
Urgent improvement	

✓ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Attendance is a priority at this school. Leaders are tenacious in their approach to ensuring pupils attend school regularly. They check attendance data carefully which enables them to identify barriers to attendance swiftly. Staff develop positive relationships with families to be able to offer timely attendance support. As a result of this, more pupils now attend school regularly. Persistent absence, including for vulnerable groups of pupils, has also reduced. This reflects the school's sustained and effective focus in this area. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reach higher than national rates of attendance. Leaders use strategies, such as a free breakfast club, to help pupils to start the day positively.

Pupils' behaviour reflects the school's high expectations. Routines are carefully embedded. As a result, classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils take pride in their work and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils appreciate the consistent approach that staff take to behaviour. During social times, pupils play happily, showing respect, courtesy and care towards each other and towards adults. Pupils say that bullying is rare and are confident that it is dealt with quickly and effectively when it arises. When pupils need extra help, skilled staff support them sensitively.

Expected standard ●

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. The curriculum has been designed and sequenced so that pupils build knowledge over time. Recent work in some subject areas is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. For example, the reorganisation of the reading curriculum has improved the teaching of important reading skills. The impact of this is evident in the work that pupils produce and the reading skills they develop.

Leaders place emphasis on securing the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of this are starting to be displayed in pupils' work in the early years and key stage 1. Leaders know that addressing gaps in older pupils' key skills continues to be a priority. As a result of these gaps, some older pupils do not build new knowledge as well as they could.

Typically, teaching across the curriculum is effective. Teachers adapt the curriculum effectively for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where needed, pupils learn from a personalised curriculum, based on their learning needs and starting points. This ensures that pupils with SEND progress well through the curriculum.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise the early years. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. The early years curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that all children, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can access it successfully.

Warm relationships help children settle quickly from the start. Children respond well to the high expectations that staff have of them and the familiar routines that are in place. This helps children grow in confidence and feel like they belong. Staff work closely with parents and carers. They think carefully about the arrangements that children will need to help them settle into the school.

Staff focus on developing children's communication and language skills. They use stories, songs and conversation to build children's vocabulary. This helps children become confident speakers. Staff use frequent checks to quickly identify if children have barriers to their learning. They receive appropriate training to support children effectively.

Children make secure progress through the curriculum from their starting points. When children leave the Reception Year, they are generally ready for Year 1. Staff put clear transition plans in place to support any children who require further support as they join Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' barriers to learning and/or wellbeing swiftly and accurately. Right from the early years, staff use this information to understand the best way of working with each pupil. They make adjustments to support pupils, such as visual timetables and choice boards. Staff value input from parents and carers and work with specialists from outside of the school when required. Pupils benefit from a carefully thought out approach. For example, pupils who require high levels of support access a very bespoke curriculum with personalised strategies. As a result, barriers to learning and wellbeing are reduced. This means that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the curriculum successfully and make progress from their starting points.

Leaders use funding for disadvantaged pupils well. They consider individual barriers to learning and put the right support in place to reduce them. This results in positive academic progress and full involvement in school life. Pupils known or previously known to social care also access appropriate support. Leaders work closely with the virtual school to ensure they are helping the most vulnerable pupils effectively. The school has an inclusive ethos. This helps pupils experiencing barriers to learning and/or wellbeing to feel that they belong.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders work closely with the trust. Trust staff know the school well. They understand the strengths of the school and what needs to improve. Leaders take appropriate steps to strengthen provision where necessary, including seeking external support and challenge.

They use information about pupils' learning and experiences to set clear priorities for improvement.

Leaders care deeply about their school and the community it serves. The school regularly seeks and responds to the views of its community. This includes pupils, parents and carers and staff. Leaders build positive relationships with families and the wider community. Parents feel welcomed and involved in school life. They enjoy visiting the school regularly to watch performances and attend family events. Leaders consider staff wellbeing. Staff feel supported and value the consideration given to their workload. They benefit from being able to work collaboratively with colleagues across the trust. Staff feel valued and appreciate opportunities to share their ideas. Leaders have supported staff to effectively implement new behaviour systems.

Those responsible for governance work closely with the school to bring about improvements. They fulfil their statutory duties, such as ensuring that leaders make appropriate checks on adults who work at the school. Those responsible for governance use a range of information to check the school's effectiveness and hold leaders to account.

Leaders have correctly identified achievement as an area that requires further development. Their actions are at an early stage and therefore the impact of them cannot be fully measured.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders provide an inclusive and carefully planned personal development programme that is designed to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences to build their knowledge and confidence. They speak enthusiastically about trips to local religious buildings and performing to audiences at events outside of school. Leaders offer opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills, take responsibility and contribute to school life. Pupils talk proudly about being elected as members of the school council and arranging charity fundraising events. As a result of this, older pupils build skills such as responsibility, independence and teamwork. Pupils learn about fundamental British values. They speak about democracy and the rule of law. Pupils develop an understanding of different cultures and beliefs through assemblies, class learning and wider experiences. They show respect for others and talk confidently about staying safe online and in the local community.

Pupils have access to a range of after-school clubs which allow them to develop new talents and interests. Pupils speak with excitement about a residential visit in Year 6 and outdoor learning opportunities. Leaders carefully check participation in the extra-curricular offer to make sure that everyone can access this. They identify barriers to participation well and ensure that these are removed. For example, leaders have introduced lunchtime clubs to improve participation rates.

The curriculums for personal, social and health education and relationships, sex and health education are thoughtfully mapped out. Pupils learn about consent, different types of relationships and age-appropriate health and sex education. They learn how to keep their minds and bodies healthy.

Staff provide pastoral support that responds to pupils' needs. Positive relationships help pupils feel safe and included. Staff offer additional support where needed so that pupils can manage challenges. This helps pupils develop resilience.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Published information shows that pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 is below national averages in reading and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment in mathematics is also typically below the national average for similar pupils. Over time, across the curriculum, gaps in some pupils' knowledge and skills remain evident, which reduces how well pupils achieve. As a result of this, pupils are not as well prepared for their next stage of education as they should be.

Leaders prioritise early reading. This has resulted in more pupils achieving the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This is now in line with outcomes of other pupils nationally.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) generally make secure progress from their starting points, particularly those with the highest levels of need.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Leaders warmly welcome pupils into the Academy at St. James every morning. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they know that they belong and that they are safe. The school vision is aspire, believe, achieve. This is linked closely to the Christian values of the school. Pupils are nurtured and staff know them well.

Pupils enjoy learning and say that teachers make their lessons interesting. Although many pupils achieve well, some have gaps in their knowledge and do not achieve as well as they should. Pupils' outcomes in national tests at the end of Year 6 are below the national average in some areas.

From before pupils join the school, leaders and staff prioritise getting to know them and their families. This means staff can quickly identify any difficulties that pupils face. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other potential barriers to learning, benefit from the support the school has to offer.

Pupils know the school rules and behaviour expectations. They uphold these well. This creates a purposeful and calm environment for pupils to learn in. When pupils find following the rules difficult, leaders provide sensitive and timely support. During social times, pupils enjoy the outdoor space that the school has. They play together well and enjoy a range of activities. Pupils show that they understand respect and tolerance and why these are

important. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare and if it does occur, leaders will respond to this swiftly and effectively.

Pupils value the wide range of opportunities available beyond the classroom. Many take part in extra-curricular clubs, sporting activities and performances. Leadership roles, including the school council, worship leaders and mental health leaders enable pupils to develop their confidence and decision-making skills.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that existing gaps in pupils' important knowledge, particularly in spelling, grammar, handwriting and mathematical fluency are identified and filled quickly so that pupils achieve more highly.
 - Leaders should ensure that they improve pupils' achievement so that a greater proportion achieve at least in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff continue to embed the recent changes made to the school's offer for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Carol Dewhurst, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Theresa Mason.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, teachers, support staff, pupils and some parents and carers during the inspection. They also spoke to representatives from the trust, the diocese, the virtual school head and the local governing board.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:
The school has had a change in headteacher since the last inspection.

The school currently does not use any alternative provisions.

The school, under the same registration, runs a nursery and provision for 2-year-old children.

Headteacher: Ruth Thompson

Lead inspector:

Kim Bradshaw, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Judy Shaw, Ofsted Inspector

Lauren Watson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

337

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

448

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

48.24%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.86%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.13%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	45%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	49%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	68%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	68%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	66%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	68%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	59%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	63%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	37%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	41%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	55%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	47%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	54%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	47%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	58%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	46%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	43%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	46%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	37%	68%	-30 pp
2024/25 (final)	38%	69%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	67%	-26 pp
2022/23 (final)	33%	66%	-33 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	55%	80%	-24 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	47%	80%	-33 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	78%	-20 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	54%	78%	-24 pp
2024/25 (final)	54%	78%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	47%	78%	-31 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	77%	-19 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	46%	80%	-34 pp
2024/25 (final)	43%	81%	-37 pp
2023/24 (final)	53%	79%	-26 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	46%	79%	-33 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.1%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.1%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	16.8%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	24.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	21.5%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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