

# St James Infant School

St James Street, , Daventry, NN11 4AG

**Inspection dates** 27–28 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress because teaching is good.
- Children in Reception make good progress in gaining essential skills, especially when using the spacious outdoor areas.
- Staff teach phonics (linking letters and sounds) effectively to small groups of pupils from Reception to Year 2.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They feel safe and enjoy school.
- Leadership and management are good. Staff work well as a team to regularly check on teaching and pupils' progress.
- The governing body has much expertise to offer, and with staff, have brought about improvements in pupils' attainment. Their regular visits mean that they know how well the school is performing.
- Parents are very positive about the school and particularly like the family atmosphere in which their children thrive.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching requires improvement when tasks are not matched closely to pupils' different ability levels, particularly during long lesson introductions.
- Standards in reading are below those in writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave for junior school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by seven teachers, a higher level teaching assistant and a teaching assistant responsible for accelerating progress of identified pupils. Three of these lessons were seen together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of five Year 2 pupils and the pupil council, the Chair and Assistant Chair of the governing body, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders including the parent link worker.
- A discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- There were 30 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. The inspectors took account of these, and also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school with their children.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work, including the before and after school clubs and looked at a range of documents, including the school’s own information on pupils’ recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, and checks on teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carolyn Wood

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is in the heart of a market town and has spacious grounds and accommodation. It is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There are two single-age classes in each year from Reception to Year 2.
- The school operates a six term year in line with other schools in the area.
- One in seven pupils is from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The number has doubled over the past two years. Most speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium (pupils eligible for free school meal, looked after by the local authority or with a parent in the armed forces) is below average. In this school, the pupil premium applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than normal times has increased significantly over the past two years. Most transfer to a nearby junior school at the end of Year 2.
- The school has established a traffic free zone within its grounds allowing the development of features such as adventure play equipment, Jimmy's Farm and Jimmy's Junk Yard.
- A before and after school club known as Spencer's Club is managed and organised by the school during term time. This is included in the inspection.
- A fully equipped Jimmy's gym has been established in a building on the school yard and a kaleidoscope room for colour therapy and relaxation plus a sensory garden have been created in and around the Spencer's Club accommodation. A large log cabin was provided for Reception children in 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching good or better and raise standards in reading, by:
  - ensuring that tasks are challenging and more closely matched to the different abilities of pupils in all parts of lessons
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills when completing tasks in lessons
  - enlisting the support of parents to hear pupils read regularly
  - encouraging pupils to use the recently introduced virtual book bag.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in Reception with skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age particularly in key areas such as communication, language and numeracy. They make good progress but for some, skills in writing and number are still below the level expected when they move into Year 1.
- Staff make excellent use of the exceptional outdoor facilities to excite, interest and motivate children to learn independently. Children enjoy role play activities in the vets, creating seascapes in the log cabin and are constantly encouraged to develop their speaking and writing skills.
- Most pupils make good progress in learning letters and the sounds they make (phonics) as they are grouped by ability and taught in small groups together with Year 1 pupils. The proportion attaining the expected level in the national test dipped to below average last year because of the many changes the school faced but is now well above average.
- Staff carefully assess children's progress in Reception as they enjoy working by themselves or with the teacher. As a result teachers know how well children are doing, and the skills that need to be further developed. In a challenging numeracy session on sharing, for example, children were encouraged to write number sentences after sharing food items equally between the teacher and themselves.
- Pupils' good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 because teaching is effective. Attainment was significantly above average for the three years up to 2012 when it dipped. This was as a result of a period of instability with more pupils than usual leaving or joining the school during each term and an influx of pupils who spoke English as an additional language.
- Effective teaching has ensured that attainment is improving. In mathematics, pupils are taught in ability groups and school information shows that attainment will be once again significantly above average by the end of Year 2. Attainment in writing is also above average but in reading it is average with similar proportions to nationally attaining as expected or above. The school has begun to address this weakness and is keen for more parents to become more involved in helping to raise standards. A virtual book bag, giving pupils access to selected books on the internet has been introduced and twice each week, pupils have supported reading sessions, aimed at further improving skills and understanding.
- Pupils use their phonic knowledge well in lessons as they write sentences to describe the Minotaur or complete booklets about aliens. Pupils who have English as an additional language are supported effectively by teaching assistants, enabling them to make the same good progress in writing as others.
- The shift in emphasis to developing reading skills is aimed at trying to close the gap in attainment with writing and mathematics. Staff are beginning to increase opportunities for pupils to read in English sessions and other subjects. When pupils work in groups, reading tasks are not always sufficiently challenging for pupils of different ability levels and over-long introductions to lessons limits the time for pupils to practise reading skills.
- In mathematics, tasks are usually challenging and pupils are confident in how to find solutions when telling the time or sorting sweets into colours, recording data and creating a graph to represent their data.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are provided with appropriate tasks and supported closely in lessons. Most achieve as well as other pupils.
- The school funds individual help for pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium. School records show that this is helping to close the gap between them and other pupils as they improve their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. They typically make good progress.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is mostly good. In some of the lessons it is outstanding, but in a small number of lessons seen, it required improvement.
- The rapport and relationships between pupils and staff are exemplary. Mutual respect and the 'No Shouting' policy mean that behaviour is excellent and that pupils are highly positive about their learning.
- In Reception, teaching is consistently good and on occasions outstanding. There is a strong emphasis on developing communication, number and social skills. Children work well together both indoors and out, supported closely by adults. The excellent development of outdoor learning in the large undercover area, log cabin or spacious hard play and grass areas ensures children have the space to enjoy the exciting learning opportunities planned for them.
- The six term year allows teachers make frequent and accurate checks on pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Any who are falling behind are quickly identified and supported.
- Where teaching was outstanding, it was not always in lessons with teachers but included sessions where pupils worked in small groups with non teaching staff to increase their rate of progress. Pupils in these lessons responded exceptionally well to the high expectations and challenging tasks planned for them. The enthusiasm and skill demonstrated by these staff succeeded in motivating pupils to try hard and divide numbers up to 20 or read with expression and respond to punctuation.
- In the few cases where teaching requires improvement, tasks are not sufficiently matched to the different ability levels within the class or in different parts of a lesson. In lengthy introductions to the whole class, learning is not always appropriate for pupils. Some find it too easy and others too hard. This slows their progress.
- Staff are careful to make the distinction between pupils who have special educational needs and those who are low attaining pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their individual learning needs are recognised and effective planning ensures that lower ability pupils have tasks which are relevant to them.
- Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils who have English as an additional language have all the help and support they need to do well. Most build effectively on their phonic knowledge to spell simple words correctly when writing but are less confident as fluent readers.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Pupils' excellent behaviour ensures that all enjoy school and do well. In lessons, pupils always listen attentively. The school's 'No Shouting' policy for staff is working well, resulting in a calm, supportive atmosphere for learning in lessons.
- The very small number of short fixed-term exclusions in the past year shows how well all try to meet the school's high expectations for behaviour and conduct towards one another. Pupils are urged in the school song to, 'make time each day a thought to spare, for those in need of special care'.
- Children in Reception are confident, independent and happy. They are constantly busy, initiating their own learning from well-planned activities.
- Pupils say that 'everyone is friendly, and we have a nice headteacher!' Weekly sessions in the kaleidoscope room, where a trained member of staff uses colour therapy and calming techniques to relax pupils, are spiritually uplifting. 'They make such a difference,' according to one parent.
- Attendance was above average for three years, but is currently broadly average. This is due to a recent outbreak of chicken pox. There is hardly any persistent absence. The excellent rapport with parents developed by the parent link worker has been instrumental in encouraging good attendance and punctuality for the vast majority. It has also helped the school work more effectively with parents to support the learning of their children.
- Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire had very positive views about the school. They unanimously agreed that behaviour is good and that their children are safe and happy. The vast majority agreed that they would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of different types of bullying. They know that name-calling and hitting others are wrong. School records show that incidents of bullying or racist behaviour are isolated and rare.
- Pupils enjoy attending the well organised breakfast and after school club where there is a wide range of activities offered in a comfortable, safe environment by caring staff.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The long-serving and highly respected headteacher has thoughtfully developed the school environment to provide pupils with a wealth of stimulating learning opportunities and experiences. The extra space from having no cars on school premises has been used imaginatively. Pupils enjoy using the gym, adventure play equipment, sensory garden and junk yard.
- Management tasks such as checking on how well pupils are doing are shared effectively with staff working as a team. All staff are responsible for ensuring that additional support is targeted effectively on specific pupils or groups of pupils. This is having a significant impact on raising standards.
- The headteacher and staff frequently check teaching, to make sure that it is effective and promoting learning well. Staff have already identified the need to raise the profile of teaching reading skills.

- The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrates an in-depth understanding of good quality provision for Reception children. Similarly, leadership and management of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is effective. Parents and carers are fully informed about their children’s progress. The school makes good use of outside specialists for support and advice.
- The headteacher and the governing body make sure that teachers’ pay rises are closely linked to their performance using nationally agreed standards to judge the quality of teaching.
- The local authority is confident that the headteacher and staff can overcome the recent unsettled period and raise attainment to former levels. A brief visit is made to fix attainment targets at the start of the year and to evaluate them at the end of the year.
- The curriculum has a strong emphasis on developing skills in reading writing and mathematics. ‘Wow days’ regularly involve pupils in planning activities for new topics. Extra-curricular activities such as a culture club and origami sessions plus others for sport and computers contribute effectively to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Core values such as friendship are promoted well in assemblies and links with Uganda help pupils to understand values such as tolerance and respect.
- The welfare and safety of pupils has a high profile. Virtually all parents and carers agree that staff treat every pupil equally, and that discrimination is not tolerated in any form.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The regular visits by governors give them a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are doing. They challenge the school on performance data for different groups of pupils and are able to see how well they are doing compared to others nationally. Governors are beginning to focus much more on helping the school to check how well it is tackling its identified priorities for improvement. The performance of the headteacher and other teachers is reviewed each year to determine pay and promotion. Governors regularly attend training events each year in order to improve their skills. Their personal expertise is used to good effect to support their work. All current national requirements relating to employment and safeguarding are met. Governors manage financial resources well and carefully check the impact of pupil premium funding on the achievement of eligible pupils.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121882
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	412475

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	163
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Greig Milsom
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Amery
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2008
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