

St James C of E Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123148
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380608
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2011
Reporting inspector	James Henry

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	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Burge
Headteacher	Jayne Snewin
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Meetings were held with senior staff, a member of the governing body and a group of pupils. Inspectors visited nine lessons and observed five teachers. They looked at the school's work, self-evaluation documents, records of teaching observations, tracking data showing pupils' progress, and teachers' planning. In addition, 39 parent and carer questionnaires, as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff, were received and analysed.

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

- The extent to which pupils, especially the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make progress across Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The effectiveness of teaching in meeting the needs of all pupils in mixed age classes.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in improving the quality of the school's work and ensuring all pupils make good progress.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. Almost all of the pupils are from a White British heritage and all pupils have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average and there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. There is provision for pre-school children on site but this is not managed by the governing body and was not part of this inspection. The school has achieved the Comenius Award for work with international schools and the Healthy 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: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

St James is a good school. There is a strong Christian ethos in the school. Pupils are attentive and keen to learn. They greatly appreciate their school and respond with good behaviour and general courtesy to each other and adult staff. As one pupil said, 'It's an exciting and fun school.' The school's success lies in the fact that each pupil is known as an individual, resulting in good pastoral care, guidance and support. Good relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils feel safe and are happy at school. They enjoy the many sporting and creative activities that are on offer through the curriculum. This is because a real strength of the school is its effective partnership with other local schools to provide enrichment opportunities that would otherwise not be possible.

Teaching is good overall throughout the school, with lessons being well planned to meet the needs of pupils in mixed age classes. This is due to effective monitoring by senior leaders. However, occasionally lessons are excessively teacher-led, which means that some pupils, particularly the more able, do not have enough opportunities to be actively involved, and this restricts their progress. Through the effective work of middle leaders, the school is building on the already rigorous system to track pupils' progress and this is improving the way the school identifies any gaps in pupils' learning. Although at an early stage of development, teachers are now using this information to further inform their planning in order to further meet individual or groups of pupils' needs. Present school data shows that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress across the school. However, progress slows in the earlier part of Key Stage 2, and progress for a minority of pupils in writing is not as consistent as it is in reading and mathematics.

The small size of each year-group means that results fluctuate but good teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1, and the effective use of assessment information ensure attainment is above average and rising by the time pupils leave. However, not enough pupils consistently achieve the higher levels in either English or mathematics.

The school's Comenius award for work abroad and its strong links with other local schools reflect its good commitment to promote community cohesion. However, links with different British cultural communities to further develop pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of British society are at an early stage of development. Pupils have good awareness of the diverse cultures abroad but their understanding of Britain's multicultural society is not as well developed. The deep-rooted Christian

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ethos in the school promotes pupils' spiritual development very well and pupils have a good sense of right and wrong.

The headteacher sets a clear vision for the school and promotes good teamwork in a supportive manner. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and leaders at all levels have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, for example in identifying the need to quicken the pace at which pupils develop their writing skills. Also following an evaluation into the achievement of different pupils, a gifted and talented register has been established to allow teachers to plan activities that better meet the needs of individual pupils, but this initiative is still at an early stage. Together, leaders have been effective in moving the school forward, for example in the consistent rising attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. This shows that the school has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and ensure pupils, especially the more able, make consistently good progress, especially across Key Stage 2 by:
 - balancing the use of teacher-led lessons with appropriate opportunities for pupils to work independently and take proper responsibility for extending their learning in all classes
 - increase the rate at which pupils develop their writing skills, through providing more opportunities to write in different styles and settings
 - using the new progress monitoring system to identify and address any gaps in pupils' learning.
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion by establishing links with schools nationally in different cultural settings to strengthen pupils' understanding of Britain's multicultural heritage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy learning and their generally good progress was clearly evident in the majority of lessons. For example, in one lesson, a pupil sat in the 'hot seat' and pretended to be an alien from another planet. Other pupils then asked questions and the imaginative answers and responses prompted lively and humorous discussion that effectively developed pupils' vocabulary skills. In another lesson, younger pupils were learning about the idea of a fair test to discover if an object was shorter or longer than another through practically measuring scarves with their hands. Pupils with special needs and/or disabilities needs are fully included in lessons. They are well supported in their learning by teaching assistants and make good progress, given their starting points. While there is some variation from year to year due to small numbers, children enter school with skills and abilities broadly in line with those typically seen in this age-group. Overall, their attainment is above average by the end of Year 6, which shows good progress, although over time this has been better in mathematics than English.

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The school has achieved the Healthy School award and this is reflected in pupils' good understanding of the importance of being healthy. For example, in a science lesson, older pupils were able to enter into quite a detailed discussion about the importance of having a balanced and moderate diet. Pupils say they feel safe in school and they willingly undertake responsibilities, such as completing the 'bus register' and leading 'wake and shake' sessions across the school. Eco-councillors are elected by each class and contribute effectively to the school community through recycling activities and energy saving initiatives. Pupils contribute to the wider community not only through raising money for charities such as Oxfam, but also by being involved in local schemes such as studying the flow of a neighbourhood stream as part of the Comenius project.

Pupils in different year groups in mixed age classes get on well together, with older pupils willingly helping the younger ones. By the time they leave the school, pupils' good all-round achievements and above average attendance ensures that they are well prepared for their next stage of education.

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	2
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	2
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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make good use of technology, such as interactive whiteboards, to engage pupils in their learning. Teachers often include activities such as practising mental mathematical skills, which allow pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills. Effective use is made of open-ended questioning, with teachers using their good subject knowledge to extend pupils' knowledge and

¹ 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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understanding in lessons. Teachers have high expectations, especially about behaviour in lessons, and this contributes effectively to pupils' good attitudes and learning. Teaching assistants are generally effective in supporting groups or individual pupils, especially those with special needs and/or disabilities. However, on occasions, they are not fully involved in supporting pupils' learning during the introduction to lessons.

The school has developed a wide-ranging curriculum that effectively links subjects together to make learning more meaningful for pupils. For example, in a science lesson observed, pupils were using their mathematical skills to calculate the number of calories in different types of meals. Themes such as 'Victorian Day' provide opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills through linking different subjects together. The school has extensive grounds that contain resources, such as a sensory garden, that allow different aspects of the curriculum to be taught outdoors, especially during the summer months. This adds to pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning. The school has established good partnerships with other schools to enrich its curriculum. This results in specialist sports coaches providing a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as football, tennis and athletics. The school also provides for meeting other pupils' needs through activities such as computer and art clubs. The good use of visitors and local and residential visits adds to pupils' enjoyment and motivation to learn.

The well-being of pupils is given the highest priority and staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the needs of individual pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good links with outside agencies are available to support pupils and their families when necessary. The work of the special educational needs coordinator, supported by all staff, plays an important part in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully involved in the life of the school.

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 headteacher has established a clear vision for improvement. Despite this being a small school, the headteacher has effectively delegated responsibilities for the work of the school amongst senior and middle leaders. This has embedded a shared purpose and strong commitment amongst all staff to continue to raise standards and improve the progress of pupils.

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The governing body are not only supportive of this drive for improvement but are also challenging in holding senior leaders to account for standards across the school. They visit school on a regular basis and provide written reports that are discussed and questioned at governing body meetings. A recent change has been to assign a governor to each class in order to further strengthen the effectiveness of monitoring by the governing body.

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community, where all pupils are equally valued and free from any form of discrimination. The provision for the care and well-being of all groups of pupils demonstrates the school's good commitment to ensuring that all pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, they make good progress across the school in line with the very large majority of other pupils.

Commitment to community cohesion is good. The school has very good links within the local community, for example with the local parish church. Also through the Comenius project, links abroad with schools in France and Spain are very strong. However, promotion of community cohesion at the national level is not as strong as that given to their grasp of the local and international dimensions of this provision.

There are good arrangements to safeguard pupils. This view was unanimously supported by parents and carers who completed and returned questionnaires. Staff have been well trained in child protection procedures. Adults are fully vetted before being allowed to work in school and there are effective risk assessments for activities both in and out of school. Governors have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training, including procedures to ensure that staff are suitably recruited.

These are the grades for Leadership and Management

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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the school, due to good induction arrangements. The close links with the pre-school setting on site ensure that the majority of children are well known to staff on entry to the Reception class. Good relationships with parents and carers enable children to feel safe and happy in a positive and welcoming environment. Due to the small numbers in each cohort, there can be variations each year in children's outcomes in different areas of learning. However, overall, children make good progress and reach at least, and, in certain cases, above national expectations by the time they enter Year 1. Children respond well to learning through play. They know how to play safely and, for their age, have a good understanding of why they eat healthy snacks and drink water regularly. Children show good independence and share and cooperate well together. For example, children were quite happily developing their vocabulary skills through role play in 'the shop'.

This good progress results from good teaching. Staff assess children's progress through careful observations during activities. These observations inform further planning to meet the needs of children. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, although on occasions, opportunities are missed to fully link together the focus of indoor and outdoor learning activities. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. The leader knows the strengths and areas for development in the setting. All safeguarding and welfare requirements for the children are met. There are also good opportunities for the professional development of staff to ensure they have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

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

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Views of parents and carers

A higher percentage of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than is usual. All those who responded thought that their children enjoyed school and that the school kept them safe. A few parents and carers felt that the school did not inform them about their children's progress and that their children were not making enough progress. Inspection evidence found that the school did have regular meetings to inform parents and carers about their children's progress. They also found that while progress overall was good, progress slows in the earlier part of Key Stage 2, and progress for a minority of pupils is not as consistent in writing as in reading and mathematics. A few parents and carers felt that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Again, inspection evidence found that pupils' behaviour was good in classrooms and around school, that pupils responded well to staff when asked and that the school has appropriate procedures both to promote good behaviour and deal with any unacceptable behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James C of E 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 94 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	73	10	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	70	10	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	48	14	35	5	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	53	11	28	6	15	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	20	50	16	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	55	14	35	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	60	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	60	10	25	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	50	12	30	3	8	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	28	20	50	4	10	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	25	25	60	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	45	20	50	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	55	17	42	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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 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"> ■ 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.



12 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James C of E Primary School, Wantage OX12 0JN

I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and watching you work with your teachers in lessons and around the school. All the staff work hard to help you learn and enjoy school. The school gives you a good standard of education and cares for you well. Here are some of the other good things that we found out about your school.

- You enjoy school and like being with your friends.
- You are keen to learn and to do your best and make good progress.
- You behave well and treat each other with respect and are always willing to help around school.
- You enjoy taking part in the activities that the school has to offer, especially sporting events and visits abroad.
- Older pupils are always willing to help younger children in the Reception class.
- You enjoy being eco-councillors and think recycling is very important.

To help the school become even better, we have asked the adults in charge of the school to do three things.

- Make sure everyone makes consistently good progress across the school, especially in writing.
- Increase the number of pupils who get the higher levels in English and mathematics, especially at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Provide you with more opportunities to learn about different communities in Britain, through developing links with a school in a different setting from your own.

You can help too by continuing to work hard, listening to your teachers and helping each other in lessons and around the school.

Yours sincerely

James Henry
Lead inspector

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