

St James Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106239
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	377386
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Toms
Headteacher	Jackie Walker
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2009
School address	Cheriton Close Off Underwood Road Hattersley Hyde SK14 3DQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons taught by six teachers and met with parents, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and local authority representatives. They observed the school's work, looked at procedures for the care and protection of pupils, documentation including school and national data on pupils' progress, improvement plans and samples of pupils' work. Questionnaires from pupils, staff and the 30 returned by parents and carers were scrutinised.

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

- The effectiveness of strategies implemented to accelerate progress particularly in Key Stage 2.
- The impact of actions to ensure pupils are taught consistently well throughout the school.
- How well the leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the school's performance and ensure there is secure capacity for improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. Children attend the Nursery class on a part-time basis. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A well-below-average proportion are from other ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high and so is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school offers a breakfast club each morning. The school holds Healthy School Status and the Active School award. There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Particular strengths are the Early Years Foundation Stage, the way pupils are cared for, guided and supported and their personal development. Behaviour is good and all pupils say they enjoy school. 'It's fun!' was a typical comment, showing they are happy and feel safe. Parents and carers who returned questionnaires were very pleased with the school, reflecting the school's effective engagement with them.

Achievement is satisfactory for all pupil groups and attainment is broadly average, although stronger in mathematics than in English. Children start school with the overall level of skills well below those expected for their age. They get off to a good start and progress well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, resulting in satisfactory progress. This accelerates to good where teaching is strongest, but slows where teaching is less effective. Tracking systems provide clear information about pupils' progress. However, this information is not always used effectively to plan learning activities which reflect pupils' different abilities, or to set sharply focused targets. Appropriately directed support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language ensures they make sound progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. School actions have increased pupils' confidence as writers but they do not always organise their ideas well. Vocabulary choices are often limited and errors in spelling and punctuation, and variable handwriting detract from the overall quality. In addition, pupils do not always understand the meaning behind the words they read.

The curriculum meets all requirements. Pupils enjoy enrichment activities and experiences beyond the classroom, such as sports, learning a brass instrument, singing at the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester and visits. They have a good knowledge of health issues and reflect the good care they receive by being caring and considerate towards each other. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The curriculum and pupils' personal development both benefit from effective partnerships with external providers and agencies.

The headteacher's strong, purposeful drive and clear vision are fully shared by leaders, managers and the governing body. Staff morale is high and parents and carers are very supportive. Significant staffing changes have slowed the rate of improvement since the last inspection. Decisive actions have boosted attainment in

mathematics, raised attendance and implemented an effective marking policy. In their questionnaires, all pupils said teachers show them how to improve their work. Rigorous evaluation of the school's performance ensures leaders and managers accurately identify areas for development but some improvement plans lack precise detail about expected outcomes. The capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Value for money is also satisfactory.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching from satisfactory to good to in order to eliminate variations in pupils' progress by:
 - sharing the expertise, skills and good practice already found in the school
 - improving the way tasks are matched to pupils' different abilities
 - ensuring teachers set precise targets for their pupils and check them regularly to see if they have been reached.

- Raise attainment in English by:
 - enhancing pupils' reading comprehension skills
 - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting, and the way in which they organise their sentences
 - finding ways to help pupils develop a wider vocabulary to use in their writing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils say they enjoy the variety in their lessons, so they behave well and work cooperatively with staff and their classmates. Good relationships, regular attendance and keen attitudes aid learning. Most pupils are careful to present their work neatly.

Lesson observations, the work in pupils' books, school and national data show attainment is average and progress is satisfactory overall. However, progress through the school varies. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and most reach the expected levels. In 2011, pupils progressed well in mathematics and slightly exceeded the expected level. In English, the quality of writing is often lowered by limited ideas and vocabulary, variable quality handwriting, errors in spelling and punctuation and rambling sentences. Reading is satisfactory but pupils do not always draw meaning from the words they read. Appropriate strategies to boost progress and attainment in English are beginning to have an impact which can be seen in older pupils' lively descriptions of an imaginary journey through the digestive system, but these strategies are not fully embedded.

Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, they know they can trust the staff and bullying is not seen as a

problem. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example, as monitors on the stairs. School councillors want to help improve the school and succeeded in getting new football markings on the playground. Pupils know how to care for their health and personal safety. They look out for each other, celebrate each other's successes and reflect on the choices they face in life. Attendance is satisfactory, and often good. Pupils' academic skills, good personal skills and regular attendance are a satisfactory basis for their future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Effective behaviour management and the promotion of good relationships were strengths in all lessons observed. Pupils particularly enjoy art, mathematics, literacy and information and communication technology lessons. Some good teaching was observed during the inspection, but this is not found in all classes. The better lessons feature secure subject knowledge and imaginative, practical learning activities so pupils make good progress. Older pupils greatly enjoyed their design brief to create houses incorporating two-dimensional shapes. When time is not used well or tasks are not well matched to pupils' different abilities, progress is only satisfactory. Marking is rigorous and includes useful guidance to improve pupils' work. Assessment systems provide clear progress information and pupils know their targets, but these are not always precise or checked regularly. This means that overall the use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory rather than good.

The curriculum satisfactorily promotes pupils' basic skills and there is a good programme for personal and social development. Literacy and numeracy skills are extended through other subjects, for example, science or history. Cross-curricular themes capture pupils' imagination and link subjects, such as in the Navaho Indians topic. Skilled support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language, ensures their progress is satisfactory. Enrichment activities feature professional sports coaches, music tuition and out-of-school visits, including a residential experience. Pupils enjoy learning in

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

the outdoor classroom and also report that they enjoy attending the variety of after-school clubs.

Improvements both indoors and outside the school have created a safe, welcoming environment. Good liaison with professional agencies supports pupils and their families. Staff are alert to emerging concerns about pupils, identify their needs promptly and swiftly implement support. The well-organised breakfast club ensures pupils are punctual and have eaten so they are ready to learn. Pupils who may be vulnerable because of their circumstances are well supported, ensuring they progress as well as their classmates. Effective transition arrangements ensure pupils move confidently to their next class and on to their next stage of education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The vision for ongoing improvement is shared by leaders, managers, the governing body and all staff. Concerted actions based on senior leaders' searching analysis of assessment and performance data, have successfully raised attainment in mathematics but pupil progress through the school is too variable. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning and performance management strategies are proving effective in raising the overall quality of teaching. However, some inconsistencies remain and senior leaders acknowledge further improvements in teaching could result from more widely sharing the good practice evident in some classes. The well-led and supportive governing body provides strong links with the local community. Members hold leaders and managers to account and make difficult decisions, but they are well aware of their share of the responsibility for the rate of improvement since the last inspection having been satisfactory rather than good.

Positive relationships between home and school benefit pupils. The school reaches out to help parents and carers support learning at home, for example, classes in literacy, mathematics or parenting skills. Good partnerships bring additional activities which the school alone cannot provide; for example, professional development for staff. Links with the parish and local schools broaden pupils' experience beyond the classroom: school councillors meet with other local school's councils. Suitable equal opportunities arrangements ensure there is no discrimination and all pupils can participate in everything the school offers. Good procedures for pupils' care and protection ensure training is up to date for all staff and the governing body. High priority is given to health and safety, records are kept meticulously and the site is safe and secure. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is a harmonious community and leaders and managers understand the context in which it works. Pupils learn about major world religions but have limited awareness of different communities and lifestyles in the wider world.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills when they start in Nursery are well below those typical for their age, especially in language. The warm, welcoming atmosphere and strong relationships with parents and carers ensure children settle quickly and happily. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. By the time they leave, most are working below the expected levels.

Good teaching provides an exciting range of interesting activities for children to explore and investigate. Children love working outside in the fresh air where Nursery children busily dug up and washed the carrots they had grown. Activities are carefully balanced between those led by adults and those the children initiate themselves. Some outstanding practice was observed in the Nursery class, where well-established routines help the youngest children feel secure. For example, the 'Daily Helpers' confidently ask questions to check if their classmates have completed all their tasks, an activity that also promotes speaking and listening skills. To boost children's limited vocabulary and oral skills, staff take every opportunity to encourage them to discuss their activities, enjoy books and recognise and write their names. Favourite stories, such as *The Owl Babies*, capture children's imagination and are used very effectively to link different areas of learning. Particular activities are planned to appeal to boys and involve them more closely with reading. For example, boys enjoyed pretending their owl puppets were reading them a story.

All Early Years Foundation Stage requirements are fully met due to good leadership and management. Progress is carefully monitored and all welfare arrangements are securely in place. The dedicated staff team is strongly committed to ensure children are happy and progressing well in all areas of their learning and personal development.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires, and were extremely positive about the school. All are happy with their child's experience, feel they are kept safe, helped to have a healthy lifestyle and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Parents and carers feel teaching is good, meets their child's needs and that they are helped to support learning at home. Whilst inspectors endorse overall these positive views, they found the quality of teaching to be satisfactory rather than good.

A very small minority feel that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively, that they are not given enough progress information, and their suggestions and concerns are not listened to. Inspectors discussed these views with school leaders. There is a clear behaviour code. Parents and carers receive an annual written report, there are two formal parents' evenings plus an informal drop-in session each year and staff are always willing to discuss progress. The school has acted on suggestions, for example, the purchase of an athletics kit.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James Catholic 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 inspector received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 124 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	63	10	33	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	73	8	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	60	11	37	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	63	9	30	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	60	10	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	60	9	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	53	12	40	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)	14	47	14	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	47	14	47	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	47	13	43	1	3	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	53	12	40	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	60	9	30	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	67	8	27	0	0	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 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).

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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James Catholic Primary School, Hyde, SK14 3DQ

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school. We met happy, friendly and well behaved children who were a real credit to their teachers and their families. I would especially like to thank school councillors and other pupils who talked to us at lunchtime. I enjoyed watching you light the candles on the Advent wreaths, visiting your lessons and hearing you playing the brass instruments. I was pleased to learn that your attendance has improved. You told us you enjoy school and so did your parents and carers. This is what I found.

I judged your school to be giving you a satisfactory education. The leaders and managers care for you well so you feel safe, and your parents and carers agree. The Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a good start. You know how to care for your health, and you make a good contribution to the school and the community. You usually reach the attainment expected for your age but it should be higher in English, and you could make faster progress if you were always taught well.

I have asked the leaders and managers to:

- make sure teaching is always the best it can be
- help you to improve your spelling, punctuation and handwriting, and to organise your writing using more exciting words
- make sure you understand what you are reading.

The leaders and managers have started to tackle these things already and I know you will do your best to help them.

I send you my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Kathleen McArthur
Lead inspector

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