

# St James CofE VA Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122035
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359155
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kath Campbell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	411
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Spenceley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Barke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Harlestone Road St James, Northampton NN5 7AG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 751475
<b>Fax number</b>	01604 685060
<b>Email address</b>	head@stjames.northants-ecl.gov.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 14 teachers and 21 lessons. Four lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and pupils. They also spoke informally to parents and carers. They observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures and child protection. They looked at pupils' past and present work and scrutinised 150 questionnaires completed by pupils and 80 by parents and carers.

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

- The progress made, particularly by boys, in writing.
- The standards more-able pupils reach in mathematics and whether they are high enough.
- The consistency of the quality of teaching and whether it is good enough to promote good learning for pupils.
- The effectiveness of the relatively new leadership team in driving through improvements that lead to higher standards.

## Information about the school

St James is a larger-than-average school situated near the town centre. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and of those who speak English as an additional language are above average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school manages a specially resourced provision on site for 10 pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, known as the Designated Special Provision. Consequently, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. The school has recently gained Healthy Schools status and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

**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 that has made rapid improvement since its previous inspection. Its most notable strength lies in the good leadership and management provided by the headteacher and senior leaders. There has been a significant rise in expectations of what pupils can achieve. The improvement in the quality of teaching and learning is the key to the school's success. Teachers and other adults manage pupils very well and behaviour is outstanding. Well-targeted initiatives, such as those to encourage a greater enthusiasm for reading and writing, have made significant inroads into a legacy of underachievement. Older pupils' work shows that attainment has risen and is now broadly average. In English, an upward trend is very evident in the work of pupils throughout the school, particularly in reading. Actions taken to engage boys' interest in writing have been partially successful but have yet to have a full impact on standards. Similarly, initiatives designed to raise attainment in mathematics, by widening the opportunities for pupils to apply their learning to everyday situations, have brought about notable improvements, but some of the more-able pupils are not reaching the standards of which they are capable.

Pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress. Those within the Designated Special Provision achieve equally well from their low starting points, due mainly to the well-targeted individual support they receive. Good interim leadership and management arrangements within the unit have successfully enabled it to move forward at a crisp pace during staff absences. Assessment procedures are of high quality and are used far more effectively than in the past. Marking is good, but is not always used with enough precision to move pupils on to the next steps, particularly in mathematics. Rigorous systems for tracking progress have made a significant contribution to recent improvements. Potential underachievement is identified early and effective intervention strategies quickly get pupils back on track.

The curriculum is good. High-quality displays celebrate success across a wide range of subjects. Pupils enjoy a good range of after-school activities that develop social skills and healthy lifestyles very effectively. Opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills in different subjects are developing well but are not consistently implemented. A particular strength of the school's good care, guidance and support is the effectiveness of monitoring systems in raising attendance levels. This is a real success story. The support offered to pupils and their families makes a major contribution to pupils' good personal development.

Parents and carers rightly appreciate the work of the school. As one commented, 'I cannot fault this school. I would recommend it to anyone.' The headteacher and deputy headteacher present a highly effective partnership that has successfully steered the school through difficult times. Together, they have created an impressively good climate for

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learning where staff have a very strong commitment towards raising attainment. There is a warmth and friendliness that permeates the work of the school.

The school has moved a long way in a short space of time through the drive and determination of staff. Senior leaders have a very clear vision for the future. They have a precise perception of strengths and weaknesses and their self-evaluation is accurate. The governing body is very well led, and is supportive of the school. Highly effective leadership, combined with rigorous tracking systems and pupils' rapidly accelerating progress, give the school a good capacity to improve.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise standards in boys' writing throughout the school by:
  - extending the range of opportunities that are specifically designed to engage the interest of boys as well as girls
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to practise writing skills across the curriculum
  - developing boys' interest in writing at an early stage so that they sustain an enthusiasm as they move through the school.
- Raise levels of attainment in mathematics, particularly for more-able pupils, by:
  - developing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in a variety of practical ways
  - sharing the outstanding practice that exists within the school
  - using marking more effectively to move pupils on to the next steps.

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

**2**

Pupils typically start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below the levels expected of children at this age. Despite making a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they move into Year 1 with a lower than expected proportion having achieved the early learning goals. Until recently, pupils did not make enough progress as they moved through the school and standards remained low at the end of Year 6. Rates of progress were uneven because teaching was not good enough. Highly effective monitoring and well-targeted staff training have had a very strong impact. Inspection evidence shows the rate of pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly because pupils have an enthusiasm for success brought about by far more effective teaching. Attainment in Year 6 is now broadly average.

Participation in initiatives such as 'Drama for Writing' is starting to increase pupils' enjoyment of writing and is playing a strong part in improved achievement. The books of younger pupils, in particular, reflect a growing ability to write at length. In mathematics, work is matched to pupils' needs with far greater accuracy than in the past, successfully accelerating learning. This was observed at its most effective in an outstanding Year 6 lesson when pupils were learning about area and perimeter. Boys and girls were equally challenged by the range of activities. More-able pupils, in particular, made rapid progress because not a moment was wasted. They quickly got down to a separate range of very

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challenging activities and were highly successful because the quality of support they were given was of the highest calibre.

Pupils with special needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress when working in small groups. A good level of individual attention enables them to develop the confidence and self-esteem to succeed. The pupils in the Designated Special Provision also make good progress, despite their barriers to learning, because their needs are catered for effectively. Their excellent integration into mainstream classes benefits the whole school community and results in the gap in attainment narrowing between them and other pupils.

Pupils of all ages say they enjoy school because lessons are fun. They particularly value the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Parents and carers are unanimous in their view that their children are safe. Pupils take responsibilities very seriously, such as becoming youth mentors in Year 5. They recognise that there are others less fortunate than themselves and regularly raise money for causes such as the Haiti appeal. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school capitalises very effectively on the richness and diversity of culture that exist within the school, enabling pupils to gain a secure understanding of life in a multicultural society. By the time pupils leave, their good social skills and improving key skills in areas such as literacy and numeracy mean that they are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

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

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## How effective is the provision?

Parents and carers rightly believe that their children are taught well. There are many strengths within teaching and learning. A quarter of the lessons observed were of outstanding quality. Teachers' enthusiasm and professionalism shine through in lessons. Their skilful use of questioning and clear explanations ensure pupils undertake their work with confidence. Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their own levels of understanding and this adds to their enjoyment of learning. Providing pupils with the highest level of challenge is a feature common to the best lessons, enabling pupils to make rapid progress. However, the quality of teaching is not totally consistent. Just occasionally, teachers talk for too long and leave pupils with too little time to practise skills. In a few lessons, teachers miss opportunities to move pupils on to a greater level of challenge.

The curriculum is rich and diverse. There have been significant changes in the past year and a successful move towards a more integrated skills-based approach. Initiatives such as 'Reading Recovery' and 'Every Child a Writer' have made a good contribution towards raising standards. A strong personal, health and social education programme contributes greatly to good personal development. Pupils particularly appreciate the numerous visitors that greatly enhance their learning. However, the new curriculum is still undergoing fine-tuning and has not yet had a full impact on standards.

Pupils know they are part of a very caring, supportive community, where they can thrive academically and socially. Pupils' care and welfare are given a high priority. The nurture of pupils and families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable is impressively good, enabling pupils in need of personal support to participate fully in school life. The breakfast club provides an enjoyable and purposeful start to the day for many pupils. The school works closely with outside agencies and the high-quality work of learning mentors and inclusion support staff makes a major contribution to the success of the school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

There is a clear determination by the headteacher and senior leaders to secure rapid improvement. In their quest to raise standards, leaders at all levels monitor meticulously the quality of teaching and the progress of individual pupils. They are totally focused on eliminating underachievement. The restructured phase and development teams have successfully provided staff with a valued voice in decision making. There is a clear vision for continuous improvement. The 'Raising Attainment Plan' is of high quality and is

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increasingly underpinned by precise analysis of pupils' progress. Governance is good. The governing body shows a strong commitment towards raising performance and monitors the work of the school well. Safeguarding procedures are secure, meet requirements and follow good practice. The single central record, in particular, is maintained with impressive precision. The school is a strongly inclusive community where pupils from all backgrounds and abilities feel valued and participate equally in all aspects of school life. Discrimination is tackled very effectively through the care and support pupils are encouraged to give to their Designated Special Provision friends when they are integrated into lessons. The school promotes community cohesion well. There are strong local links, particularly through the school's good links within the parish. The school reaches out effectively to the wider community through, for example, its links with a rural school. Links at a global level with pupils in Kenya are a recent addition. The school is an impressively harmonious, cohesive and happy community where adults and pupils get along well together.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children enter the reception classes with weak early language, literacy and numeracy skills. Those at an early stage of learning to speak English make rapid progress through very effective one-to-one attention. Overall progress is good in all areas of learning. The strong emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional growth and language development effectively enables children to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Staff create a warm, nurturing environment where children feel very secure. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the good start their children receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are given numerous opportunities to become involved in their children's learning. All staff work together effectively as a team. Routines are well established and children experience a wealth of rewarding learning experiences. Occasionally, some independent activities lack sufficient challenge for more-able children.



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The outdoor area is an integral part of learning and children have freedom of choice to work indoors or outside. Children gain a good early understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are inquisitive and animated, particularly when working on independent activities. Teaching is of a consistently good quality and the high ratio of staff to children ensures staff can interact fully with individuals, enabling them to make good progress. 'Foundation Stage Profile Books' are of good quality and provide secure evidence of the progress of individual children. The transition into Year 1 is carefully thought through and particularly effective in ensuring a seamless move to work related to the National Curriculum. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well, and all staff have a clear grasp of strengths and weaknesses and a clear direction for improvement.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 relatively low proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, but those who did respond are overwhelmingly appreciative of the school. They are unanimous in their views that the school keeps them informed about progress and meets their children's particular needs. They particularly like the quality of teaching and learning and the fact that their children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Very few expressed any concerns and isolated comments tended to be of an individual nature. The lead inspector followed these up with the school. The inspection team spoke to parents and carers to gain a wider view and found a high level of satisfaction.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James CofE VA 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 411 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	68	24	30	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	66	25	31	0	0	2	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	45	56	35	44	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	56	34	43	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	58	30	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	55	35	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	44	41	51	3	4	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)	36	45	41	51	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	46	41	51	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	43	42	53	2	3	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	40	41	51	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	54	35	44	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	61	29	36	2	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St James CofE VA Primary School, Northampton, NN5 7AG**

Thank you for looking after us all so well when we came to see your school. We found you friendly, polite and kind and we think your behaviour is excellent. You should be really proud of that. You like your work and you get on well with all the adults that teach you and look after you. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and looking at your books.

You go to a good school that has improved a lot. You told us how much you enjoy your work in class and how much you like all the clubs you have after school. You make good progress because you are taught well. There are lots of adults in school to help you when you get stuck.

We have asked your school to do some things to help it improve even more. We have asked the teachers to give you the chance to use your numeracy skills in lots of different ways. Some of your teachers are very good at teaching numeracy and we want all the teaching to be as good as theirs. We want to make sure you know how to improve each time you have your numeracy work marked. The boys are getting better at writing but some need more help for it to be really good. We want you to enjoy your work so that you feel confident to write more. We have also asked for you to be given more time to practise your writing skills in different subjects.

Please help by coming to school every day on time, doing your best and keeping up that excellent behaviour. Well done to all of you!

Yours sincerely

Kath Campbell

Lead inspector

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