

St James' Church of England Primary School

Wolverley Crescent, Oldbury, B69 1BG

Inspection dates 14–15 February 2013

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.

- Pupils achieve well during their time at the school and leave the school with results that are broadly average.
- Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception as a result of effective support to develop their reading, writing and communication skills
- Teachers are enthusiastic and provide clear written and verbal feedback to pupils on how well they are learning and what to do to improve.
- The use of 'learning logs' for pupils to do homework in a variety of creative ways is very effective in promoting pupils' love of learning beyond the classroom
- Pupils feel safe in school and have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.
- Pupils' behaviour in school is good and they have positive attitudes to their learning.
- The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational, and he is supported by highly effective senior and middle leaders. All leaders have an accurate awareness of what works well in the school and where next to improve.
- The school develops literacy and numeracy skills through a wide range of subjects and activities, such as bricklaying and flower arranging.
- The governing body works in partnership with school leaders to continually improve the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to read more widely in a range of subjects, for example by using the library to develop their skills for research.
- In lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunities to investigate and work independently on a range of problem-solving activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, of which three were jointly observed with the headteacher. Inspectors also made several other short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, both informally during the school day and during formal discussions. In addition, a range of pupils' work was looked at.
- School documentation was scrutinised, including the school's data about the attainment and progress of pupils in each year group, records relating to safeguarding and attendance, and how teachers' performance is monitored by the school.
- Discussions were held with four members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, senior and middle leaders responsible for aspects of school life.
- Inspectors took account of communication with parents during the inspection, and 33 responses to the questionnaire that staff were invited to complete. There were not enough responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire for the results to be taken into account during the inspection.

Inspection team

Clare Saunders, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rowena Green	Additional Inspector
Christopher Ogden	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school, where most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for specific groups of students) is much higher than the national average, and makes up just over half of the school's population.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action, school action plus, or by a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school has a separate area, referred to as the 'Nurture Room', for some children in Reception to specifically develop their social and communication skills.
- The proportion of pupils entering the school during the school year is above average.
- No pupils are taught in alternative provision away from the school site.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress that pupils make in all subjects by:
 - enabling pupils to read widely and often to develop their research skills
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to develop and use their skills of independent enquiry to solve problems in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below those typical for their age. This is particularly true of how they communicate and interact socially with others. As a result of good teaching and carefully planned support, children make good gains in their learning during their time in Nursery and Reception.
- Pupils continue to make good progress as they move up the school, and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, they gain results in English and mathematics that are broadly in line with the national average.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, and the small number who are looked after by the local authority, make good progress and achieve well. Pupils eligible for free school meals make progress and attain scores that are similar to those pupils who are not eligible for free school meals. This is as a result of the careful allocation of the pupil premium funding to ensure that all pupils have the care and academic support that they need to achieve their best. For example, the additional funding has been used to reduce class sizes in Years 2 and 6, enabling teachers to monitor closely how well each individual pupil is learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and learn well over time due to additional help which is designed to meet individual pupils' specific needs.
- Pupils respond well to the school's careful plans to develop their reading throughout their time at the school and they enjoy reading. However, they have limited opportunities to use the library to read about a subject for pleasure or for research to develop their understanding and knowledge.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good across the school; there are some examples of outstanding teaching. Teachers are enthusiastic and this helps pupils to develop a love of learning. This has led to pupils achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics over time.
- In the best lessons, pupils learn quickly as a result of skilful questioning by the teachers to encourage pupils to give answers that help the teacher to know exactly what pupils understand. This leads to work being set that suits pupils of all capabilities in the class, and the teacher competently adapts the lesson so that pupils learn as best they can.
- In the vast majority of lessons, teachers have high expectations of how well pupils can learn. Pupils respond well to established routines and expectations in terms of behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and high-quality presentation of written work. However, pupils do not routinely have opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills in lessons, and generally do exactly what the teacher tells them, rather than using their initiative to work independently and work things out for themselves.
- Marking is a particular strength, especially where the pupil premium is used to create smaller class sizes in Years 2 and 6. Teachers' written comments are of a consistently high quality, and pupils routinely respond by correcting work, or completing specific tasks that help them to learn quickly.

- The school encourages the effective use of the pupils' 'learning logs' to complete homework tasks that extend the learning in school. These tasks are interesting and stimulating and allow pupils to think creatively about the topics they are studying in school. For example, one homework task asked pupils to find out what life was like when Queen Victoria was born and present this however the pupils liked.
- Teachers use the school grounds in an imaginative way to encourage learning to take place in an interesting and stimulating environment, for example the 'Forest School' area is often used by all year groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils feel safe in school. They have an accurate awareness of what would constitute bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, and are confident that there is always someone to ask if they feel concerned. They are adamant that, if bullying should occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils are respectful and mindful of others in the school. The school's caring and welcoming approach to all pupils is very noticeable, for example, new pupils are integrated seamlessly into the day-to-day workings of the school and all of the school community go out of their way to make new pupils feel welcome.
- In lessons, pupils are keen to learn, and demonstrate the positive social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of their education that the school promotes.
- Of particular note is the school's use of the 'Nurture Room' which provides a home-like environment for some identified Reception-aged children to develop their social and communication skills, for example, by having breakfast together each morning around a table where each child has a particular responsibility to enable all to sit together.
- The school's attendance rate has risen strongly since the last inspection, and is now around the national average for primary schools. This is due to the school successfully applying some strategies, such as a 'walking bus' where school staff collect pupils from their homes to enable prompt attendance at school.
- Pupils appreciate the consistent way that teachers apply the behaviour policy. Pupils know what is expected of them and this helps them to learn well in lessons.
- The school's own questionnaire gathering parents' views, and the views of parents during the inspection, support this positive view of behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders accurately evaluate the strengths of the school and work well as a team to correctly prioritise areas for further development. All school leaders know exactly what aspects of the school they are responsible for, and their accountability is regularly reviewed during school meetings.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. An innovative approach to develop literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects includes spending time on Friday afternoons on the 'St James'

University' where pupils can try a variety of activities including flower arranging, bricklaying and film making. For example, pupils calculate the quantities of materials needed to build a bench, or use a wide variety of adjectives to describe the flower arrangements. Highly effective use of the pupil premium means that eligible pupils make good progress.

- Pupils are encouraged to work together as a team and to respect each other. Many aspects of the school promote the positive social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils, for example the weekly assemblies, to which parents are invited, celebrate successes in lessons, participation in extra-curricular activities and good attendance.
- School leaders are proactive in encouraging parents to have a say in how the school is run; for example, a recently formed 'parent voice' group is effective in making sure parents' views are listened to regularly.
- The headteacher has a very thorough and effective system for checking the quality of teaching and to support the continuous development of staff across the school. High standards in teaching are expected and staff are supported through relevant and timely training. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved across the school since the previous inspection.
- Teachers are set rigorous performance management targets that are linked to how well their pupils achieve. More is expected from those teachers on the upper pay scale, including a contribution to whole-school aspects to continually improve the school. Underperformance in teaching is supported through effective training to improve performance and teachers are aware that underperformance is not permitted.
- The local authority has provided effective light-touch support for this good school, recognising strong leadership and a good capacity for improvement from leaders throughout the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works in partnership with school leaders to rigorously evaluate how well the school is performing. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and link this to the data about how well pupils achieve throughout the school. They ask challenging questions of school leaders where the effectiveness of initiatives is not immediately understood, and offer effective support to the headteacher. They play an active role in the school, visiting regularly, and reward good teaching appropriately to ensure that all teachers are aware of their high expectations of teachers' performance. Pupil premium funding is carefully allocated and evaluated to make sure that it is spent for the most benefit of eligible pupils as possible, as reflected in their good achievement. They ensure that all legal responsibilities for safeguarding are met.

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	131673
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	406447

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	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Goodwin
Headteacher	Paul Longden
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2011
Telephone number	0121 552 5491
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Email address	headteacher@st-james-pri.sandwell.sch.uk

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