

St James Hatcham CE Primary School

St James, New Cross, London, SE14 6AD

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. Pupils' attainment has improved since the previous inspection and is now above average. All Year 6 pupils reached the expected levels in national tests in July.
- Teaching across the school is typically good. Teachers plan interesting, imaginative lessons which pupils enjoy. Occasionally there are lessons requiring improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically good in lessons and around the school. They are polite and considerate. Pupils say they feel safe and happy in school.
- The headteacher provides strong and energetic leadership and is determined that all pupils should achieve as well as they possibly can. Senior leaders and governors share her ambition. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve further.
- Parents and carers, pupils and staff are highly positive about the school and proud to be a part of 'the village school in the heart of New Cross'.
- The school provides a wealth of opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These values underpin the curriculum and are at the core of the school's ethos.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although most pupils make good progress in reading and writing, too few reach the higher levels in writing at the end of Year 2 or reading at the end of Year 6.
- Not all pupils in Reception and Year 1 use letter sounds and combinations (phonics) confidently to read unfamiliar words.
- Teachers' explanations and introductions to a few lessons are sometimes too long which means pupils then do not have sufficient time to work independently. Occasionally, teachers do not ask demanding enough questions of pupils, particularly those who are more able, and this restricts progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or part lessons and heard a number of pupils read, specifically those in Years 1, 2 and 3. Three joint lesson observations were carried out with the headteacher and other senior staff. In addition, inspectors observed playtime and lunchtime routines and visited an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair, a representative from the local authority and groups of pupils. They also met with some parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors studied a range of documentation, including policies and records of behaviour, safeguarding arrangements, records of pupils' attainment and progress, the school's monitoring and planning documentation, minutes of governing body meetings and information related to the performance of teachers.
- During the inspection, inspectors took account of the eight responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as responses to an earlier parent and carer survey conducted by the school. The responses to 16 questionnaires completed by staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Sue Quirk, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Olson Davis

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St James Hatcham is an average sized primary school. Children within the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery class and a Reception class.
- An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs through school action is average, although the proportion of pupils with more severe special needs, supported at school action plus or with a statement, is above average.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups and just under half have English as an additional language.
- The school has a number of awards, including the Princess Diana award for creating a safe environment free from bullying.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing and reading by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils in Years 1 and 2 have more opportunities to write at greater length using a wider range of vocabulary
 - ensuring more-able pupils in Years 3 to 6 read more challenging texts in order to extend their reading abilities further.
- Ensure all teaching is consistently good or outstanding by:
 - reducing the length of teachers' introductions to lessons so that pupils have more time to practise their skills and work independently
 - improving the teaching and learning of phonics in the Reception class and Year 1 so more pupils reach expected levels by the end of Year 1
 - ensuring teachers ask more demanding questions, particularly of more-able pupils, in order to extend their learning further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement in English and mathematics has improved year on year since the previous inspection, especially in mathematics which was identified as an area of weakness. There is now little difference in the attainment of different groups of pupils because the school helps those who are at risk of falling behind to catch up quickly.
- Most children start school with skills and abilities at lower levels than those typically found for their age. A strong focus on developing children's early communication and numeracy skills means they make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below average. Not enough pupils in Reception and Year 1 are confident in tackling or sounding out new words. However, as result of recent improvements in the teaching and learning of phonics, pupils in Year 2 read with increasing confidence and standards are rising.
- Pupils achieve well through the school, resulting in all pupils reaching the expected levels by the time they leave in Year 6. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 say they enjoy reading and can recall favourite authors and stories, however, those who are more able do not always read more challenging texts and books to stretch their learning and understanding further.
- The school works closely with parents and carers to promote pupils' general love of reading. The headteacher as well as teachers and support staff regularly check pupils' reading diaries to make sure pupils read at home to help increase their confidence.
- Most pupils develop a secure range of writing skills, often enjoying writing about familiar events. Those pupils in Years 1 and 2 who are more able however, are not always confident in writing more creatively or at greater length.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make good progress, because they are well supported by adults who understand their needs and plan activities that help them catch up. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language also benefit from similar levels of support. For example, one pupil at an early stage of learning English was able to join in the lesson about writing a character description by using a computer to write in her home language.
- The school uses pupil premium funding wisely to employ an extra teacher to give more intense support to pupils who are falling behind in mathematics. This has been effective in ensuring those pupils were able to make good progress and catch up quickly.
- The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and number skills across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 thoroughly enjoyed using their number skills to solve a murder mystery using a range of number facts to eliminate potential suspects and made good progress as a result.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and has been improved since the last inspection. This is because the headteacher and senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and learning and provide clear guidance for teachers to improve their practice. However, there are some variations in the pace of learning and in the quality of questioning and a minority of teaching sometimes requires improvement.
- The Nursery class provides a safe stimulating environment for the youngest children. They thoroughly enjoyed making jam tarts, rolling out the pastry and accurately identifying circles, rectangles and hexagons as they chose their cutters. This focus on early communication, language and numeracy skills means they are well prepared for the transition into the Reception class.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunity to discuss their work with fellow pupils called 'talk partners' and this

helps them to think through new ideas. Sometimes teachers' introductions and explanations are too long which limits the time for pupils to get down to their tasks and work independently.

- In well-taught lessons, teachers check how well pupils are doing and adapt tasks where necessary. In a Year 4 lesson on teaching the use of apostrophes, some more-able pupils said the work was too easy, so the teacher quickly intervened to give them a more challenging task which stretched their abilities.
- An emphasis on active, first-hand experiences means pupils enjoy their learning and understand more clearly. Pupils in Year 5 acted out an air raid warning and discussed the experiences and feelings of evacuees during the Second World War. Pupils then wrote sensitive, imaginative diary entries that an evacuee might have written.
- The school has high expectations of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils benefit from accurate identification of their needs, well-planned group and individual tuition and regular checks on their progress. Teaching assistants provide the right balance of support to pupils. This enables them to develop independence and achieve well, particularly those who are at the early stages of learning English.
- Pupils know their targets and what they have to do to improve and are proud when they have achieved them. Teachers mark work regularly and in the best examples, pupils respond readily to the 'nextsteps' which helps them to make good progress. Teachers often use questioning well to make sure pupils have understood their learning, but there are sometimes missed opportunities to give more-able pupils open-ended questions directed at them to enhance their thinking.
- Reading is almost always taught well, especially through the daily well-planned guided reading sessions. These provide a good level of challenge to most groups of pupils, although occasionally not enough is expected of the most able pupils to extend their abilities further. The teaching of phonics to children in Reception and the Year 1 class is variable. On occasions it requires improvement because mistakes in pupils' pronunciation are not always corrected quickly enough.
- Parents and carers appreciate the regular homework set, especially the reading diaries. Every week, pupils are given a new task such as giving the book marks out of 10, writing down three new words or making up quiz questions for a friend. For older pupils there are also suggestions for parents and carers on how to help their children develop more advanced reading skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, and behaviour in class and around the school is good. They are polite, courteous and kind to adults and to each other. Occasionally, a minority of pupils become fidgety and distracted if lesson introductions last too long but this does not disrupt the learning of others in the class.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and view it as an extension of their family. They are confident that they can approach adults in the school who would take any concerns seriously. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and harmonious relationships are evident around the school.
- Records show that incidences of bullying are rare. This was confirmed by pupils and their parents and carers. Pupils understand the different types of bullying and are particularly aware of the importance of internet use and e-safety guidelines.
- Older pupils apply to be peer mediators who can help others; those who are successful are trained by professionals and are really proud of their role. One boy said, 'We are there to help but we can't solve fights and we don't judge!' Other pupils agreed the playground was a safe, happy place.
- Governors, pupils and parents and carers all recognise behaviour has improved significantly over

recent years. The headteacher is highly visible around the school and expectations for behaviour are set out clearly in each classroom. A learning mentor is highly effective in supporting individual pupils at difficult times and also supports smooth transition to secondary school.

- Pupils are aware of the dangers of gangs and the school invests time in helping pupils to know how to keep themselves safe.
- Attendance is high which indicates pupils' enjoyment of school. The school has effective procedures for following up absences.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a strong leader who is determined that all pupils should achieve their very best, but is realistic in knowing there is still room for improvement. She is well supported and respected by staff who share her ambition and drive for improving the school's effectiveness. Subject leaders make accurate judgments in lesson observations and they are able to use information on pupils' progress to identify strengths and weaknesses in their subjects.
- The school uses a wide range of information to gauge the progress of different classes and year groups effectively and teachers are quick to intervene if any pupils start to fall behind. This led to every pupil in Year 6 reaching the expected levels and making the nationally expected rates of progress through the school. Leaders and managers know they have not yet been fully successful in ensuring that all teaching is consistently good or better or in making sure that pupils who are capable of reaching the higher levels in writing at Year 2 and reading at Year 6 do so.
- There are well-organised systems for checking the quality of teaching, learning and rates of progress. Any weaknesses in the work of individuals are followed up with training and support such as helping to extend writing and reading for some pupils. Regular professional development and holding teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class have been significant factors in the school's year-on-year improvement in results.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and reflects the school's determination that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development should be central to all aspects of school life. Reflection areas in classrooms support pupils' spiritual development well. Cultural development has improved since the last inspection with a wealth of opportunities for pupils to explore similarities and differences between themselves and others. There are occasional missed opportunities to plan writing and reading activities which boost the learning of some more-able pupils.
- Links with parents and carers and the local community are strong. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, recognising that their children are safe, happy and achieving well. They refer to the school as the 'village school in the heart of New Cross!'
- The local authority has confidence in the school's capacity to sustain improvements and provides light touch support.
- **The governance of the school:**

Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses through a regular programme of formal and informal visits and a comprehensive range of information provided by the headteacher. They hold senior leaders to account effectively for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, reflected in improvements since the previous inspection. Working in close corporation with the headteacher, governors' decisions on which teachers should move up the salary scale are based on the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress. Governors agreed to spend the bulk of the school's pupil premium on additional staffing to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics which has proved successful. Results have risen sharply and those pupils eligible for the funding are now making similar rates of progress to the others. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements related to health, safety and staff vetting are carried out conscientiously. Governors ensure discrimination of any sort is not tolerated.

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	100727
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	400424

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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Edwards
Headteacher	Sonia McFarlane
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 October 2009
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