

St James's CofE Primary School

Kingsway, Wollaston, Stourbridge, DY8 4RU

Inspection dates 31 October–1 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics, whilst improved, is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers match work to pupils' individual needs in a general way, but sometimes work is too easy or too hard and so does not enable pupils to make good gains in their learning.
- The quality of marking is variable and teachers do not always adhere to the school's new marking policy. Pupils do not all know how to check their own work so that they know how well they are doing.
- There is too much emphasis, in some lessons, on the completion of written tasks rather than developing pupils' mathematical and investigative skills.
- Pupils do not always understand the purpose of what they are learning to enable them to apply the skills they learn in other contexts.

The school has the following strengths

- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- The caring atmosphere of the school is outstanding and as a result, pupils' behaviour and safety are good.
- The determination of senior leaders to improve teaching has already made a measurable difference to improving pupils' achievement.
- The recent emphasis on teaching the links between letters and the sounds they represent has had a significant impact on improving standards in reading throughout the school.
- Evaluation is used continuously by the school in all aspects of its work, to see what can be improved still further.
- Links with parents are strong and parents are very included in, and supportive of, school activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all parts of the school in 18 lessons, of which, two were shared observations with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. In addition, pupils were heard reading and pupils' work in books was scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with representatives of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspection took account of the 83 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 39 responses to staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including those relating to safeguarding, planning and monitoring, records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, and the school's own data on pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Sheelagh Barnes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Verna Plummer	Additional Inspector
Neil Gillespie	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than average.
- The majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds, with fewer pupils than nationally coming from minority ethnic groups.
- Fewer pupils than nationally speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average overall, although a higher than average proportion is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is below average.
- There have been significant changes to staffing, since the previous inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post since September 2011.
- There is a playgroup, breakfast club and after-school and holiday clubs on site. These are inspected separately.
- The school has attained a number of awards, including foundation and intermediate International School awards. The school also holds Fair Trade School status.
- The school meets the current floor standards set by government, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of teaching, in mathematics in particular, so that pupils make consistently good or better progress in their learning, by:
 - teachers ensuring work is not too easy or too difficult for pupils
 - improving the consistency of teachers' marking and telling pupils how to improve in all lessons and subjects
 - involving pupils more in evaluation of their work and that of their peers
 - placing greater emphasis on practical, investigative and real-life topics that enable pupils to see the purpose of the skills they are being taught.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Mathematics has been identified by school leaders as an area for improvement. Progress of pupils is not yet sufficiently rapid or sustained in all year groups to bring about good achievement. There is too much variation between year groups and classes. In some classes, progress is good or even excellent on occasion, but in others it requires improvement.
- Children join the Nursery with skills that are at a typical level for their age. They make progress in line with that generally expected. On entry to Reception, standards are also in line with those expected for that age.
- Over previous years, children in Reception were making progress in line with that expected, but now, because of improvements to the quality of teaching, their progress is good. In the past year, children transferred into Year 1 with standards above those expected for their age.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with the national average and has been over the past three years. There has been a recent improvement in the progress pupils make when learning to read. This is currently good. Progress in mathematics is still more variable. Achievement in Key Stage 1 requires improvement overall.
- After the last inspection, standards dropped and pupils' progress slowed, so that, for some pupils, achievement was inadequate. This was particularly the case in literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2. Senior leaders acknowledged this and put effective systems in place to raise the quality of teaching and thus improve pupils' progress.
- Focus was placed firstly on improving the teaching of reading and phonics (the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent). This has already resulted in a sharp improvement in the progress pupils make in learning to read. Over the past year, pupils' progress in reading was good.
- Progress in reading and writing has improved. This acceleration is because of the work school leaders have done recently to improve teachers' knowledge and confidence in this aspect of pupils' learning. Whilst achievement over time in English still requires improvement, the progress pupils are currently making is more rapid than before.
- Groups of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make progress in line with their peers and with similar groups of pupils nationally. Teaching assistants support small groups or individuals effectively to enable them to make progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers plan lessons to interest pupils and with their different needs in mind. However, this planning is not always sharp enough. As a result, pupils occasionally work at things they find easy or have already mastered, or they find work is too hard to tackle easily. This slows the pace of their learning.
- In mathematics, teachers methodically teach skills, such as measuring and estimating. On some occasions, this is based around practical activities; on others, the move to written computation is too quick. When this happens, the pace of pupils' learning slows because pupils do not see the practical application of what they have been taught.

- A new marking policy has been introduced, helping to point out to pupils how they can improve their work and reminding them of their specific personal next steps. In some classes, this is having a significant impact in raising standards. However, it is not yet consistently applied in all subjects in all classes.
- Some teachers give pupils the opportunity to evaluate how well they have done in lessons. However, this is not yet consistently the case in all classes.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is good and results in these children making good progress in their learning.
- There has been a whole-school emphasis on improving the teaching of reading. As a consequence, pupils now make good progress in learning to read. The development of pupils' awareness of the letters of the alphabet and the sounds that they represent is also helping to raise standards in writing.
- Teachers make a highly effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the topics they choose and the emphasis they place on charity and thinking of others.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported effectively in class, and through individual and small-group tuition, so that they make progress in line with their peers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are considerate of others and keen to learn. As a result, behaviour in all parts of the school is good.
 - Pupils enjoy school and all it has to offer. This is shown in their above-average attendance and the fact that 80% of them take part voluntarily in the many clubs the school runs outside lesson times.
 - 'Pupil voice' is also a strength of the school. Pupils' views have been included in decision making within the school. This has been through school council, 'eco warriors' (to improve the school environment) and a worship group. Pupils also choose themes and hymns for assembly.
 - Parents say that they feel that their children are safe, and pupils agree that they are cared for and their views are held as important by school staff. They say that there is rarely any bullying or prejudice and that disagreements are resolved quickly.
 - The provision of after-school activities and a wide range of excellent opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development create a positive atmosphere and encourage pupils to make the most of good opportunities they have. As a result, the pupils are well prepared to talk about the world in which they live in, in a confident manner.
 - Staff manage the behaviour of pupils consistently well. They exemplify the respect they want pupils to emulate. As a result, the school is a calm and industrious environment and pupils conform to consistently high expectations.
 - Pupils say they are confident that any problems they have can be shared with staff. They know
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how to keep themselves safe and they recognise unsafe situations.

The leadership and management are good

- Underachievement of pupils has now been tackled by leaders, who have made the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning a priority. Initial focus was on the teaching of reading. The leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning in reading, which is now good. In turn, this has had a positive effect on the progress that pupils now make in writing. The focus has now been turned to improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.
 - Performance management is focused on improving the effectiveness of teaching and is linked strongly to the progress pupils make. To this end, teachers' performance in the classroom is linked to how well pupils make progress, and with the pay that teachers then receive.
 - School self-evaluation indicates that the headteacher and governors are aware of the strengths of the school and the most important priorities for improvement. The focus on improving teaching in reading has been effective. This year, the focus is on improving teaching and learning in mathematics. The quality has already started to lift. However, leaders are aware that further improvement to the quality of teaching is still required. The focus now is on ensuring consistent application of systems by all teachers, such as the new marking policy.
 - Safety and safeguarding are given suitably high emphasis and all requirements are met.
 - The school has had appropriate support from the local authority to enable leaders to have a clear, objective view of standards of teaching and learning for all ages.
 - The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in the Reception classes.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has contributed to the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Governors have become more actively involved in monitoring than previously and are confident to question and challenge. This rigour, combined with a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, has led to more effective analysis and planning for development. Finances and other resources are used effectively to raise standards. The governing body has ensured that additional funding which the school receives from government (the pupil premium) is used to support those in greatest need of extra support. This has been measurably beneficial to those pupils.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103851
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	395609

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	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Millichip
Headteacher	Sally Sixsmith
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2008
Telephone number	01384 818810
Fax number	01384 818811
Email address	ssixsmith@st-james.dudley.sch.uk

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