

St James' CofE Primary School

Vicarage Road, Hereford, HR1 2QN

Inspection dates 17–18 October 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.

- Good teaching helps all pupils, including those who need extra help, and the most able, to make good progress, especially in reading.
- The standards pupils reach in reading are above average at the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave the school in Year 6.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute well to their good progress.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and their parents and carers agree their children are well cared for.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are ambitious for the school. Leaders at all levels have succeeded in improving all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection.
- Teaching has improved because leaders are strongly committed to providing staff with clear guidance and professional training opportunities which help them to develop their skills.
- Senior leaders, including the governing body, keep a close check on how well school improvement actions are helping pupils to make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils' make good progress and their attainment in reading has risen to above-average levels, standards in writing and mathematics remain closer to average.
- Pupils are not given enough time to respond to teachers' marking of their work.
- Not enough emphasis is placed on pupils' development of handwriting and the presentation of their written work.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills when they are learning about other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers, and two assemblies. Four lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher or senior leaders. Inspectors also undertook learning walks, which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at the teaching of reading and learning across the curriculum.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, an inspector talked with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during breaktimes and at lunchtime.
- The school's safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils' behaviour were reviewed. Pupils' work and records of their progress were also looked at.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), written communications from parents and carers as well as the 22 replies to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Martin Budge

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St James' Church of England Primary School is smaller than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British, although the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is more than in many schools. One in every ten pupils speaks English as an additional language.
- A below-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school. The funding is based on the number of children at the school in local authority care, from Forces families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is average. An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The St James' breakfast and after-school club operates on the school site. It is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
 - devise a whole-school approach to teaching handwriting and encourage all pupils to take a greater pride in the presentation of their work
 - give pupils more time to respond to the marking of their work, especially in mathematics, so that they can practise and improve their skills
 - extend opportunities for pupils to use their skills in mathematics when learning about other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are similar to those expected for their age, although they are slightly below expected levels in literacy and mathematics. They make good progress so that a higher-than-average proportion of children reach a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. This is because adults provide interesting activities that help children to learn and develop new skills.
- Pupils' attainment across the school is rising. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, and by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, are average overall. The proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them in reading and writing is high compared to national averages. It is similar to average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress has increased markedly since the previous inspection.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils in all year groups, those who need extra help and those who are the most able, are making good progress from their different starting points. In the past two years, the older pupils started Year 3 with standards below the national average. They have made good progress to catch up and reach average levels by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils do best of all in reading. The most recent results show that pupils' attainment in reading has risen to above-average levels. Their progress is particularly strong in all year groups. The youngest children are taught phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) regularly and systematically. The teaching of phonics and reading skills continues in all year groups. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to use their reading skills in school and they are supported well by parents and carers at home.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress because of the extra help they receive in lessons. Small-group work tackles specific gaps in their knowledge and skills. In lessons, adults provide good language role models which helps pupils to learn new words and to use them confidently and accurately. They break learning down into small achievable steps and give pupils interesting resources to support their understanding of new ideas.
- The additional funding received by the school in the form of the pupil premium is used effectively to provide one-to-one tuition, additional adult help in lessons and access to educational trips, after-school clubs, music and sporting projects. Consequently, these pupils make good progress and, in 2013, were working at similar levels to their classmates.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching ensures that all pupils, including those who need extra help and the most able, achieve well over time. In lessons, good relationships exist between staff and pupils. Teachers and other adults praise and encourage pupils in lessons and value their contributions. They ask pupils searching questions to help clarify their understanding of new ideas or to make them think more deeply.
- The best learning happens when teachers expect pupils to work hard and do their best. Pupils respond positively to their high expectations. They listen attentively, follow teachers' instructions readily and this helps them to make good progress. Teachers plan activities for pupils that are at just the right level of difficulty to help move their learning forward.

- Teachers have a good knowledge of different subjects and provide pupils with clear explanations and instructions. They show pupils good examples, particularly in writing, so that they know what is expected of them and this helps them to make good progress when they write on their own.
- Teachers make particularly good use of 'learning partners', where pupils look at each other's work to identify where they have achieved success and where improvements might be made. For example, in Year 5, pupils checked each other's work to make certain it had all the right features of diary writing. Their discussion helped them to read, understand and improve their writing effectively and, as a result, they made good progress.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress because adults plan activities for them that are closely matched to their learning needs and interests. Children choose from a variety of activities that help them develop skills across all areas of learning. For example, they made progress at a rapid rate during a 'Dough Gym and Funky Fingers' activity. To upbeat music, and with obvious energy and enthusiasm, they developed their physical skills extremely well in learning to manipulate very small items and move them from one place to another.
- Teachers' marking of pupils work provides them with clear guidance about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, not all teachers give pupils sufficient time to respond to their marking so pupils can learn from their mistakes and think more deeply. Work in pupils' books shows that some do not take enough pride in the presentation of their work because the school does not have a consistent approach to teaching handwriting and presentation of written work.
- Although adults plan rich learning opportunities for pupils to use their reading and writing skills when learning about other subjects, chances to use their mathematical skills are more limited.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Typically, pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning, are willing to listen and to work hard and this helps them to make good progress. Pupils are polite and courteous as they move around the school. Adults organise lots of activities which promote pupils' social and emotional development effectively. Pupils show they can work equally well on their own or cooperatively with others.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and are looked after well. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Pupils report few incidents of bullying, such as name-calling, but are confident teachers will help them deal with their concerns. Adults have introduced plenty of games and sporting activities for pupils at break times to promote their physical skills and to maintain their interest. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils behave well and enjoy being active.
- Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire and those who communicated with inspectors, spoke highly of the care their children receive and agree that they are happy to come to school and are well cared for. Pupils' attendance is a little below average due to a small proportion of families who take extended holidays during term-time.
- On the rare occasions when pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons, a few lose interest and exhibit low-level, disruptive behaviour. As a result, their learning and that of others slows.

The leadership and management are good

- Under the determined leadership of the headteacher, and supported well by governors and staff, the school has moved forward at a good rate. Key aspects of the school have improved since the previous inspection. Those in charge of leading subjects and other areas of the school's work are managing developments well. Consequently, there is good capacity for the school to secure further improvement.
- Leaders at all levels have a good awareness of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement. Teaching has improved because leaders have invested time in ensuring that all staff are provided with training which is closely matched to their individual needs. Leaders and governors make sure teachers are set targets for improvement and that their pay is closely related to pupils' progress.
- Systems for checking on the progress of different groups of pupils are rigorous. Careful attention is paid to ensuring that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed and that any discrimination is tackled decisively. Leaders and teachers meet regularly to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress so that they get the extra help they need.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage and the school's work to support pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are led and managed well.
- Effective steps are taken to use the pupil premium funding to enable eligible pupils to take a full part in what the school has to offer. The sports funding is ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to participate in a range of physical activities. A high proportion of pupils benefit from a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. The funding is also being used to provide specialist sports coaches to work alongside members of staff to make sure pupils profit from better-quality sports teaching.
- Staff provide good opportunities for pupils to appreciate art, to sing together and to play musical instruments. Visits and visitors enhance the teaching of different subjects. Staff provide interesting lessons that bring other subjects to life. For example, the Year 6 class experienced what it was like to be a child in a Victorian classroom as a very strict teacher drilled them in writing, mental arithmetic and physical training tasks. Such activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well.
- The local authority has provided little support for the school since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well organised and use their skills well to support the school in its work. They benefit from training so they are well informed in making decisions about what happens in school. Governors are aware that pupils' standards in relation to other schools nationally are improving. They know they must support senior leaders in maintaining the focus on improving teaching so that standards in mathematics and writing equal those of reading. Governors are fully involved in working with staff, pupils, parents and carers in deciding what it wants to achieve for its pupils. They visit school regularly to check that improvement actions are effective, including visiting lessons alongside school leaders. Governors check the performance of the headteacher and that other teachers are meeting the targets set for them. They manage the finances prudently, including the spending of the pupil premium, and check that this is having a positive effect on eligible pupils. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	116885
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	426970

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Towner
Headteacher	Kathy Weston
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2012
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