

St James' RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Solway Road, Hebburn, Tyne and Wear, NE31 2BP

Inspection dates 21–22 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The inspirational headteacher has a crystal-clear view of just how successful the school can be. Ably supported by the deputy headteacher, he has galvanised the skills and commitment of the whole staff. As a result, considerable improvement has been made since the previous inspection.
- Effectively led and managed teaching enables pupils to succeed and achieve well, including those pupils eligible for the pupil premium.
- Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching is well-planned and thought-provoking, holds pupils' interest and challenges their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the happy, friendly school atmosphere. They are extremely well-cared for, work conscientiously and take great pride in their achievements. This is evident in their abundant enthusiasm and high level of engagement in lessons.
- Exemplary behaviour, characterised by kindness and consideration of others, is effectively supported by pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Strong relationships with parents help to boost their children's achievement and development, including their attendance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Rapid progress is not yet sustained over time. In a few lessons where progress is a little slower, tasks are not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities and needs.
- The school has an accurate picture of its performance, but its review of actions taken to improve the quality of learning in lessons is not always rigorous enough.
- Sometimes, especially in Key Stage 1, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils' determination and independence to enable them to work things out for themselves. Occasionally, pupils are unclear about how they can improve quickly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons of which four were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons and walks around the school to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspection team held discussions with: pupils; parents; members of the governing body; school staff, including senior leaders and those with responsibilities such as leadership of subjects; the local authority school improvement adviser and primary lead officer.
- Inspectors took account of the 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspection team observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons and checking of pupils' work, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philip Scott

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St James' is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (which is provided to support the learning of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces) is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils whose learning needs receive the level of support known as school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- Most pupils are White British. A significantly lower than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups. None are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the current floor standards which set out the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club each day.
- The headteacher was initially appointed as acting headteacher in September 2010. He was confirmed as a permanent appointment in September 2011, when the deputy headteacher was also appointed. This followed a period of unsettled leadership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all progress is rapid and sustained to increase the proportion of pupils exceeding what is expected of them by:
 - making certain the curriculum is further enriched to encourage high levels of achievement
 - ensuring that pupils have a firm understanding of how they can improve their work
 - increasing the rigour of the school's methods for gaining an accurate picture of itself.
- Improve teaching so that it is at least consistently good by:
 - using the school's knowledge of pupils' progress and development to adapt and shape tasks to meet individual abilities, needs and interests
 - increasing the use of imaginative and interesting approaches to teaching that exist in the school to excite and challenge pupils' thinking, especially in Key Stage 1
 - ensuring teachers' questioning constantly checks, stretches and challenges pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - making certain that pupils acquire the determination and independence to find things out for themselves, especially in Key Stage 1.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The legacy of underachievement has been eradicated. Recent test results at the end of Year 6 show above average standards in all subjects. This is the result of pupils' rapid progress and high achievement, especially in Years 5 and 6. Although the rate of progress in Key Stage 1 is more variable, rates of progress there are accelerating. Lesson observations and school information show that current Year 6 pupils are making rapid progress and many are working at levels above those expected of them by the end of the year in English and mathematics. Consequently, achievement over time is good.
- Most children start Reception with skills lower than those typical for their age. Their language skills are a particular weakness. Children settle quickly, confidently and happily in the encouraging atmosphere. They develop good self-control and independence.
- Better quality teaching of how sounds and letters link together to form words, has significantly improved the progress in children's early reading and writing. Increasingly, younger children are using reading to discover and learn.
- Swift progress is being made raising pupils' enjoyment levels when reading. Attainment in reading by the age of six is broadly typical for their age. Older pupils speak enthusiastically about their responsibilities for choosing new books to read in school. They happily discuss the reasons for choosing a particular author's style or theme. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 is above average.
- The developing use of themes to link subjects together in imaginative ways, such as the study of life in Victorian times, brings learning to life. Visiting nearby Beamish Museum adds to pupils' first-hand experiences and levels of interest. This helps to extend the imagination of pupils in their longer pieces of writing, while at the same time improving the accuracy and breadth of their vocabulary. Despite a broadening range of such rich learning experiences, they are as yet too few in number to inspire sustained, rapid progress by pupils
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, also make good progress and achieve well. This is the result of the careful checking of pupils' progress and development, which quickly identifies any gaps or particular needs in their learning. The progress and achievement of pupils supported by pupil premium funding are especially high, often exceeding their classmates. Parents particularly appreciate the high quality of the care, support and encouragement provided to meet their children's needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good, and often inspiring and challenging, teaching enables pupils of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to learn well. Classrooms are characterised by much mutual trust and respect between staff and pupils. Pupils' high level of commitment and enjoyment is evident. The emerging pattern of rapid progress and high achievement is the result of well-planned and often imaginative approaches which constantly stretch pupils' thinking and understanding.
- Visits, finding solutions to problems, and partner-talking and debating, added to the increasing use of interesting topics such as considering the plight of child labourers in Victorian times, bolster the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents enjoy excellent relationships with staff and their willingness to be more involved in their children's learning adds to the school's drive to improve at a fast pace.
- Teaching helps pupils to make rapid progress and achieve highly when:
 - pupils are well aware of what they are going to learn
 - carefully planned activities and questioning tailored to individuals' abilities continuously build upon pupils' earlier learning
 - inventive, well-timed methods hold the interest of pupils and stir their thinking

- staff guide pupils to think for themselves, work out solutions and consider their answers.
- When progress in lessons is slower, especially in Key Stage 1:
 - tasks are not always well-enough matched to the interests, abilities and needs of all pupils
 - teachers' explanations and demonstrations are too drawn out and questioning is not probing enough
 - not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to tackle tasks by themselves
 - written feedback in pupils' books does not provide clear steps for rapid improvement.
- In the Reception class, children are provided with a good variety of opportunities to investigate and explore both in and outdoors. The adults skilfully encourage them to grow more confident about finding things out for themselves.
- The use of pupil premium funding is adding to the richness of learning by increasing the number and variety of first-hand learning experiences. For example, pupils learn about local heroes and delve into their achievements. Such hands-on activities effectively support the rapid progress made by pupils eligible for the funding. Additionally, pupils benefit from a developing range of well-thought-out small group support sessions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The high quality of care, excellent staff role models, and clear boundaries set for their behaviour and attitudes all ensure that pupils feel happy, safe and secure. Pupils value the guidance they receive from staff to help them develop tolerance, respect difference and take pride in their achievements.
- The exemplary behaviour of pupils, including those whose circumstances might put them at risk, is reflected in their high levels of engagement and cooperation in lessons. Relationships amongst pupils and with staff are typified by consideration and kindness. The breakfast club provides a relaxed, ordered and happy start to each morning. All parents and pupils comment positively about the sensible behaviour and responsible attitudes in lessons and at playtimes.
- Pupils show a good grasp of what constitutes bullying and an extremely well-developed understanding of how they can deal with and resolve any worries or concerns. They report that, 'people care for you'. Pupils fully understand how to keep themselves safe and are well-informed about risk and danger. They thrive on the responsibilities they are given to contribute to school improvement.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance and punctuality, which are now above average. This has included effective working with local authority support agencies to help and support families. The pupils benefit from and appreciate the benefits of meaningful rewards for their excellent behaviour and much improved attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- Since his initial appointment, the headteacher has led the school with great enthusiasm, ambition and commitment. As a result the school is constantly and rapidly building upon and adding to its strengths. The increasingly reflective and self-critical approaches of senior leaders ensure continuous improvement in the quality of pupils' lessons.
- The whole staff are a closely-knit team with good leadership in their areas of responsibility. Systems to check pupils' development are rigorous, enabling the school to judge accurately their skills and rates of progress. Staff are becoming ever more confident and skilled at using the information to plan lesson activities, although not all staff practice is consistent.
- The systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching is detailed and accurate. Staff respond positively to well-thought out training programmes, which include the use of local authority consultants to extend staff skills. Their performance targets are closely linked to the level of pupils' achievement with appropriate incentives for raising standards. Although senior leaders have an accurate view of how well the school is doing, the recording of the judgements of the

quality of learning in classrooms is not always focused sharply enough upon sustaining improvements at a fast pace.

- The good and developing curriculum is firmly focused upon improving pupils' skills. Art and sport are strong elements. The curriculum is highly effective in promoting the pupils' personal development. However, opportunities are sometimes missed, especially in Key Stage 1, to link subjects together seamlessly and to encourage pupils to find things out for themselves.
- Staff make certain all pupils are involved in all aspects of school life. This ensures all can achieve equally well, including those whose circumstances may put them at risk and those with disabilities. Effective use is made of specialist support agencies working in close partnership with staff and families.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much best practice reinforcing the high quality of care and support for pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The effectively led governing body has thoughtfully and systematically added to its strengths over the past three years. Its members share the headteacher's drive and determined pursuit of excellence. Routinely, the governing body challenges and holds the school to account in open and positive ways. Governors display a good knowledge of the school's strengths and their grasp of the quality of teaching across the school informs their effective performance management target-setting. Successful partnerships with the local authority and diocesan representatives help to boost the drive for non-stop school improvement.

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	108723
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	405190

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Grewcock
Headteacher	Martin Clephane
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2011
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