

# St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119503
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	379819
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Declan McCauley

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>	185
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Reid MBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Cliffe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Off Stopes Brow Lower Darwen Darwen BB3 0QP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight teachers in 19 lessons or part-lessons. They held meetings with three representatives of the governing body, the School Improvement Officer, staff, parents and carers and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work closely and looked at the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, its improvement plans, reports on its work, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors considered questionnaires from 84 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

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

- Inspectors explored why the attainment of more-able pupils is better in mathematics than in English.
- The team examined whether the school's leaders have brought about as much improvement in achievement as possible.
- How robustly school leaders and managers at all levels, including members of the governing body, are driving further improvement.
- Inspectors examined the extent of pupils' understanding of living in a global multicultural world.

## Information about the school

The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils come from a White British background. Very few pupils who speak English as an additional language attend the school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is in line with the national average. The headteacher returned to school full-time this term, following a substantial period of absence due to serious illness, which created some instability in school leadership. The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy Schools status and the Activemark.

**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. The school environment is very welcoming. All pupils enjoy attending school and learning in lessons that are engaging and interesting. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved under the dynamic and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher and the well-focused governing body. A shared vision exists among all staff to improve the outcomes for the pupils. The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with their children's experience of school. Pupils have many good opportunities to learn in a very stimulating and highly caring environment. Members of the governing body responded decisively to the many staffing challenges during the past year and a half. They ensured, through careful planning, that no pupil failed to do as well as they could academically. Last year saw the best ever attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics.

Children enter school with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average, although higher in mathematics than in English. There are some minor inconsistencies in teaching, although overall it is of good quality, resulting in pupils making good progress from the time they join the Reception class. Teachers often use assessment well to support pupils in their learning. However, teachers' marking of pupils work sometimes does not give explicit advice for improvement and work provided for some more-able pupils sometimes lacks challenge. Pupils do not have clear targets in all subjects.

Robust self-evaluation provides senior leaders with accurate knowledge of the improvements needed. Regular monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress is a key tool used by school leaders to bring about improvement. Members of the governing body hold the school fully to account. The governing body, headteacher and other leaders are fully focused on further improving pupils' attainment. Strengths in school leadership combined with the desire to obtain the best outcomes for all pupils and the improvement, which has taken place, mean the school has good capacity to bring about further improvement.

Pupils are well behaved throughout school, contributing to their good learning. Exceptionally robust processes enable all staff to care for pupils effectively, ensuring that they are very well guided and supported throughout their time at school. Pupils are encouraged well to adopt healthy lifestyles resulting in them being very well

informed about health issues. Pupils make a very substantial contribution to their school and are highly active in the community. An exceedingly wide range of opportunities is provided by the school that contributes strongly to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

- Raise attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
  - ensuring that all pupils, but especially the more able, are challenged appropriately in lessons
  - making sure that teachers have consistently high expectations of what all pupils can achieve.
  
- Eradicate minor inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring all marking identifies the next steps in learning for pupils
  - maximising opportunities for independent learning in lessons
  - sharing the existing good practice to bring about improvement
  - extending the setting of targets for pupils across all subject areas.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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All pupils are very positive about their school and enjoy being involved in many aspects of school life. They particularly enjoy lessons where they have the opportunities to direct their own learning. In lessons, pupils apply themselves well to learning tasks and are eager to make progress. When pupils start school their language and literacy skills are generally less well developed than their numeric understanding. All pupils make good progress because of the very well-structured support that is tailored for individual pupils' needs. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good rate of progress as that of other pupils.

Pupils speak confidently about how safe they feel in the school environment. They are very aware of the importance of a healthy diet and participate regularly in a wide range of sporting activities. The pupils are involved widely in the local community. There are numerous events run in school, the local church and wider community that would not occur if it were not for the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and pupils. The 'angelic sounding' school choir is made up of a talented group of musicians who perform for others on a regular basis. Attendance is improving. Pupils' well-developed personal and information communication technology (ICT) skills, along with their average attainment in mathematics and English, ensure that they are well prepared for their future lives. All pupils are reflective; they are very thoughtful and consider the needs of each other carefully. All pupils have a very well developed understanding of living in a multicultural world. They have many links with schools and organisations throughout the world. In conversation, they demonstrate a tangible understanding of what it is like to be from a culture other than theirs. They speak with feeling about the importance of being respectful and considerate of others and their feelings.

*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>2</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

In lessons where teaching is effective, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and learning moves at a fast pace. Skilful teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding of what they have learned and direct them carefully to enable them to achieve success. In one lesson, the teacher questioned a small group of pupils about how they would feel if they were stuck in a traffic jam and they were inhaling petrol and diesel fumes, in order to develop their understanding of vocabulary. In lessons where teachers have planned and structured independent learning opportunities, pupils participate very enthusiastically and speak with great confidence and enthusiasm about what they have learned. In a small number of lessons, more-able pupils are not fully challenged and in others, all pupils have insufficient independence. There remains some minor inconsistency in the way pupils' work is marked. Some teachers do not have high expectations of what pupils are capable of learning. On occasions, teachers do not always identify fully the next steps in learning for all pupils, leading to some pupils being unclear about how to improve their work. Targets are set and used well by teachers and pupils in English and mathematics, although not in other subjects.

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils effectively. It supports pupils' academic and personal development and well-being very well. Exemplary care is provided for all pupils at St James' enabling them to progress successfully through school. Pupils are nurtured fully; their talents are recognised and developed through very high-quality support and guidance. Pupils with physical disabilities, such as visual impairment, are fully integrated into school life and thrive because of the support provided. Transition from St James' to the next school is very well managed and enables pupils to prepare for transfer without anxiety.

*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

<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

<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>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The effective leadership of the school has resulted in improved attainment over a three-year period. School leaders at all levels, including members of the governing body, are motivated well to improve the quality of teaching and further raise attainment. These are areas, which they have clearly identified in their self-evaluation. The school's improvement plans demonstrate how they aim to bring about further improvement. During the absence of the headteacher, the governing body worked very successfully to ensure that the school was led and managed effectively and were very well supported in this by the whole school community. During this period of instability, improvement was driven securely. The monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out rigorously by the headteacher, members of the governing body and, more recently, by subject leaders.

The governing body is effective and discharges its responsibilities fully. Members work closely with the school to ensure that good procedures are fully in place to keep all pupils safe. The school works well with a very wide range of partners to support the learning and well-being of all pupils successfully. Relationships with parents and carers are good. The school website demonstrates a clear commitment to working closely with parents and carers by sharing information to benefit pupils' development.

School leaders are particularly successful in ensuring that all pupils are given equal chances to succeed in their education. There is a strong stance against any suggestion of discrimination. Much is done successfully to promote community cohesion through a broad range of strategies and links. Recently, pupils gained much from visiting a school in another area where the overwhelming majority of pupils comes from a variety of other ethnic groups. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the visit and the insights they had gained from the link which the school intends to develop further in the future. St James' is resourced well overall and this has a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils.

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

The Early Years Foundation Stage team is led well. Members of the team work well together to enable children to adjust to school routines rapidly. Children make good progress from their below-expected starting points. Very good relationships exist in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which enable children to develop their social skills well. Adults build a variety of development opportunities into activities selected by children. One adult was observed painting with children and taking the opportunity to enhance their language acquisition through the use of descriptive language with words, such as 'swirls and wobbles'. Teachers and adults are skilled in making activities fun and very engaging. Children are very willing and collaborative learners, who have many opportunities to take part in independent activities in a harmonious atmosphere. The Reception classroom is organised and planned well, providing an effective stimulating environment in which children enjoy undertaking the variety of planned and independent tasks. There are opportunities for the free flow of play in the outdoor area. Children feel safe in their learning environment. Children's development is carefully monitored and recorded, enabling adults to have a good understanding of how much progress is being made and where further work is needed. Children are well prepared for the start of Key Stage 1 by their time in the Reception class.

*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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Nearly half of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. A very large majority of these parents and carers was positive about the school and its work. A number also wrote comments to expand upon their views. Many praised the staff for their work in helping their child to develop, particularly those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. One of the comments made by parents and carers was, 'The staff at St James' support children and parents 100%. As a parent, I feel that nothing is too much trouble for the staff at school no matter your sex, gender or race, etc. All pupils and parents and carers are given equal rights and no one is treated as an outsider no matter what the circumstances.' A number of parents and carers raised questions about applying for holidays in term-time and health and safety issues. Inspectors found that the headteacher deals with the process of managing absence for holidays in term-time appropriately and health and safety guidelines are adhered to.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at 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 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 185 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	57	33	39	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	64	28	33	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	49	37	44	4	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	50	38	45	2	2	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	54	64	27	32	0	0	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	52	38	45	0	0	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	52	37	44	0	0	1	1
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)	35	42	44	52	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	51	38	45	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	48	38	45	4	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	44	40	48	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	47	56	36	43	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	60	32	38	0	0	1	1

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 is 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](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.**



18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School, Lower Darwen, BB3 0QP**

Thank you for being so welcoming towards the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you to learn about your school. Thank you to all who completed the pupils' questionnaires; they provided us with lots of information about your views. Clearly, you go to a very friendly and welcoming school. It provides you with a good education and it has some outstanding features, which you enjoy.

These are the main things that we found out about your school.

- You behave well at all times.
- Staff care extremely well for you and you are very well supported and guided in school.
- You take on lots of important roles in school and in the wider community.
- You reflect well on what is right and wrong and know a lot about people from other cultures.

We have asked the school's leaders to do two things to help make things even better.

- Enable you to attain even higher standards in your work at the end of Year 6.
- Improve teaching further so that your lessons are even more exciting.

We saw many of you trying hard in lessons and we hope that you will continue to do this in the future so that you make as much progress as possible in your learning.

Yours sincerely,

Declan McCauley  
Lead inspector

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