

# St James Primary School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 131581             |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Walsall            |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 381368             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 16–17 January 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | James Henry        |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                                    |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                                  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11                                       |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                      |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 176  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                         |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Wendy Collis                               |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Helen Pearcey                              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 27–28 November 2008                        |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Great Charles Street<br>Walsall<br>WS8 6AE |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01543 452328                               |
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| <b>Email address</b>                       | postbox@st-james.walsall.sch.uk            |

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|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 4–11               |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 16–17 January 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 381368             |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

James Henry

Additional inspector

Linda Rowley

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in thirteen whole-class lessons, two assemblies and several teaching sessions supporting small groups of pupils. Seven teachers were observed and meetings were held with members of the governing body, a group of pupils and senior staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school self-evaluation documents, school improvement plans, data showing pupils' progress and school records concerning pupils' behaviour. Questionnaires were received and analysed from 42 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

St James is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Almost all of the pupils are from White British heritage, with English as their first language. The number with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school meets the government floor standard currently. There is one Reception class that forms the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school received an Anti-Bully award recently. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and a new deputy headteacher in April 2011. There is a separately managed children's centre on the school site.

## Inspection judgements

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>3</b> |

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school.
- A strength of the school is the good provision and quality of teaching for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall across the school, but better in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1, and leave with attainment which is broadly average.
- School assessments, work in pupils' books and lesson observations during this inspection show that pupils' progress across the school is good overall in English, being better in reading than writing, but satisfactory in mathematics.
- Good progress in English for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, is a result of the school focusing strongly on raising standards in pupils' reading and writing skills. Well-targeted intervention programmes underpin this success, but some opportunities are still missed for developing literacy skills in other subjects.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but some good teaching was observed during the inspection, especially in English, reflecting the good progress pupils were making in their reading and writing.
- The curriculum has been developed since the previous inspection to include more practical and creative activities for pupils; however, opportunities to practise and develop basic skills further, especially in mathematics, are not planned consistently in different subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school, with little disruption to their learning. Consequently, they say they feel safe.
- Although a small minority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire raised the issue of bullying, pupils said that it was rare and felt confident in staff to resolve any concerns that they may have.
- While leadership and management are satisfactory overall, the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership and have introduced initiatives, such as new procedures to assess and track pupils' progress, that are beginning to raise standards.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement in mathematics to be good by the end of Key Stage 2 by:
  - improving staff knowledge and understanding of the teaching of mathematics, especially in the steps pupils need to make to improve their mathematical skills
  - providing feedback through marking on how pupils can improve
  - embedding the new scheme of work and ensuring that pupils who may be falling behind in mathematics are identified and supported.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is good or better by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to be responsible for their own learning, rather than lessons being too teacher-led
  - making more-effective use of support staff in lessons by ensuring pupils are allowed to learn for themselves, especially in small group sessions.
- Improve the curriculum by consistently planning opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their basic skills, especially in mathematics, across a range of subjects.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills levels that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class, especially in their basic communication and language skills.

Children enter Year 1 with attainment in their mathematical skills broadly in line with that expected, although slightly lower than expected in their communication, reading and writing skills. Over time, pupils' attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 is below the national average, but school assessments show that there is an improving trend. Pupils in Year 1 were able to use their reading skills to sound out letters and groups of letters to read unfamiliar words. However, while they could understand and re-tell the stories in their school reading books, they had limited knowledge of other books that they had enjoyed or read. Given their low starting points, pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, make good progress in their language and comprehension skills. As a result, attainment in reading and in English overall by the end of Key Stage 2 is consistently higher than in mathematics, being broadly in line with the national average over time. English was above the national average in 2011. Also, the number of more-able pupils achieving the higher levels in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 was above the national average in English, but below in mathematics in 2011.

Pupils' progress in English lessons that were observed was often good. For example, older pupils were enjoying learning about different authors' techniques for writing stories, were fully engaged in their tasks and working well independently. Their progress is only satisfactory overall across the school because progress in mathematics is satisfactory, given that their starting points in Year 1 are in line with

those expected. This is supported by the school's own tracking and analyses and by observations in mathematics lessons; often pupils did not always have a sound understanding of concepts being studied. In some mathematics lessons, teaching focuses too much on ensuring correct answers to questions rather than developing pupils' mathematical understanding.

Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make satisfactory progress also and achieve as well as their peers in school. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that their children were making good progress. This is accurate in reading and writing, but pupils are making satisfactory progress in mathematics.

### **Quality of teaching**

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children were taught well. This is accurate in certain aspects because, while teaching is satisfactory overall, especially in mathematics, there were examples of good teaching observed. The variability in teaching mirrors the difference in the progress made by pupils in English and mathematics. Where teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge, plan tasks that meet pupils' needs, allow pupils opportunities to be independent in their learning and understand the next steps that they have to take to make good progress. This is shown in the good-quality marking of pupils' writing across the school, with clear guidance on how to improve. While pupils' mathematics work is marked consistently, there is limited guidance on the next steps needed to develop their mathematical skills. Also, more effective use is made of intervention groups in developing pupils' reading and writing than in mathematics. Some of the mathematics lessons observed were satisfactory because they tended to be too teacher-led with pupils listening for too long to explanations in the introduction. Whilst activities in lessons were consistently planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, there were examples of low-level tasks, such as copying lists into books, which slowed the pace of learning. Some teachers have gaps in their subject knowledge for the teaching of mathematics. The school has introduced a new scheme of work for mathematics that, rightly, focuses on developing pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. This was being taught consistently in Key Stage 1 classes, but is not yet embedded. Consequently, this has not had time to impact on raising pupils' attainment.

Teaching assistants are often deployed effectively to support groups of pupils in lessons and are particularly successful in leading intervention sessions in literacy. This aspect of teaching is less successful when support staff complete tasks for pupils, rather than allowing them to learn for themselves. Relationships in lessons between staff and pupils are good. Also, generally, pupils work well together and enjoy sharing their learning and this supports pupils' personal qualities, especially in developing their social and moral skills.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Whilst a few parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour and instances of bullying at the school, almost all pupils were clear in their responses in the inspection questionnaire that the few cases of bullying were dealt with effectively.

Pupils had a clear understanding of the definition of bullying and the difference between bullying and having an argument or a dispute. So, when questioned, pupils said bullying, most often name calling, was rare, although some pupils did have arguments. However, they have confidence in staff to deal with any concerns that they may have and report that they feel safe. Over time, there have been very few exclusions or cases of racist incidents. The school keeps a detailed and continuous log of any concerns raised by parents and carers and the steps taken to resolve issues. Also, persistent efforts have been made to involve parents and carers in the work of the school, for example, through the proposed parents' forum, but these have yet to be successful.

Behaviour observed during the inspection was generally good, both in lessons and around the school, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning, respect staff and are polite, friendly and welcoming. During a walk around school, pupils told inspectors that the good behaviour they were seeing was normal and that the school had effective systems to reward good behaviour. However, there were a few occasions when pupils had to be sanctioned for inappropriate behaviour. Attendance is above average and this has improved over time due to the robust actions taken by the school, especially with regard to pupils taken out of school during term time. There are also clear procedures for encouraging punctuality and regular feedback through newsletters to parents and carers to promote good attendance.

### **Leadership and management**

While leadership and management are satisfactory overall, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported by staff and the governing body, provide strong leadership and have introduced new initiatives that are quickly beginning to raise standards. These include new procedures to assess pupils' progress accurately, more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, and changes to the curriculum, for example, the new mathematics scheme designed to increase pupils' understanding and raise attainment. Regular meetings about pupils' progress have increased teachers' accountability and led to more accurate identification and intervention for pupils who may need extra support. This has been especially effective in increasing the rate at which pupils develop their reading and writing skills and is raising standards, especially at the end of Key Stage 1. It has been used less well to identify those pupils at risk of falling behind in mathematics. Senior leaders have undertaken a robust approach to monitoring the quality of teaching, including reviewing pupils' work, and professional development has been used well to support teachers where necessary, especially in English. This has increased the amount of good teaching across the school and school assessments show that this is increasing the rate at which pupils learn, especially in English. This was an area for development at the previous inspection and shows the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their basic skills in meaningful contexts, especially in mathematics. There has been a strong focus on improving the curriculum through developing the role of middle leaders in the school. This was in response to an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection and has resulted in the curriculum being changed successfully to include more practical activities for pupils.

Also, planned assemblies and links with the parish church, including visits from the local vicar, help promote pupils' moral and spiritual development. Partnerships with local schools include opportunities for pupils to participate in shared activities, such as sporting events, to develop their social skills. The curriculum promotes pupils' appreciation of other cultures and faiths through themed activities, such as an annual multicultural week. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The governing body is now challenging the school's performance more effectively by working more closely with the headteacher. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively. For example, through the work of the family support worker supporting pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, it ensures their regular attendance and access to the curriculum. The school has rigorous systems in place to safeguard pupils and all adults are checked and vetted fully before working in the school.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 46  | 46   | 8            | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 8   | 47   | 40           | 5          |
| Secondary schools    | 14  | 38   | 40           | 8          |
| Special schools      | 28  | 48   | 20           | 4          |
| Pupil referral units | 15  | 50   | 29           | 5          |
| All schools          | 11  | 46   | 38           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Attendance                 | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| Behaviour                  | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.                    |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.                            |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Safety                     | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

18 January 2012

Dear Pupils



### **Inspection of St James Primary School, Walsall WS8 6AE**

I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and watching you work with your teachers in lessons and around the school. All the staff work hard to help you learn and enjoy school. The school gives you a satisfactory standard of education and helps you to understand the importance of being good members of your school community. Almost all of you told us that the school helps you to do as well as you can, that teachers are interested in your views and will deal with any rare bullying. Most of you are happy to come to school and behaviour is good.

Here are some of the other good things that we found out about your school.

- You enjoy school and like being with your friends.
- You are keen to learn and to do your best and make satisfactory progress overall, but good progress in English.
- Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- You behave well and treat each other with respect and are always willing to help around school.
- You enjoy taking part in the activities that the school has to offer, especially sporting events.
- Older pupils are always willing to help younger children in the playground.

To help the school get even better we have asked that the adults in charge of the school to do three things.

- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that the adults who teach you fully understand how to help you to improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching by allowing you to be more quickly involved in learning for yourselves rather than listening for too long in lessons.
- Give you more opportunities to practise your reading, writing and mathematical skills in different subjects.

You can help of course by continuing to work hard and supporting one another.

Yours sincerely

James Henry  
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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