

St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105848
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	377311
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Lead inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edward Hardaker
Headteacher	Catherine Aden
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings
Derek Barnes

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine teachers. They held discussions with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils, and the school's external adviser. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Questionnaires from staff, pupils and from 63 parents and carers were scrutinised. There were no responses to the online questionnaire Parent View.

Information about the school

St. James' is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities is below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The onsite before- and after-school care is privately managed and is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection. The school has gained a number of awards, including the Rights Respecting School award, and is an accredited Healthy School. The government floor standard has been exceeded for the past three years.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- St James' is a good school. It provides a very welcoming setting for learning in which pupils thrive in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress through the school and attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Writing is a weaker aspect of pupils' performance in English, with their sentence structure lacking accuracy. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their mathematical mental recall and problem solving skills.
- Teaching has many strengths and there are examples of outstanding practice. Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to explain new ideas confidently and clearly. They manage classrooms well, so that little time is lost and pupils remain engaged in their activities. There are times when the tasks provided for more-able pupils lack sufficient challenge, especially in mathematics, and this slows their progress.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding. Pupils are highly adept at managing their own behaviour in classrooms and around school. They have excellent attitudes to learning that make a significant contribution to the progress they make. Attendance is high. All groups of pupils feel safe in school at all times.
- The headteacher is at the heart of the school's success and provides inspirational leadership. Leaders and the governing body demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school and motivate staff successfully. As a result, morale is high and there is a shared commitment to driving the school forward. Leaders do not systematically share the outstanding practice of some teachers with other staff to advance their skills. The good curriculum is well-organised and provides a variety of imaginative experiences. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in an outstanding manner.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 to above the national average by:
 - improving pupils' ability to write correctly structured sentences
 - increasing planned opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their mathematical mental recall and problem solving skills
 - ensuring the needs of more-able pupils are met consistently, particularly in mathematics
 - sharing the practice of those teachers who consistently deliver outstanding lessons among all teaching staff.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve well from their skill level on entering school, which is below that typical for their age, particularly in language, communication and mathematical development. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress because staff provide them with challenging activities that capture and maintain their interest. Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves from a variety of well-planned activities and this effectively develops their independent learning skills. This shows improvement from the last inspection when such opportunities were limited. The strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics enables pupils to make good progress in linking letters and sounds. This contributes well to their attainment in reading and writing.

Pupils continue to make good progress through the rest of the school. As a result, they attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Attainment in reading is stronger than in writing. It is broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, progress is accelerating due to improvements in teaching, and attainment is now close to above average by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6. Pupils enjoy reading and show pleasure in talking about their favourite authors and books. They speak clearly and communicate their ideas in a confident manner. Pupils write imaginatively in a variety of styles, including narrative, poetry and instructional writing. This was evident when pupils in Year 6 were developing their skills in creating characterisation in their story writing. Pupils' writing lacks accuracy in the use of correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. Their mathematical calculation skills are secure but their quick mental recall skills are not as well developed. Pupils do not always show proficiency in solving practical real-life number problems.

In their questionnaires, almost all parents and carers agreed that their children were making good progress at the school. This is an accurate view. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities make the same good progress as others because of the effectively targeted support they receive. There is no significant difference between the achievement or the quality of learning of different groups.

Quality of teaching

The vast majority of parents and carers feel that their children are taught well at school. This is an accurate view. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to build on previous work so that pupils can use what they already know and understand to support new learning. They generally use assessment information well to provide activities that effectively challenge different groups of pupils. Nevertheless, there are times when the work provided for more-able pupils is not challenging enough. This is particularly the case in mathematics. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves. This was evident in a science lesson for pupils in Year 2 in which they were investigating which was the best material to insulate ice cubes.

The teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) has been improved by good quality professional development. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating, especially in reading. This was observed in a briskly paced Year 1 literacy lesson. The teachers' expertise enabled pupils to make good progress in identifying and pronouncing words correctly, including the letter 'a' and ending in 'e', such as 'escape' and 'game'. Teachers' marking and discussion with pupils is used well in English and mathematics to make sure that pupils understand their individual targets in detail and how to achieve them. They are not as well developed in other subjects. Outstanding teaching was characterised by imaginative teaching strategies that generated high levels of enthusiasm and ensured that pupils' individual needs were met exceptionally well. This was exemplified in a literacy lesson for pupils in Year 3 in which they made exceptional progress in successfully punctuating a conversation between two characters from a traditional tale.

Teaching makes a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is shown in the high expectations of pupils' behaviour, ensuring they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The many opportunities for pupils to engage in paired and small group activities effectively foster their social development. The curriculum is planned well to develop pupils' literacy skills across subjects. It is not as effective in developing pupils' numeracy skills. Effective teaching assistants are deployed well to support all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and pupils with disabilities.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

'We want to come to school, it's fun and we want to learn.' This pupil comment is typical of many and reflects their outstanding attitudes to learning and their high attendance. All pupils are excellent ambassadors of a Rights Respecting School. They are acutely aware of their responsibilities and very effectively protect and promote the rights of others. As a result, pupils make an exceptional contribution to a safe and positive learning environment. Pupils have very high levels of engagement, politeness and cooperation in and out of lessons. They are very keen to take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council or Eco Committee. In so doing, they very effectively promote the voice of pupils in suggesting how the school could move forward.

Pupils, parents and carers overwhelmingly say that behaviour is excellent and has been over time. Observations in lessons and around school confirm that behaviour is outstanding. Pupils say that everyone has a right to learn and that they should act responsibly in lessons so that no disruption takes place. This results in classrooms being very friendly and calm

environments in which to learn and contributes significantly to the progress pupils make. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of the different types of bullying. They say that any such cases are rare, with staff dealing with any low level misbehaviour sensitively and promptly before it escalates.

Almost all parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe. One comment was typical, 'I consider myself lucky to have my child attend such a caring and nurturing environment.' Pupils have a thorough understanding of what might be an unsafe situation and are highly aware of how to keep themselves and others safe. They say they have complete confidence that they can talk to a member of staff if they have any worries or concerns.

Leadership and management

Leaders at all levels have worked diligently to consolidate and build upon the school's good performance at the last inspection. Teaching has been improved by the provision of good quality professional development, so there are now examples of consistently outstanding practice. However, this practice is not systematically shared amongst staff in order to refine their own skills. The governing body is supportive of the school and proactive in evaluating its performance and influencing its development. The monitoring and the evaluation of school performance are robust and provide an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses. Plans for improvement are tightly focused and easily measurable in terms of how successful they are proving. The school's track record in recent years shows the capacity for further improvement is good.

The promotion of equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination is central to the school's work. Consequently, pupils' outcomes are positive and any unevenness between different groups is minimal. The school gained the Rights Respecting School award because it has a clear vision for the achievement of all pupils based on human rights.

There are comprehensive procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils and staff. Training, particularly for child protection, is of good quality. Issues about safety are integrated effectively into the curriculum so pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe. Partnerships with others, including the local high school, contribute effectively to pupils' good achievement and progress. This partnership has enhanced pupils' learning and development in ways the school could not provide on its own, especially in promoting their musical talents.

The curriculum is good. It is tailored to meet the changing needs of individuals and groups and is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended. Visits to places of educational interest, including Quarry Bank Mill, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors effectively extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. Opportunities for pupils to refine and improve their mathematical mental recall skills and problem solving activities are limited. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Consequently, pupils have an excellent understanding of society's shared and agreed values and the personal qualities necessary for living and working together.

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. Ousted 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).

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.
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.



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School, Rochdale, OL12 9JW

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that yours is a good school and that:

- you make good progress and achieve well
- you are excellent ambassadors for a Rights Respecting School
- your behaviour is outstanding and you have excellent attitudes to learning
- adults are interested in your views and you feel safe in school, as you indicated in your questionnaires
- you enjoy school, as is shown by your high attendance
- the way the school promotes your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

What we have asked your school to do now is to:

- improve your ability to write correctly structured sentences and your mathematical quick mental recall and problem solving skills
- make sure all teachers consistently give those of you who find work easy activities that make you think hard
- share the examples of outstanding teaching amongst all staff to improve their own expertise.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Lead inspector

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