

St James' CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106437
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	355949
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Adrian Dance
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Rowley
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven lessons were observed and six teachers, one trainee teacher, five teaching assistants and a learning mentor were observed working with pupils and children. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work, and documentation looked at included the school's self-evaluation form, school improvement plans, the most recent School Improvement Partner's report, tracking data on pupils' progress, documents and policies relating to the safeguarding of pupils. Inspectors looked at 39 questionnaires received from parents and carers plus those completed by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in securing the upward trend in achievement, including for more able pupils and particularly in English.
- The security of the school's judgement of outstanding for pupils' behaviour.
- Whether the care, support and guidance provided for pupils, including those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, are outstanding.
- The impact of middle leaders in bringing about improvement.
- The features of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision that justify the school's outstanding judgement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average. Of these pupils an above average proportion speaks English as an additional language and a very few are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. There are fewer girls than boys compared to most primary schools. A very few pupils are looked after by adults other than their own parents. A few pupils are from Traveller families. The school shares its site with an annexe of the local Children's Centre. The Reception class achieved the Wigan Quality Standard for Excellence in provision in July 2010. The Reception class shares some of its facilities with a Nursery class with places for 20 children. The Nursery class is managed currently by a voluntary provider comprising school staff and governors. It is subject to a separate inspection report. Refurbishment of the whole school was completed very recently.

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

St James' is a good school. Outstanding care and support ensure a secure and welcoming environment for pupils of all background or circumstances. Other outstanding features include behaviour, use of assessment to support and accelerate learning, and provision in the Reception class. Leaders and managers, supported by highly-committed staff and the governing body, are relentless in their successful pursuit of ambitious aims for school improvement. Since the previous inspection, they have successfully improved many aspects of the school, in particular, pupils' enjoyment and achievement and the impact of teaching, assessment and the curriculum on pupils' learning, all of which are now at least good. Consequently, pupils feel happy and safe and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Attendance has improved to an above-average level and attainment and achievement are on an upward trend, demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve further.

The school builds highly-successful, positive relationships with parents and carers, including those who may find it difficult to work with the school. Consequently, parents and carers are actively involved in school events and in supporting their children's learning. Alongside the extended services in the Children's Centre annex, the school is an important hub of support for the local community. The Reception class provides an excellent start for children. The highly stimulating classroom and outdoor area and the close attention staff give to children's well-being and development result in a hive of busy, happy and confident children. The outstanding use of assessment across the school focuses staff and pupils on success and achievement and is a key factor in the accelerating progress. Professional development, that includes teaching assistants and other support staff, deals with the right priorities identified through rigorous monitoring and largely accurate self-evaluation. Staff work successfully as a team to share effective approaches to teaching, learning and assessment and to develop an exciting curriculum relevant to pupils' interests and needs. Consequently, pupils make good progress throughout the school and reach average attainment by Year 6. The proportion reaching above-average attainment in recent national tests for writing and mathematics has been lower than average. Inspection evidence shows that more pupils are currently on course to reach above-average levels by the end of the year.

The governing body increasingly holds leaders and managers to account for the school's performance. However, the role of the governing body in monitoring, evaluating and supporting school improvement is underdeveloped as shown by an over-reliance on information provided by school leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment further by:

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- securing the increase in the proportion of pupils reaching above-average levels by the end of the year in both mathematics and writing
- raise further the challenge for more able pupils during the introduction and final part of lessons.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation role of the governing body by:
 - providing well-focused training to develop confidence in carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities
 - developing a structure and cohesion to visits to the school by members of the governing body so that they are more closely focused on school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are eager to learn and enjoy lessons. They apply themselves diligently to tasks. Having worked with the teacher to complete challenging tasks on multiplication, a Year two pupil said, 'I love doing work'. Year four pupils enjoyed the literacy lessons on developing a script so much that a number of them produced their own play scripts at home unprompted by the teacher. Most present their work carefully and by Year 6, many write imaginatively, using well-structured sentences and paragraphs. Much of the handwriting is mature and well-formed. Pupils enjoy the many well-structured opportunities to talk about their work and which help to stimulate their writing. They take great interest in their own progress, finding the 'Steps to Success' and 'Ladders of Learning' meaningful and excellent motivators in raising their aspirations.

From the overall well below-average starting point at the start of Reception, progress is good throughout the school. Data on pupils' progress show that attainment is rising and progress accelerating. The work of Year 6 pupils shows that more are on track to reach above-average attainment in writing and mathematics than in recent years. Pupils with special educational and/or disabilities, those who are learning English as an additional language and pupils from Traveller families, all receive carefully planned support from school staff and external support agencies so helping them to achieve well.

Pupils say there is very little bullying and they know that staff are there to help them. Pupils enjoy plenty of physical activity and have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. Pupils are proud of their school. The school council is active, making improvements to the playground and organising a school disco. There is a committed and enthusiastic Eco-council. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong actions and most understand the consequence of their actions on others.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?

Teaching is good and on occasions it is outstanding. Relationships between adults and pupils are highly positive. Classrooms are stimulating environments that support learning and celebrate pupils' achievements. Lessons are well-structured and purposeful and learning progresses at a good pace. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to stimulate learning and to provide opportunities for pupils to work independently. Tasks interest and challenge pupils and take them carefully through steps in learning. The major tasks in lessons are challenging for more-able pupils although there are missed opportunities during the introductions and final parts of lessons to provide further challenge for the more-able. Teaching assistants provide well-targeted support for pupils.

The use of assessment is outstanding and a key factor in accelerating progress and driving up attainment. Accurate assessments ensure that teachers fill gaps in learning and match the bulk of tasks closely to pupils' abilities and needs. Staff use simple but highly-effective systems that make it explicitly clear to pupils how they can succeed in each lesson and over time. Pupils frequently refer to the 'Steps to Success' that are set out clearly on boards on each table, to guide their learning and they enjoy the sense of achievement gained from reaching the next 'I can do "rung"' on the 'ladders of learning'. Marking precisely identifies how well pupils have achieved and what they need to improve.

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Pupils contribute to devising the relevant curriculum that makes the most of the locality, visits further afield and visitors to stimulate interest and enthusiasm for learning. A recent visit to a castle prompted much excitement and good quality writing in Key Stage 1. There is good emphasis throughout the school on developing language and literacy skills through talk and drama, alongside a well-structured programme of learning letters and sounds to support spelling, reading and writing. Progression in basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is well planned. The work carried out as part of the themes and topics provides good opportunities for further practice of basic skills in literacy, and increasingly in numeracy and ICT, within interesting contexts.

The school is an extremely happy and welcoming place where staff care deeply and work very hard to ensure that every pupil feels happy and secure. The school very quickly recognises and responds to pupils' different circumstances, particularly those that make children more vulnerable, including those looked after by adults other than their own parents. Staff meticulously seek the right support both from within and beyond the school to help pupils and their families overcome barriers to learning. The nurture centre provides excellent support for pupils with emotional difficulties. Many support staff are trained and highly effective in providing specialist support for a wide range of additional needs. Since pupils enjoy their time in school, parents and carers increasingly appreciate what the school offers their children and pupils' attendance has improved significantly. Senior leaders work closely with staff to identify potential underachievement quickly and ensure that support is provided to boost pupils' progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

Dynamic senior leaders are successful in galvanising staff, sharing their strong sense of purpose and driving through improvements. Challenging targets have raised expectations and the aspirations of staff and pupils. Improvement planning is tightly focused on raising attainment and performance management is linked closely to school priorities. Staff work collaboratively and share responsibility for developing new approaches, for example, to assessment and learning in English and mathematics. Teaching assistants have clear roles and responsibilities, taking on different specialist support areas. Senior leaders use data on pupils' progress rigorously to hold teachers closely to account for pupils' progress. The school is aware of the need to develop further the role and skills of middle leaders in contributing to the school cycle of monitoring, evaluation and review.

The governing body, which includes a number of new members, is highly-supportive of the work of the school and attendance at meetings is good. They are aware of the

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school's strengths and its priorities for improvement but are not fully confident in the role of monitoring and self-evaluation.

Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Staff and adults working with children have been suitably vetted. Risk assessment of all areas and activities within school and for educational visits are rigorous.

Many parents and carers are highly engaged in their children's learning. For example, there was a high level of interest in the project where Hindu puja worship trays were designed by pupils and their parents and carers. Successful coffee mornings where parents and carers are invited to the school are increasingly popular events. A group of parents and carers is working with school staff to develop their own mathematical skills in able to support the learning of their own children. A number of parents and carers who started helping in the school have become qualified teaching assistants.

The school is highly committed to and successful in supporting every pupil, whatever their circumstances and background. Rigorous monitoring of the progress of individuals and groups helps the school to take action and successfully close gaps in performance. For example, more-able pupils are beginning to make better progress and the gap between girls' and boys' achievement is closing.

Community cohesion is planned and reviewed well. The school is a harmonious community. Pupils have a good understanding of the range of faiths and cultures in the local area. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds and their families contribute to activities in school to celebrate their different culture and religions. The school has developed links with a school in a rural area of the country and is planning to form links with schools in city areas and globally.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The Reception class is a highly-stimulating and a very well organised learning environment. Children settle into the routines very quickly, learning to play with each other, share equipment happily and to take responsibility for recording the activities they choose to pursue. They understand the need for healthy food and independently take their fruit and milk snack mid-morning, remembering to record that they have done so. They understand how to behave well when playing or working in a group with adults. There is an excellent balance between activities led by staff and those chosen by the children. Activities within all the areas of learning are very carefully planned both indoors and outdoors to promote progress and stimulate imagination. The theme of space is the source of much excitement and children have contributed their ideas to the activities they can pursue. Children enjoy being outdoors and happily dress themselves in full waterproofs and wellington boots on wet days and they understand how to keep themselves safe. Leaders and managers are outstanding. Staff work exceptionally well as a team to meet high expectations. They are highly focused on individual children's development, identifying additional needs early and ensuring support is provided. Excellent systems of assessment help staff to know where to give additional support and challenge. In response to the weaker development in communication, language and literacy there is a strong focus on developing early skills in communication, recognition of letters and sounds and early writing. Talk between adults and children is used exceptionally well to promote good progress in communication language and literacy skills. From a well below average start children make good progress overall and exceptional progress in their personal development. Most reach the goals expected for their age in many areas of learning. However, skills are weaker in recognising letters and sounds, writing and numeracy.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

A minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. They are very supportive of the school and recognise that the school is improving rapidly and a place where they are welcomed. A few have concerns about the management of poor behaviour. The inspectors found that the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. The school is aware of the few pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and they are supported very carefully, helping them to settle and be ready to learn.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James' CofE Primary 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 149 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	64	14	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	64	14	36	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	51	17	44	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	56	15	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	59	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	51	17	44	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	49	19	49	1	3	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)	21	54	16	41	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	54	16	41	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	56	10	26	5	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	46	15	38	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	51	14	36	3	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	62	13	33	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



10 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' C of E Primary School, Wigan, WN3 5XE

Many thanks for making the inspectors feel very welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking to many of you and hearing how much you enjoy and are proud of your school.

St James' is a good school and getting better all the time. All the staff and the governing body work exceptionally well together to keep all of you safe and happy in school, including those of you who have extra difficulties to overcome in their lives. The care, guidance and support that staff provide for you all are outstanding. Your school has worked outstandingly well with your parents and carers to help you to do well and the school is becoming a hub for your local community. You are a real credit to your school. Your behaviour is exemplary and it was good to see how keen you are to do well in lessons. It was heartening to hear how much you like the excellent 'Steps to Success' that guide your learning in lessons. You are all clearly very pleased when you manage to climb up to the next 'rung' on the 'Ladders of Learning'. Children in the Reception class have an excellent start to their time at St James'. You are all well taught, make good progress and your achievement is good.

I have asked the school to do a few things to help you to do even better in your school work. These include:

- helping more of you to reach above-average levels by the end of the year in both mathematics and writing
- making sure that those of you who are the most able have to think even harder during the introductions and final part of lessons
- helping the governing body to find out more about your school and how it works so that they help to make it even better.

You can play your part by continuing to enjoy coming to school and trying your best. Try and make the most of all that the school can offer you. I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector

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