

St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113761
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	357412
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Barron

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Camping
Headteacher	Jacqui Booth
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and observed 4 teachers. They also held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers and also groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school development planning, minutes of governors' meetings, school policies, including those associated with safeguarding procedures, assessment and tracking documentation, pupil records and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed the views of parents and carers in the 52 Ofsted questionnaires returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Attainment, especially in Year 4, and what this signifies in terms of pupils' progress, especially in writing.
- The effect of changes to leadership and management since the last inspection on the school's overall effectiveness.
- Provision for cultural education and its impact on building up pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultures and communities other than their own.
- Evidence to confirm the school's judgement of outstanding for the level of care, guidance and support provided for pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average rural primary school with four classes, nearly all of which contain pupils from two year groups, the exception being the Year 4 class. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the school's mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of these pupils have learning difficulties and a few have social and emotional needs. The school has undergone changes to leadership and management and several changes to the teaching staff since the last inspection. The present headteacher took up her position in September 2008. The school holds several awards including Healthy School Status.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has an inclusive and caring ethos and prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Parents and carers are positive in their views of the school. One commented that the school was 'a happy village school with a caring ethos' while another praised the 'enthusiasm of the teaching staff'. Inspectors agree with these typical comments in the returned parents' and carers' questionnaires.

The headteacher has provided a clear vision for school improvement since her appointment and has worked with her dedicated staff and with governors to ensure the school has evaluated its performance effectively and successfully implemented strategies aimed at improving its practice. As a result, the school has improved all the areas for development noted by the last inspection and there are outstanding outcomes for the pupils. The curriculum, for example, now mixes subjects together well in order to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable for pupils. The tracking of individual pupils' progress has improved and this has led to improvements in pupils' achievement. The school has a realistic overview of its strengths and areas for development, for example the need to improve pupils' attainment in writing to match their well above average attainment in reading and mathematics, and this is an indication of the school's good capacity to improve in the future.

Children enter the school at the age of four with skills and understanding slightly above those expected for their age, although this varies from year to year. Pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, then proceed to make good progress in all year groups because of good teaching which usually caters for their needs effectively. By Year 4, attainment is well above average and this represents good progress for this group of pupils. However, throughout the school, attainment in reading and mathematics is better than in writing because pupils often find it difficult to complete longer pieces of writing successfully.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to develop a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy the good range of popular extra-curricular activities provided by the school, especially sporting ones, and talk enthusiastically about school trips to places of interest. However, although pupils are developing a realistic understanding of the customs and cultures of people living in other countries they have little knowledge of the multicultural nature of society in the United Kingdom. They find joining in a conversation about this difficult through a lack of understanding and this represents a gap in their learning.

The level of care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding and ensures they become confident and independent learners. Parents and carers are overwhelming in their praise for the way the school looks after their children and comment positively about the school's safe and caring environment. Health and well-being are securely safeguarded and child protection procedures are good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing to match the well above average attainment of pupils in reading and mathematics by improving opportunities for pupils to apply their basic writing skills successfully in longer pieces of work. (Timescale: end of summer term 2011)
- Develop pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of the United Kingdom by improving opportunities for pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding of the ethnic diversity found in modern society. (Timescale: end of spring term 2011)

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are very positive about school and this is reflected in their above average rates of attendance. Their behaviour is excellent and pupils are confident that adults will always deal with any rare instances of unkind behaviour quickly and fairly. They say that they feel very safe and very well looked after. One pupil commented that, 'It feels like everybody tries to help each other'. Some pupils even commented that they preferred coming to school rather than staying at home during the school holidays.

Pupils say that they like their teachers because they are kind and make learning interesting and fun. They enjoy lessons and list information and communication technology (ICT) as well as literacy and history among their favourite subjects. Their attitudes to learning are outstanding and pupils work hard in lessons. This enables teachers and teaching assistants to concentrate on helping pupils who are experiencing difficulties with their work. This was the case in a literacy lesson for Year 4 pupils when the class teacher and his effective teaching assistant had the time to help individual pupils complete their tasks successfully because all the other pupils were able to work well independently. However, the school is aware that improving attainment in writing, especially the ability of pupils to use basic writing skills successfully when completing longer pieces of work, is an area in need of development in all year groups.

Pupils are very aware of the importance of exercising regularly and eating healthy foods. They are very proud of the role of the school council in ensuring the school listens to their views. Older pupils believe they make a good contribution to the school and the wider community by, for example, organising coffee mornings for local residents. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and their good collaborative and independent skills are preparing them well for their future economic well-being.

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. However, while one aspect of their cultural development is in need of improvement, their spiritual, moral and social development is strong and this is reflected in the respect and care pupils display for others.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum mixes subjects together well while at the same time focusing on promoting the effective development of skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology. It has been designed to make learning interesting for pupils and to help broaden their understanding of the environment in which they live. The curriculum is enhanced through visits to places of interest for all ages of pupils and interesting visitors to the school. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. The quality of teachers' marking is good and gives pupils clear ideas about how to improve their work. Most classrooms are large and well resourced and teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to enhance learning. Teachers usually ensure the tasks pupils are expected to complete in lessons are matched to their different ages and abilities and offer the correct amount of challenge. However, this is not always the case and, on rare occasions, some tasks are either too hard or too easy and this results in pupils not making the progress they are capable of.

The school promotes an outstanding level of care, guidance and support for pupils. Parents and carers value the way the school looks after their children and pupils say they are confident they will always be very well looked after. Very effective induction and transfer arrangements help pupils settle quickly into new routines while positive links with families and effective partnerships with outside agencies enable the few pupils

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experiencing difficulties to make good progress. Vulnerable pupils receive excellent levels of well-targeted care and support in order to enable them to play a full part in school life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked well to ensure that the school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve and that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. She has been well supported by the staff and by the governing body, which takes its duties seriously and offers the school a good level of support and challenge.

The school has worked hard to develop good links with parents and carers, especially those who are hard to reach. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers comment that they are happy with their children's experiences at school. Safeguarding procedures are good and meet all requirements. This is reflected in the exactness of staff recruitment and vetting checks and in the way the school regularly monitors and evaluates its policies and practices. Staff and governors receive regular training about safeguarding issues and are well aware of the importance of their role in protecting pupils.

The school's work in promoting community cohesion is satisfactory. It uses its effective links with the local church and community well to develop pupils' understanding of shared values. However, the school realises there is a need to do more to enhance pupils' appreciation of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the wider national community. Links with external agencies and partnerships with other institutions are used effectively to support pupils' learning and well-being.

Systems for monitoring well-being and progress are good and used effectively to provide all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also the more able pupils, with the support they need to be successful learners.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents value the good quality of education the school provides for their children. They comment positively about the 'safe and happy learning environment' and the enthusiasm of staff. The words of one parent aptly sum up the good quality of provision: 'My daughter only started this term and can't wait to go to school every day. I have seen her grow in confidence since starting in September.'

The classroom the Reception children share with pupils from Year 1 is large and colourful, as is the recently constructed outdoor area. Both have been designed to provide children with stimulating learning environments. As a result, children enjoy participating in an interesting range of activities, either adult led or ones that they choose themselves. Welfare is given a high priority and children are happy and feel safe. Good leadership and management ensure that both the class teacher and teaching assistant keep a close check on how well individual children are progressing in order to ensure lessons are planned effectively. As a result, children make consistently good progress in all areas of learning because good teaching caters well for their needs, regardless of their abilities or previous experiences.

Even at this early stage in the school year, children happily share and take turns. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is good and children are prepared well in their Reception year for transfer into Year 1. However, although behaviour by girls is consistently very good, a very small minority of boys can be quite boisterous and this can, on rare occasions, affect the quality of their behaviour and their learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires or who were spoken to by inspectors held very positive views about the school. The overwhelming majority were happy with their children's experiences at school. Most believe their children enjoy school and that the school helps children to have a healthy lifestyle. A very large majority believe that the standard of teaching is good and that their children are making enough progress. Several commented favourably about how safe they felt their children were. Few parents and carers expressed any concerns although a very small minority felt the school was not led and managed effectively and that the school did not take account of their suggestions or concerns. A few felt that the standard of teaching was not good and that the school did not help them to support their children's learning.

Inspectors considered these comments and judged the school was led and managed effectively and that the school took account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns. Inspectors also judged that the standard of teaching was good and that the school helped parents and carers to support their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 109 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	65	17	33	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	73	13	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	38	23	44	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	54	17	33	3	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	25	48	20	38	4	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	54	19	37	5	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	58	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	46	21	40	2	4	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	40	26	50	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	33	29	58	3	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	38	22	42	4	8	3	6
The school is led and managed effectively	21	40	19	37	6	12	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	58	20	38	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, Wimborne BH21 4JN

Thank you for welcoming the other inspector and myself to your school. Everyone was really friendly and helpful. We enjoyed talking to you about what you like the most about school and seeing you all working hard in lessons.

Yours is a good school which means that it gives you a good start to your education.

Here are some of the main things we found out about your school.

- Children get off to a good start and make good progress in their Reception year.
- The standard of your work in mathematics and reading is well above average for your ages.
- You enjoy school a lot and this is reflected in your good attendance.
- You have excellent attitudes to work and your behaviour is outstanding.
- Your school takes very good care of you and makes sure you are always very safe.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors lead and manage the school well.

We believe your headteacher and teachers can improve your school so we have asked them to:

- help you to improve your writing, especially when you write longer pieces of work
- help you to find out more about the customs and traditions of people living in this country who are from different cultural backgrounds to your own.

Once again, thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school and remember you can help your school to improve by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron

Lead Inspector

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