

Sankey Valley St James Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133676
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	360564
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Barbara Flitcroft

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Litton
Headteacher	Mrs Vivienne Formby
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at learning. Sixteen lessons and eight teachers were observed. Time was spent scrutinising school policies, the school improvement plan, minutes of the governors' meetings and other documents, analysing pupils' work, checking information on their current progress and talking to them about it. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Thirty six parents' and carers' questionnaire returns were considered and also questionnaire returns from staff and pupils.

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

- How well pupils achieve, in particular in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and assessment and the impact these have on pupil progress.
- The work of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the impact of this on children's progress.
- How effectively leaders and managers have led improvement since the last inspection.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average primary school and has a higher proportion of girls than boys. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. A large majority of pupils are from a White British background; the rest belong to a range of different ethnic groups and few speak English as an additional language. More pupils than normal join or leave the school partway through their primary education. The percentage of pupil stability is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is almost double the national average; no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school has gained a number of awards including International Award, Activemark, Eco School Silver, Artsmark and it has Healthy School Status.

There is a children's centre on the school site where private providers organise breakfast and after-school care. This did not form part of this inspection but a report on its quality can be found on the Ofsted website

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

Sankey Valley St James Church of England Primary is a good school which has improved considerably since its last inspection. Pupils benefit from stimulating opportunities to enrich their learning such as visits to museums and other places of interest, and residential trips. Learning opportunities are significantly enhanced by a range of outstanding partnerships. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to live a healthy lifestyle and are very actively involved in a range of sports, some provided through the school's excellent partnerships and others through amateur clubs in the local area. Parents and carers are very happy with the school and what it offers their children. One parent said, 'The headteacher and staff are the best we have experienced.'

Thanks to the good pastoral care, pupils feel safe at school and able to turn to adults if they have a problem. The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Throughout the school, pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and show a high level of enthusiasm about taking on the many opportunities for responsibility. Key Stage 2 'Olympic Ambassadors', for example, were preparing to speak about 2012 in front of the rest of the school in assembly. Eco monitors speak about their roles enthusiastically. Pupils get on exceptionally well with one another and are supportive of others. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school; their attendance is in line with the national average.

There has been an improving picture of progress since the last inspection and pupils now achieve well at all key stages. Overall, pupils reach average standards in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. However, pupils' attainment and rate of progress in mathematics are slowed by those pupils who have difficulty recalling number facts quickly enough, which affects their ability to solve problems. Also, in mathematics, the activities used at the start of some lessons do not link to or aid the main part of the lesson.

The headteacher and senior staff give the school good direction. They have introduced very effective systems for target-setting and school self-evaluation in response to the recommendations of the last inspection. As a result leaders and managers at all levels are now thoroughly involved in monitoring teaching and tracking progress. The governing body is now confident about challenging the school and holding it to account. Good work has been done to improve the quality of teaching and the proportion of good teaching has greatly increased. Senior leaders and the governing body have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Development planning focuses on the most important priorities for the future and leads to effective action. Consequently, the school has a good capacity for further continuous improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in mathematics by:
 - - giving pupils greater opportunities to learn and rapidly recall number facts
 - - encouraging pupils to use a wider range of mental strategies to solve problems
 - - linking the mental and oral starting activities, where appropriate, to the main activity in mathematics lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils contribute to the good progress that they make in lessons by displaying positive, enthusiastic attitudes to work. The enjoyment seen in lessons and work in pupils' books show that pupils are working comfortably within the challenging targets set for them by the school. All groups of pupils achieve well from their generally below average starting points. Although significantly good progress is made in mathematics from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, there is still room for them to make even faster progress.

The school has accurately identified that attainment and progress in writing have been weaker than in reading and mathematics, particularly for some boys. Leaders have begun to address this successfully with a number of actions, including finely-tailored teaching of writing skills and opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the school's inclusive practice, and the work which is planned in small steps to help them grow in confidence and succeed. Pupils from minority-ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress in line with others. Former differences in the attainment of boys and girls have been addressed effectively by the school.

In the school's safe, 'family' environment, pupils develop their personal and social skills well. They are invariably sensitive and supportive towards each other. They are particularly helpful to those who experience difficulties, ensuring that they feel fully included in all aspects of school life. Pupils exercise efficiently their many responsibilities, such as the good work of the school council and of 'buddies'. They participate in school activities with great enthusiasm and are making a positive contribution to their local community. Pupils have a good understanding of what is meant by eating healthily; they love their 'Healthy Hero' sessions and actively participate in physical activities, confirming the reasons for their achievement of awards.

Pupils have a thorough grounding in basic skills and information and communication technology. Pupils' business enterprise activities and their good social development ensure that they are well prepared for the next stages of education, and eventually for working life.

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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	3
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?

Teachers make lessons interesting and exciting. They use a variety of information and communication technology to bring learning alive. For example, younger pupils writing a setting for a story in which they had to describe the trees in a forest used some amazing vocabulary, prompted by a slide presentation with appropriate music made by older pupils in the school. Effective questioning challenges pupils' thinking to help them accelerate their learning. Skilled and caring teaching assistants usually make a significant contribution to supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to gain confidence and success in their learning. However, they are not always used to best effect, for example, in the teaching of the daily phonics sessions for younger children. The planning and execution of mathematics lessons do not always provide pupils with enough opportunities and strategies to hone their skills of mental recall and problem-solving. The regular celebration of pupils' efforts and successes helps to ensure they are well motivated and willing to do their best.

Day-to-day assessments of pupils' progress and attainment are accurate. Pupils know their targets and many older ones have a clear view of how to improve their work. There are good examples of the way teachers' marking guides pupils' learning, but pupils do not have the opportunity in lessons to respond to this.

The curriculum and excellent range of additional activities make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. The after-school clubs are well attended and these combined with the

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many visits and visitors enhance learning opportunities for pupils. The school aims to offer a more creative curriculum for pupils to use their skills across different subjects. The impact of a writing initiative has led to better attainment in that area, particularly for boys. The school recognises the need to raise aspirations for learners and has forged links with the local collegiate and university to inspire pupils about their future careers.

Pupils are confident they can turn to an adult for guidance and support. Staff know the children and their needs very well. The potentially vulnerable receive caring and thoughtful support as individuals, in pairs and in small nurture groups.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team and staff make a cohesive unit who work tirelessly to improve provision and outcomes for pupils. The school and its governing body set measured but challenging attainment targets derived from accurate tracking of pupils' progress. All teaching staff are involved in identifying strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performances and in targeting underachievement. Improvement planning is closely linked to high-quality professional development of staff to help them to overcome any weaknesses in their work. The school promotes equality of opportunity successfully in ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress and attain equally well, for example, by the way in which it has improved boys' attainment in writing.

The governing body is knowledgeable about the school. Its members have a good understanding of its strengths and are fully involved in evaluating the quality of provision and planning for improvements. They are meticulous in ensuring that arrangements to safeguard pupils are in place. The school ensures that all adults are suitable to work with children, and that child protection arrangements and assessments to minimise any form of risk are fully in place and work smoothly.

The governors and the leadership team are active in promoting community cohesion locally and globally. The school's links with parents and carers are very effective and much effort is made to involve them in their children's learning. Leaders have already planned opportunities for the further involvement of parents and carers. The school liaises closely with the children's centre staff in order to offer pertinent support and therefore get the best outcomes possible for pupils and their families. Other partnerships such as those with the local cluster of schools bring a wealth of benefits for pupils.

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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	1
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

There is a happy, purposeful atmosphere in the attractive learning areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enjoy being in school and are well motivated to learn. They show good levels of confidence in their relationships with adults. Children are very involved in their learning and are encouraged to extend their speaking and listening skills at every opportunity. The activities, both inside and outdoors, are stimulating, and work on display enhances learning, often linked to literacy and number activities.

When starting the Nursery, many children show levels of development that are below those expected for their age, with a significant minority well below those levels. They make up ground quickly as a result of good teaching. When they start in Year 1, many children's skills are now close to the standards expected of them due to the good progress they have made.

The balance between adult-directed work and work chosen by children is good. Assessment procedures are in place to provide effectively for the individual learning needs of each child. Good leadership and management ensure adults are well trained and that the whole unit provides high-quality care and support for children. Induction procedures are good. Parents and carers speak highly of the level of communication with staff and the school has identified the need to encourage more of them to assist with their children's 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

Parents and carers spoken with and the few who returned the questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They appreciate the care and concern it gives their children. Many make a significant contribution to the partnership of helping to develop their children's learning. The vast majority believe the leadership and management of the school are good and have a positive impact on pupils' progress and the effective running of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sankey Valley St James Church of England 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 179 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	61	13	36	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	58	14	39	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	64	12	33	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	58	14	39	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	61	13	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	56	12	33	3	8	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	47	15	42	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)	14	39	18	50	3	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	44	18	50	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	47	15	42	3	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	42	14	39	5	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	42	15	42	3	8	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	50	14	39	1	3	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.



21 March 2011

Dear Pupils,

**Inspection of Sankey Valley St James Church of England Primary School,
Warrington, WA5 1XE**

Thank you for making the team feel so very welcome and for answering all our questions when we visited recently to inspect your school. Particular thanks to those who filled in responses to the questionnaire. We concluded that Sankey Valley St James is a good school in which you receive lots of help from your teachers and teaching assistants to enable you to do well. We think that your behaviour, politeness and manners are excellent.

We were impressed to learn that you and the vast majority of your parents and carers are very happy with the quality of education you receive and that you enjoy all the additional activities and educational visits that the school provides. It is good to know that you feel safe in school. Your understanding of how to stay healthy is very impressive, as is the care and guidance that you receive. Your superb behaviour is helping you to make positive gains in your learning and creates a very happy school community where you all care so well for each other. The interest you show in lessons helps you take full advantage of the good teaching you receive and therefore make good progress. We were also impressed by your knowledge of people who come from other parts of the world and whose culture is different from your own.

We know that your school leaders and governors are always striving to make the school even better. With this in mind, we are asking them to make some improvements in the teaching of mathematics. You can help with these improvements by continuing to work hard and by practising your number facts so that you can say the answer straight away without having to work it out on your fingers.

The inspection team wishes you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Flitcroft

Lead inspector

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