

St James' CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112362
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378476
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Sue Sharkey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Pidduck
Headteacher	Angela Rawlinson
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sue Sharkey
Sheila Mawer

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

The inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed seven teachers and one teaching assistant while visiting 11 lessons. Discussions were held with the headteacher, school staff, groups of pupils, and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed pupils' work and looked at a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's system for tracking pupils' progress, documents regarding the safeguarding of pupils and key policies. Inspection questionnaires from 48 parents and carers were scrutinised and those from school staff and pupils were also taken into account. The lead inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

This is smaller than most junior schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to free school meals is above the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds with a few speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average.

The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has the Arts Mark Gold and British Council International School Award.

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

Inspection judgements

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

Key Findings

- This is a good and inclusive school. Pupils make good progress from their starting points when they join the school in Year 3 so that attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average by the end of Year 6. It is not an outstanding school because pupils make better progress in reading and mathematics than they do in writing, especially boys in Years 3 and 4. Progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6 so that boys are catching up with the girls in their writing and the gap in their attainment is closing.
- A calm atmosphere pervades throughout the whole building creating a rich and purposeful environment where pupils blossom. Parents and carers are very positive about school life saying that their children are happy, safe and grow in confidence.
- Good teaching ensures that lessons have a brisk pace, expectations are high and lessons are exciting. Some aspects of teaching are not as strong. Pupils' assessment information is not used rigorously enough so that activities, especially for the more-able pupils, are not always stimulating or challenging. Marking does not consistently help pupils know how to improve their work and there are not enough regular opportunities for writing in different subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Pupils say they feel safe and if they have a problem they can turn to any adult in school who will help them. Pupils are polite, respectful and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The headteacher is well supported by the drive and commitment of the staff and governing body who all share her vision and sense of direction. She has an accurate view of provision in the school and provides strong leadership for the management of performance. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching are good and staff participate in regular training to bring about improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of pupils' writing further by:
 - building on current good practice to increase and extend imaginative opportunities for writing in other subjects
 - accelerating boys' progress, especially in Years 3 and 4, in order to close the gap between boys and girls.

- Improve the quality of teaching further in order to accelerate progress by:
 - ensuring that marking consistently shows pupils how to improve their work
 - using assessment information more rigorously to ensure that activities in lessons provide consistent stimulus and challenge, particularly for the most able.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and contribute confidently to class discussions. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were discussing the 'Titanic' disaster. The teacher asked good questions to initiate discussions in groups. Pupils had prior information which they used well to aid their debate. They were keen to put forward views as well as challenge each other's thoughts. Pupils are willing to participate, recognising the importance of listening well and valuing each other's contributions to the discussion. In another lesson, Year 3 and 4 pupils were consolidating their understanding of letters and sounds. Pupils enjoyed the lively activities using letters to make different words, spelling them out and sharing new vocabulary. Pupils were keen to join in and showed a real willingness to learn.

Parents and carers are correct when they say that their children are making good progress. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been broadly in line with national averages in both English and mathematics. Attainment in mathematics has been slightly better than English but the school's current focus on improving writing, especially for boys, indicates that, with accelerated learning, attainment in English is rising and continues to close the gap between girls and boys. However, senior leaders recognise this is a work in process and boys' progress in writing in Years 3 and 4 needs to accelerate further still. The school makes very good use of local facilities as well as visits and residential activities to stimulate pupils' learning and to grab their enthusiasm. There are many opportunities to develop pupils' confidence as well as their speaking and listening skills but full advantage of engaging pupils in writing across other subjects and during different activities is sometimes missed. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs as well as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make the same progress as others because staff select the right support and intervention for them. A skilled team of teaching assistants works closely with these pupils and carefully assesses their progress, adapting provision to suit individual needs.

Pupils say they enjoy reading. They are keen readers and have plenty of opportunities to use their reading skills when working in groups or individually during lessons. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 say they like to read adventure stories and usually read at least one book a week. When reading they read with expression and confidence. By the end of Year 6 pupils' reading is broadly average. The well-stocked library inspires pupils to read a wide range of genres. Here, pupils can curl up with a book enjoying some quiet time whilst following a good story or seeking information.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is predominantly good throughout the school. Pupils say they learn a lot in lessons and find them interesting because teachers make the planned curriculum relevant and tailor it to their needs. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are well taught. Inspection activities confirm that this is the case. Lessons are characterised by a very supportive atmosphere in which relationships are strong, enabling pupils to work well in groups and individually. Strong features in teaching include the good subject knowledge of the teacher as well as imaginative and stimulating activities, which fire pupils' enthusiasm. Although teachers generally plan well, using assessment information to match work to pupils' abilities, their planning does not always provide pupils, particularly the more able, with enough opportunities to challenge their thinking.

Teachers use a range of different teaching styles in order to stimulate and successfully help engage pupils. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the teacher engaged pupils well through quick-fire questions in order to assess their knowledge of finding the perimeter of shapes. Activities followed and pupils used a range of skills to solve the measurement problems. Computers were used confidently by some pupils enabling them to carry out their work using different independent skills. Tightly focused learning objectives and good use of steps to success ensure pupils know what is required of them. Marking is regular, giving good praise, but there are not always enough comments to help pupils know how they can improve their work.

Teaching ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through different subjects of the curriculum. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together, understanding how to take turns and to respect each other's views.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils manage their own behaviour well, upholding the school's high expectations. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the different types of bullying saying that pupils do occasionally fall out and disagree but that there is no bullying in school. The school is a very harmonious community where safety is of vital importance. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning; they get on well with one another and enjoy school, which is reflected in their above average attendance. They are polite and courteous demonstrating respect for adults and each other. Behaviour in lessons and around school is consistently good and this makes a strong contribution to their learning and their positive experiences. Pupils told inspectors

that their school is a friendly, , and safe place and inspectors confirm this. Parents and carers agree that their children behave well and feel safe in school.

The school council is pleased that its roles and responsibilities help the school to run smoothly. The members wear blue caps at break time so that they can be clearly identified if other pupils need help quickly. They say this system works well and are proud that they can help others in school to enjoy break times. Following break times, pupils return swiftly to their classes where they settle into lessons and show instant enthusiasm towards their work.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's drive, ambition and vision unite staff towards common goals. She knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well and this is evident in the school's accurate self-evaluation. There is a great sense of teamwork. Subject leaders share the headteacher's vision for making the school even better. They have a good understanding of their subject, carry out their monitoring role effectively, for example, through observing lessons, and they plan for school improvement well. The good leadership of English has ensured that reading is a strength throughout the school. Writing is improving, particularly for boys, and the determination of all staff to close the gap between boys and girls attainment is evident. The school gives importance to staff training and a good programme of professional development is resulting in consistently good teaching. The school's good track record of improvement since the previous inspection demonstrates that the school has a strong capacity to improve further.

The excellent relationships throughout the school mean that every pupil is known by all adults and their needs are addressed on an individual basis, ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. There is no evidence of discrimination of any kind. The governing body provides good support and challenge to school leaders to drive improvement. Along with school leaders, it is actively involved in monitoring the well-being of pupils. All safeguarding requirements are met. The school is extremely well committed to working in partnership with parents and carers as well as other schools and organisations. These strong links enable leaders to work closely together for support as well as providing a wide range of opportunities to promote pupils' learning and well-being.

The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of pupils and provide them with rich experiences. The wide selection of enrichment activities offered to pupils provides them with opportunities to develop interests, confidence and self-esteem. The curriculum is designed to support both academic and personal skills and there is always a wide range of stimulating visits out of school as well as visitors who come into school who add considerable value to pupils' learning and personal development. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their musical talents, as seen in assembly, when pupils were learning new songs for their performance in church. The successful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven through the curriculum and throughout all aspects of school life. Pupils enjoy learning about their own town, exploring and celebrating different cultures as well as dance and African drumming. Consequently, pupils are able to reflect on and discuss issues that concern them maturely.

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.
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.



23 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' CofE Junior School, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 1NY

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you, watching you learn in lessons and listening to some of you read. Your behaviour is good overall both in the classroom and outside and we were impressed to see how well you play together at break time. Overall, we found that your teachers teach you well and your school provides you with a good education, so that you are able to make good progress in your work.

There are a few things that we have asked the school to do to help you make even better progress, especially in writing. First, that you have more opportunities to write in other subjects, not just English. Second, that all pupils, particularly boys in Years 3 and 4, work hard so you do really well in your writing. Third, that teachers mark your work differently so that they write comments to help you even more to know what you have to learn next. Fourth, that teachers make sure that your work always challenges you so that you can all do really well.

Congratulations on everything you do to help your school. Talking with the school council helped me to see what a good job they do in helping out at break time to make sure that everyone has a good time. We were pleased to hear you say that teachers make lessons fun while you learn. We were also delighted to hear you say you enjoyed school.

I know your school is very proud of you. Your headteacher, staff and the governing body care for you well. Remember always to do your best and help your teachers. Thank you for helping us.

Yours sincerely

Sue Sharkey
Lead inspector

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