

St James' Church of England Aided Infant School

Leonard Street, Derby, DE23 8EG

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching varies from class to class and is not consistently good.
- The planning of activities is not always clear enough to identify what the children are expected to learn. In a few lessons, time is not used effectively to provide high-quality work for different ability groups.
- Standards across the school are not as high as they should be. The progress of some pupils is affected by taking extended holidays in term time.
- Pupils across the school, and particularly those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, do not make consistent progress, especially in speaking, reading and writing.
- While there have been many improvements in the way the school is led and managed, several initiatives are at an early stage and have not yet made sufficient impact in raising standards.
- Although the governors and senior staff are leading the school effectively, they have not yet eradicated some weaknesses, especially in the provision for the youngest children.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders share a determination to drive school improvement forward. They have a very clear view of what works well and where improvement is required, and they have made improvements over the past year.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is accurate and identifies what needs to be improved.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around school is consistently good, and they know how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The school makes sure that those pupils who need the most help, including those new to learning English, are well supported.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of eight lessons in four classes. This included several joint lesson observations with the assistant headteacher. The inspector also listened to several pupils read and looked at samples of recent work.
- Meetings were held with one of the two executive headteachers and the assistant headteacher, including in her role as literacy leader, and with the learning mentor. Discussions took place with the Federation business manager and groups of pupils, as well as with representatives of the governing body and local authority.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be analysed, but the inspector spoke to several parents and carers during the course of the inspection. She also took account of 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring information. Records relating to safeguarding were scrutinised and the inspector held a meeting with the school business manager to discuss the school's procedures.

Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a school that is below-average in size.
- About 85% of pupils are from a wide range of ethnic minority groups, with the largest group being of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. Approximately 60% of the pupils speak English as an additional language. These figures are well above the average for most schools.
- With the closure of the adjacent hospital, the intake of the school has changed in recent years. School records indicate that a number of pupils are new entrants to the United Kingdom. A growing proportion of these families are from Eastern Europe.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to the pupil premium is above average. In this school, this supports the pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the very small number in local authority care.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school is a part of a federation of three schools led by two executive headteachers who took up post in April 2013. One of the executive headteachers leads this school and is supported in the day-to-day running of the setting by an assistant headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching across the school is consistently good or better by:
 - checking that planning identifies precisely what pupils are expected to learn in any task
 - using assessment information to ensure that work is set at the right level to challenge pupils of different abilities
 - ensuring that staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage carefully check that time is always used effectively to improve the rate of progress made.
- Raise standards and improve the rate of progress made by ensuring that:
 - pupils are provided with plenty of opportunities to discuss their ideas in class in order to improve their speaking skills
 - staff take every opportunity to encourage children to develop their reading and writing skills, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - staff work with parents and carers to improve attendance and cut the number of holidays taken in term time.
- Ensure that recent initiatives to raise standards are developed and embedded across the school by:
 - checking that the monitoring of planning, teaching and learning is regular and rigorous in identifying areas for improvement
 - ensuring that the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage establishes effective teaching for all children.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Children join the school with skills which are often well below those expected for their age. While there is a range of abilities and experiences, many initially have little or no English. Most settle happily and start to be more confident communicators but overall progress across the school requires improvement.
- The Year 1 check of pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) indicated that standards were exceptionally low in 2012. Since that time, the school has reorganised how they teach these skills, and pupils are making better progress in this area. Overall, progress is currently best in Year 2, where the inspection sample of work showed that teaching is often outstanding. This was also illustrated in a lesson where pupils used 'talk tennis' in turns with a partner to suggest ideas for using connectives, or 'joining words', in their writing.
- In the last two years, standards at the end of Year 2 have been significantly below average. In both years, pupils were the equivalent of more than two terms behind the national average. In 2012, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils, who were the largest group, did better than similar pupils nationally in all areas. Approximately 20% of the cohort were those of white backgrounds other than British or Irish, many of whom were new to the country. Their achievement was well below that of similar pupils. With changes of staffing mid-year and now excellent teaching in Year 2, the rate of progress for all pupils has improved but gaps in pupils' learning remain.
- In recent years, standards in reading have been below those in writing and mathematics. The school has responded to this issue and has considerably improved the way in which it checks and tracks the progress that each pupil makes. Information is then used to identify where support is most needed. However, reading remains a priority area for the school.
- Standards in writing have been above those in reading, partly because, in Years 1 and 2, this has been made a key focus for teachers. This is reflected in bright and stimulating displays of pupils' recent work, showing that the school values and celebrates their writing. However, opportunities are missed in Reception and Nursery to provide every opportunity for pupils to speak, read and write on a regular basis.
- Standards in mathematics are well below average. While some pupils are confident to use what they know about numbers to solve problems, others are less confident in discussing their ideas and are sometimes too reliant on adults for support.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs often do better than similar pupils nationally. This is because teaching assistants have a good understanding of their roles and work effectively with class teachers to support pupils in class and in small groups. This has a positive impact on raising their self-confidence, especially for the girls.
- In 2012, pupils entitled to pupil premium funding made considerably better progress than others. This group were a year ahead of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics, and they were at least a term ahead of similar pupils nationally. Finances have been used very effectively to provide extra hours of support from the learning mentor and to fund an additional teaching assistant. The funding is also used to part-finance the work of the assistant headteacher to support vulnerable groups, including a literacy and dance project to increase communication skills and confidence.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because its quality varies too much. There is some teaching which is outstanding and is rapidly improving the rate of progress pupils make, but there remains some teaching which is inadequate. This is at least in part because information from the checks on pupils' progress is not used in a consistent way to make sure that work challenges pupils of all abilities. When teachers set tasks for pupils to complete, their planning does not always identify what it is they expect the pupils to learn.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not always meet the needs of the youngest children. Tasks are not always planned well enough and assessment information is not always used to provide sufficient challenge. For example, when children made models of bees, virtually all of them were identical because the children were required simply to follow an adult, making no choices of materials and lacking any opportunity to develop their creativity. Staff are not sufficiently active in moving around the groups of children and checking that they are focused on their tasks. This therefore allows some to do very little and so they make limited progress.
- Teaching in Year 1 is often effective. When pupils wrote an account of a visit they had made the previous day to a sea-life centre, for example, the teacher explained to the pupils that they needed to sequence their sentences in the correct order. As a result, they focused well on the use of linking their sentences. The teacher used questions well to gather ideas and many pupils discussed their ideas happily.
- The teaching of pupils entitled to pupil premium funding and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is usually well-organised and effective, particularly through the support of the learning mentor and others. These staff have good expectations of what the pupils can achieve, which often enables them to make better progress than their peers.
- Teaching is excellent in Year 2. This was very well illustrated during animated discussions of what pupils needed to do to make their sentences interesting. The teacher used a range of strategies, including pupils having discussions with a partner and as part of a group. When she made deliberate mistakes in her writing, the pupils enjoyed correcting them. When a lower attaining pupil suggested he needed to use adjectives, and explained what these were to the class, everyone appeared genuinely delighted.
- Samples of work in Year 2 showed that what pupils are expected to learn in a lesson is very clearly identified, so that pupils and all staff, including those in support roles, understand this fully. This is accompanied by 'steps to success', which are different for most ability groups. This ensures a high level of challenge for the more-able pupils and suitable expectations for lower achievers. Pupils' work is very carefully marked and identifies what else needs to be improved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The large majority of pupils behave well in and around the school. Almost all of those spoken to say they like school and making new friends. With a very diverse population, this shows that the school actively promotes its mission statement which is, 'I was a stranger and you took me in.'
 - Pupils typically have positive attitudes to their learning and, when they are taught well, many are animated in their discussions and produce neatly presented work of good quality. Occasionally some are very quiet and passive in their responses including those who speak English well. However, most take a real pride in what they are doing and are keen to improve. They get on
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well together and work happily in pairs and small groups. Pupils enjoy assemblies and welcome visitors who act out stories from religious texts. Children enjoy singing together and do this well.

- Pupils have a reasonable understanding for their age of what bullying is and know that they must not be unkind to others. They live up to the school's expectation that those from different ethnic groups will get on well together.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and their parents and carers agree. Pupils know that if they are unhappy they can talk to the adults around them, including the learning mentor, at break and lunchtimes. Discussions with staff who support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs show that the school has extensive links with external agencies and is active in supporting families who need additional help.
- The school works hard to promote regular attendance by stressing the impact of being out of school. While attendance is improving, it is still below the national average because it is affected by extended holidays in term time.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management of the school are improving and have a number of very effective elements. Leadership and management require improvement, however, because many initiatives are recent and are not yet embedded or consistently applied.
 - The senior leadership team has a fully accurate view of the provision in school. School self-evaluation matches that of the inspection, indicating that senior staff recognise where improvements are still needed. Senior staff carry out lesson observations but have not always paid as much attention to looking at teachers' planning and samples of pupils' work, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has not resulted in good teaching and learning for all children in Nursery and Reception.
 - The school has recently improved the ways in which it checks and tracks the progress made by pupils. This is starting to be effective in identifying the different rates of progress made. The school has advanced plans to support staff where teaching is weak, including demonstrating strong and effective practice and visiting other successful schools. However, the impact of such initiatives is not always evident.
 - This is a highly inclusive school that warmly welcomes pupils of all abilities and from a wide range of backgrounds. The school has a strong focus on tackling discrimination and fostering good relationships. Staff work hard to remove possible barriers to learning so that pupils have equal opportunities to do well. For example, the free breakfast club ensures that pupils, and sometimes their families, benefit from a good start to the day.
 - The executive headteachers, whilst new to their current roles, have previous experience of working in the school. This, combined with new appointments, including an assistant headteacher based at the school, is ensuring that staff have confidence in leadership. This is noted in several comments to the inspection questionnaire that 'changes to the leadership team have made a great difference, with a positive approach'.
 - The school has carefully considered how it works with the local authority and has recently changed its arrangements with them. The new approach is ensuring the school has the capacity
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to continue to improve.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported in their learning and personal development. Additional funds to support these pupils and those entitled to the pupil premium are used well, resulting in them making better progress than many of their peers.
- The way in which the school teaches different subjects offers a range of experiences that contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parent governors, for example, spoke with pride about how the school enjoys celebrating a range of festivals.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance of the school has a number of strengths but is not yet entirely successful in ensuring that the quality of teaching in the school is consistently good enough. Members of the governing body are often passionate in their support of the school and share a strong determination that the school will continue to improve. They check that leaders have a firm grasp of what assessment information tells them. Through governing body meetings and the work of committees, governors are now successful in challenging leaders and holding the school to account for the standards achieved. They recognise where teaching is ineffective and ensure that measures are put in place to address this. Governors check that salary increases are clearly related to the progress made by pupils. They allocate additional finances to support pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding and those identified as being vulnerable because of their circumstances. They ensure that such funding is used effectively. Governors have a strong interest in supporting their diverse community and championing equality of opportunity for all. They ensure that all legal requirements are met, including those for the safeguarding of 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	112915
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	408934

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant and Nursery
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shayad Mahmood
Headteacher	Tamara Rolfs
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2010
Telephone number	01332 229229
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@stjamesi.derby.sch.uk

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