

St James' CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116885
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	384982
Inspection dates	31 January–1 February 2012
Lead inspector	Mark Mumby HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Towner
Headteacher	Kathy Weston
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2010
School address	Vicarage Road Hereford HR1 2QN
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mark Mumby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Philip Winch

Additional inspector

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes in the school taught by seven different teachers. Fifteen teaching sessions were observed; on four of these observations, the inspector was joined by the headteacher. Inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons and at breaktimes. They observed the teaching of reading and listened to some pupils reading in each key stage. Inspectors met with members of staff, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at some of the school's documentation, including that relating to pupils' learning, behaviour, safeguarding and self-evaluation. As this inspection was carried out without notice, there was no inspection questionnaire. The views of parents and carers were gathered through the school's own questionnaire and discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Information about the school

St James' CofE Primary School is smaller than the average primary school. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils come from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to the national average. The school meets the government's floor standard for achievement in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. When the school was inspected in March 2010, it was judged to require special measures. It has been monitored by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors since the previous inspection.

The school is an Every Child Counts school; it has achieved National Healthy School status and the Quality Mark for self-evaluation of special educational needs.

There is privately run before- and after-school care on the school site which was not included in this inspection.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.
- The school has improved considerably as a result of the high expectations of what can be achieved and the clear direction provided by the headteacher. She has established an effective leadership team who work together very well to drive forward school improvement. The team is relatively new but has already proved that it has the ability to continue to improve the school.
- Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and it is now consistently satisfactory or better. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A particular strength is the teaching of early reading skills (phonics) to the youngest pupils.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards in line with the national average by the time they leave the school. In the most effective lessons, pupils make good progress as a result of high expectations and challenging work. This is helping to plug gaps in pupils’ learning and enable them to make up for inadequate teaching in the past. However, a small minority of older pupils still have gaps in essential basic reading skills.
- Procedures to keep pupils safe are robust. Pupils cooperate well and mostly have good attitudes in lessons. However, when lessons are less engaging, pupils quickly drift off task and their learning slows. Most pupils play well together, although there are only limited activities for them to participate in at breaktimes. As a result, a few pupils become isolated and find these to be lonely times in the day.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to enable all pupils to make at least good progress and attain standards above the national average by:
 - ensuring that all lessons have clear learning intentions which meet the individual needs of the pupils
 - making effective use of assessment to plan learning activities which challenge pupils, especially the most able, throughout every lesson
 - having high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour in every lesson so that no learning time is lost.

- Ensure that all pupils have well-developed reading and spelling skills appropriate to their age by:
 - improving the subject knowledge of teaching and support staff in the teaching of reading and spelling
 - identifying pupils who have gaps in their learning with regard to reading and spelling, and ensuring that these pupils receive the support they need to catch up.

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting and social skills at breaktimes and outside the school day.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children begin in Reception with skills and abilities which are in line with those expected for their age. As a result of making at least satisfactory progress as they move through the school, they attain standards which are broadly average by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils. The attainment of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to that of the same groups of pupils nationally, but below that of other pupils. The school's work to support these pupils is effective in beginning to narrow this gap for many of these pupils, but the good impact of this work is not consistent for all of these pupils. Parents and carers have very positive views about the progress their children are making, mostly saying that the school has improved considerably and that their children are making good progress.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and have good attitudes to their work. They respond particularly well when they understand what they are learning about and the tasks they have been set are challenging. For example, younger pupils engage enthusiastically in writing activities where they are keen to express themselves and they show well-developed independent learning skills. Some of the pupils in Year 1 are beginning to write in complex sentences. Children in Reception enjoy developing their early writing skills as they choose to participate in a good range of opportunities for mark-making and writing activities. After a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, progress becomes satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and the start of Key Stage 2. It increases again in Years 5 and 6. Older pupils have good opportunities to develop their basic skills, such as writing, in other subjects. For example, they talked enthusiastically about writing a recount of how they would feel as an evacuee. The

presentation of pupils' work is mostly satisfactory, although a few older pupils do not have a suitable style of joined handwriting, while others do not always use a ruler when drawing lines and tables.

In reading, pupils attain average standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and standards in line with expectations by the end of Year 6. They make good progress in developing their early reading skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. A few pupils in older year groups who have missed out on developing essential reading skills when they were younger are still not using effective strategies to read and spell unfamiliar words.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but satisfactory overall. There are examples of good teaching in the school, but not enough teaching is consistently good to enable pupils to make good progress in their learning. Parents and carers acknowledge that teaching has improved since the previous inspection and feel that it is good.

Children in Reception benefit from a well-organised learning environment, both indoors and outside. They are provided with good opportunities to develop their basic skills in language and numeracy, as well as to explore through their own creativity, as they increase their understanding of the world they live in. Their excitement was obvious as they discovered frogspawn through their water play and faced the challenge of the changes to their wet sand as they discovered it had frozen in the cold weather. Children have good opportunities to learn through this type of exploration but, occasionally, adults miss opportunities to question children and develop their language skills fully.

Throughout the school, pupils make the most progress when lessons have been carefully planned with clear learning intentions and challenging activities which meet their needs. For example, Year 5 pupils made good progress in a literacy lesson about figurative language because the teaching was clearly focused on the planned learning. The teacher used questioning well to ensure that the pupils knew what they were learning about and to clarify his high expectations. Consequently, the lesson got off to a brisk start and pupils responded well to the tasks which were carefully matched to their abilities. In other lessons, pupils make slower progress because pupils are not clear about what they are supposed to be learning. In these lessons, the teaching frequently lacks a sharp focus and too much time is lost while pupils listen to unnecessarily long explanations. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough in these lessons. Consequently, progress slows, particularly for more-able pupils who complete tasks quickly and are not provided with more challenging work. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or groups to solve problems. They respond well and demonstrate good levels of cooperation.

The teaching of reading is good for the youngest pupils because teachers have a good understanding about how to teach reading and use assessment well to check on progress and move pupils on in their learning. However, the few older pupils who have gaps in their understanding are not always provided with sufficiently clear

guidance about how to read unfamiliar words. This is because the adults working with them do not consistently teach them the most effective strategies.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. They mostly have good attitudes in lessons, although they quickly become restless in the minority of lessons where the teaching does not fully engage them throughout the whole lesson. They play sensibly at breaktimes, but a few of the older pupils say that they are lonely at these times and other pupils do not play with them. They are provided with only a very limited range of play equipment. The systems to help pupils socialise during this free time are not effective enough.

In the school's own survey, virtually all parents and carers stated that poor behaviour is dealt with well and that their children are safe. This concurs with the pupils' views from the questionnaire and discussions. Pupils have a secure understanding about what constitutes bullying but say that it does not normally occur. The school's records support this view and indicate that there are no issues with persistent unacceptable behaviour.

The school has implemented effective strategies to ensure that pupils attend well and are punctual. As a result, attendance has been consistently above average since the previous inspection.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership for the school. She has been successful in establishing and developing the school's senior leadership team. Senior leaders have clearly defined roles and work together effectively with subject coordinators to develop teaching and learning and drive school improvement. The impact of the team's work is clearly evident in the improvements to the quality of teaching, increasing levels of pupils' progress, and attainment which is now in line with the national average. The school has clearly demonstrated that it is well placed to continue to improve.

School development planning is secure in the short term. Raising achievement plans in English and mathematics are accurately focused on key priorities and include an appropriate range of training, resources and evaluation to bring about improvements. Professional development has been carefully targeted to meet individual needs through a bespoke approach based on secure evaluation of the work of individual teachers. This work has been successful in improving the quality of teaching throughout the school and has been well received by teachers.

The governing body has a very good understanding about the strengths of the school and areas for development. It holds the school to account through challenging questioning at meetings and ensures that the school's robust procedures for safeguarding are properly implemented. It receives detailed information about the performance of the school from its leaders as well as through visits to the school. Its role in working with the school's senior leaders to set a strategic direction for the school and plan long-term improvements is underdeveloped.

The school's rigorous programme to assess and track the attainment and progress of individual pupils is thoroughly embedded in the school's work. It is used effectively to identify any underachievement and target appropriate support. The success of this work is evident in the accelerated progress being made by many of the pupils with special educational needs. Consequently, all pupils are treated fairly and have an equal chance of success.

The curriculum has been suitably planned to meet the needs of the pupils. It is enriched with a good range of activities to enhance pupils' understanding and cultural development. For example, pupils have opportunities to appreciate music and art from around the world or through celebrating festivals such as Chinese New Year. Year 5 pupils have benefited from the Mayor Project through which they have been on educational visits to find out more about local government. They get involved in the community through singing events, including the choir appearing on breakfast television. The school has strong links with the Royal National College for the Blind which enables pupils to reflect on the lives of others less fortunate than themselves.

The school provides a range of extra-curricular opportunities, but pupils are rightly concerned that there are currently very few sporting opportunities.

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).

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.



2 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' CofE Primary School, Hereford, HR1 2QN

Thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome while we have been visiting your school over the past two years. You have always made us feel very welcome and we have enjoyed observing your lessons and talking to you about your work.

When your school was inspected in March 2010, it was judged to require special measures because it was not providing you with a good enough education. The staff and governing body have made a lot of changes since then and the school is now much better. It is now a satisfactory school. The teaching is now always at least satisfactory. In Reception, it is good. It is also good in other classes some of the time, especially in Years 5 and 6, but it is not good for enough of the time to enable you to make good progress. Your progress is satisfactory and you attain levels in English and mathematics that are similar to pupils in other schools by the time you leave. I have asked the school to continue to improve the quality of teaching so that you make even better progress. I have also asked the school to make sure that those of you who still have difficulty reading when you are in Key Stage 2 get the right sort of help.

You told us that you feel safe in school and that everyone gets on well together. We could see that this is the case, but I fully understand why a few of you feel lonely at playtimes and have little to do. I have asked the school to make playtimes more interesting and to make sure that you all have someone to play with if you want to. I have also asked the school to try to provide more opportunities for you to take part in sport, just as some of you said you would like to.

Please continue to work hard and help your school get even better. You could also help by making friends with someone who seems to be lonely.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector

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