

# St James CofE Primary School, Farnworth

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105208
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	377199
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Sarah Drake

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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	327
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The interim executive board
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Charlton
<b>Acting Headteacher</b>	Jeffrey Bonner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Hillside Avenue Farnworth Bolton BL4 9QB
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Sarah Drake  
Doreen Davenport  
Paul Latham

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by 13 different teachers. They also observed a series of short sessions either promoting the understanding of the links between letters and sounds to pupils from Reception to Year 6, or supporting pupils who need additional help. The inspectors heard pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read and talked with them about their enjoyment of books. They held meetings with: school staff; members of the interim executive board; two groups of pupils; a small number of parents and carers; representatives of the local authority and the diocese; the headteacher of the school with which this school is working closely; and the headteacher designate. In planning the inspection, it was not possible to take account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as no responses had been registered. The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and school management, including the work in pupils' books, assessment information and school development planning. They also took into account the responses to the inspection questionnaires made by 98 pupils, 25 members of staff and 145 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It serves an urban area to the south of Bolton. Most pupils are White British but increasing numbers belong to a range of minority-ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. More pupils than is usual join or leave the school partway through their education. In 2011 the school did not meet the current floor standard for the attainment levels pupils are expected to reach at the end of Key Stage 2.

Over recent years the school has experienced significant staffing upheavals. Two posts are currently covered by staff on short-term contracts and two more posts by temporary staff. The previous headteacher resigned in August 2011 after a long period of absence. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher who was the school's deputy headteacher. In September 2011 the governing body was disestablished, with the approval of the Secretary of State, and the school is now held to account by an interim executive board. A new headteacher and a second deputy headteacher are due to take up post in April 2012.

**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

<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>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not good because, despite improvements in attainment, pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the monitoring and analysis of performance by leaders, these are not yet sufficiently strong to ensure that pupils' achievement over time is better than satisfactory. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the school's friendly approach and the support provided for their children. Pupils describe the school as 'happy, helpful and fun'.
- Most children's skills on entry to the Nursery are low compared to those expected for their age and, in the past, attainment has been well below average by the time pupils leave school. Now, pupils' attainment in Year 6 is broadly average but there remain gaps in the knowledge and skills of pupils in Key Stage 2 that inhibit them from reaching higher levels. Opportunities are sometimes missed to maximise the benefits of support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, or to develop children's skills outdoors in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teaching is of satisfactory quality overall. It is good in many lessons but not yet in all. Through much effective training, the school has successfully tackled some weaker areas but, largely due to instability in staffing, there remain inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils and in the quality of provision that pupils experience.
- Pupils' satisfactory behaviour and understanding of how to keep themselves safe ensure that the school operates as a harmonious community where the very large majority of pupils treat each other and adults with respect. Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by impressive improvements in their attendance.
- After an unsettled period which had a negative impact on pupils' achievement, the school's leaders, ably and determinedly led by the acting headteacher, have implemented well-considered and effective actions to drive forward improvement. Rigorous analysis and self-evaluation guide all decision-making but middle managers are still developing their leadership role for their areas of responsibility.

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?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics so that it is at least average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average at the end of Key Stage 2, by:
  - ensuring that the gaps in knowledge of pupils currently in Key Stage 2 are eliminated
  - streamlining the provision and support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
  - improving the use of the outdoors to promote the communication, language and mathematical skills of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently of good or better quality, by:
  - establishing stability among the classroom staff who teach and support pupils' learning
  - ensuring that all lessons are well organised, move at a good pace and give pupils enough opportunities to contribute actively to their learning
  - ensuring that all teachers use open-ended questioning and have suitably high expectations of the amount and presentation of pupils' work
  - extending the good practice in some marking to other areas.
- Increase the involvement of middle managers in driving forward school improvement.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy being at school and they understand that they are there to learn. They settle well at the beginning of lessons and generally collaborate well when discussing ideas or working together in pairs or small groups. In the best lessons they sustain their focus well and work hard, as when pupils in Years 5 and 6 were learning how to rotate and find the coordinates of the vertices of triangles, using a grid. However, where the teaching is less effective pupils lose concentration, take too much time to put pencil to paper and do not always take enough pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils are beginning to evaluate their own and others' work effectively and they know their improvement targets. Overall, their learning in lessons is satisfactory.

Children generally join the Early Years Foundation Stage with very low communication and mathematical skills. In the supportive atmosphere they soon become used to routines and develop good relationships. They make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in their dispositions and attitudes, and use of numbers for counting. Most of their learning outdoors promotes only their physical development. The overall skills of the majority on joining Year 1 are well below average. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress through the school. The effective use of assessment and organisation of sessions to promote pupils' understanding of the links between letters and sounds mean that younger pupils, in particular, use their knowledge well to inform their reading and writing. However, despite the recent inclusion of Key Stage 2 pupils in these sessions, some older pupils' work still

shows significant weaknesses in spelling and grammar. Pupils' vocabulary is limited and they lack confidence when using and applying mathematical skills in different situations. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is below average; at the end of Year 6 it is broadly average. Year 6 pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is also broadly average. The learning and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are satisfactory. Similarly, pupils who speak English as an additional language and those entitled to free school meals make satisfactory progress. The progress of all groups of pupils has improved compared to that made in 2011, with particular improvements in the progress of boys in reading and mathematics. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are satisfied with their children's progress. Their views are similar to the inspection judgment that achievement is satisfactory. Older pupils say that they appreciate the introduction of tutoring and of grouping by ability for literacy and numeracy which, they consider, are helping them to make better progress than in the past.

## Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers consider that their children are taught well. The inspection judgement is that teaching is satisfactory because it is not yet consistently good throughout the school. All teachers clarify the learning objectives and success criteria of lessons so that pupils understand what they are expected to learn. The curriculum has a positive influence on teaching as activities build suitably on pupils' prior knowledge, skills and understanding, and are usually adapted according to their different needs. Activities often capture pupils' interest, for example, children in the Reception classes were enchanted by the tracks running all around the classroom which had been left by 'the naughty bus' and which inspired their speaking, creative and writing skills. However, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teaching does not make enough use of the attractive outdoor areas to promote children's communication and mathematical skills.

Teachers use subject-specific language effectively to confirm pupils' understanding and they provide useful visual clues, often using the interactive whiteboard, to cater for pupils' different ways of learning. The use of a microphone enables those with hearing impairment to participate fully, and teaching assistants usually provide effective support for those with disabilities, who have special educational needs or who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. However, they are not always used to best effect during the whole-class input to lessons. Work undertaken during small group sessions for pupils with special educational needs is not always sufficiently closely linked to work in the classroom. Most teachers use praise to good effect, helping to build pupils' self-esteem. Activities such as letter-writing in the character of a soldier working in Afghanistan also promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. The best lessons move at a brisk pace with pupils fully involved in, for example, recalling their prior learning or identifying the key positive features and areas for development in their own and others' work. However, this is not consistent throughout the school and adults do not always probe pupils' thinking sufficiently deeply, through questioning, to provide enough challenge, especially for the more-able pupils. Some teachers provide useful written guidance about the next steps that pupils should take to improve their work, especially in writing, but this is not yet consistent. The marking of topic work does not promote pupils' basic skills sufficiently well. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of the amount of work that pupils should produce or the quality of its presentation.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The great majority of pupils, parents and carers agree that most pupils typically behave well around school and that instances of bullying are rare, and dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Typically, pupils are polite, well-behaved and eager to please. They carry out responsibilities, such as school councillors or monitors, with confidence and competence. Pupils form good relationships with each other and adults. They are interested in others' cultures and beliefs, and have a clear understanding of right and wrong – as demonstrated in a lively assembly when they refused to be tempted by chocolates that did not belong to the person offering them! Pupils say that they feel safe in school and they are willing to share concerns with staff, confident that they will receive good quality help to sort out any problems. They also understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using mobile phones or the internet. They are aware of different forms of bullying and suggest sensible ways of dealing with them should they occur. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally good. However, where the teaching is weaker, or when pupils experience a succession of temporary staff, lessons are too often disrupted since pupils do not have sufficient self-discipline to sustain their usually good standards. In response to concerted efforts by staff, attendance has improved by more than two percentage points this year and is currently above average. The school is now working to improve the punctuality of the small number of pupils who are persistently late in the morning.

## **Leadership and management**

The introduction of an effective system through which to track pupils' progress has enabled increasingly rigorous analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has driven forward improvement, raised attainment and demonstrates that the school now has satisfactory capacity to improve further. It has also enabled leaders and managers to improve equality of opportunity for different groups since any hint of underachievement is now quickly identified and leads to rapid action. Pupils' progress is increasing and attainment is rising. Determined, skilful leadership has effectively prioritised and tackled areas of weakness, and ensured that staff have access to high-quality professional development. However, staff absences and resignations mean that, while weaknesses in teaching have mostly been eradicated, its quality is still inconsistent. Some responsibilities have been devolved so that the acting headteacher no longer has to lead improvement in many different areas at once. Leaders for different subjects and areas, as well as class teachers, now have a satisfactory understanding of, for example, the age-related expectations for different subjects. Leaders for the Early Years Foundation Stage, special educational needs, mathematics and literacy are now analysing accurately information gained from assessment, observation and scrutiny of pupils' work, but development planning is not always closely enough linked to improving attainment.

The school has been very open to external support from the local authority, diocese and other schools. Members of the interim executive board have taken decisive and successful steps to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. The responsibilities of different groups are clear-cut and progress is regularly checked to ensure no duplication of effort. Good liaison between the acting and substantive headteachers means that there are already firm plans to underpin and sustain improvement in the summer term and beyond. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

The curriculum suitably meets pupils' needs. It has satisfactory adaptations for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional

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language although there are few links between small group work and that in the classroom. It prepares pupils adequately for the next stage of their learning. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, providing them with opportunities for reflection and to deepen their understanding of cultures different from their own. This helps them put into practice the school's new mission statement of 'Caring, sharing, learning 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. 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.
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.**



5 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St James CofE Primary School, Farnworth, Bolton, BL4 9QB**

Thank you very much for being so friendly when the inspection team recently visited your school. Particular thanks should go to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to help us understand what it is like to be a pupil at St James. Outlined below are some of the main reasons why we have decided that it is a satisfactory school which shows clear signs of improvement.

Children settle well and enjoy their time in Nursery and Reception. Pupils of all ages make satisfactory progress so that attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. The rate of progress that you make is speeding up. Teachers make the point of lessons clear to you and usually give you interesting tasks to do. Sometimes they do too much of the talking and they do not always challenge you enough to do your best. Most pupils behave well but sometimes, especially when you have supply staff, lessons are disrupted because, as some of you said, 'Pupils play up to the teacher.' You are usually polite, develop good relationships and enjoy being helpful. You know the difference between right and wrong. You are interested in and show respect for cultures and beliefs that are different from your own. Your attendance has improved a great deal this year – congratulations to you and to your parents and carers!

The school's leaders have a clear picture of your progress and use this well to decide what needs to improve next. We have asked them to pay particular attention to: helping you raise your attainment in reading, writing and mathematics; making sure that everybody receives equally good teaching; and ensuring a fair distribution of tasks among those who have responsibilities. You can help with the improvements by: continuing to enjoy your time at school; taking care with the presentation of all your work; and making sure that you attend school whenever possible and arrive punctually in the morning. This letter comes with our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake  
Lead inspector

