

St James Church of England Primary School, Handsworth

Sandwell Road, Birmingham, B21 8NH

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, leaders and governors have worked well to improve teaching and raise achievement since the last inspection.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective. Leaders check pupils' progress carefully and provide swift support to those pupils who fall behind.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They learn about the links between letters and sounds and apply their knowledge confidently in their early reading and writing work.
- The school is a safe and secure place in which pupils feel at ease. Pupils know how to stay safe, especially when it comes to safety on the internet.
- Provision for children in the early years is good. Children learn quickly and make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and managed very well. This helps create a calm and orderly atmosphere in lessons and around the school.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully. Pupils learn to value and respect everyone equally, regardless of race, ethnicity or belief.
- The promotion of British values and tolerance for others is good. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The governors are now very effective partners in supporting and challenging the school to improve even more. The review of the work of the governing body following the last inspection has improved their understanding of their role, and they now challenge the school about its performance well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils, including the most-able pupils, do not always make the progress they should during lessons because teachers do not adapt activities quickly enough if they prove to be too easy or too hard.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their writing and numeracy skills in their work in other subjects.
- The comments that teachers make on pupil's work do not always tell them clearly how to improve their work. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on the advice they are given or make the corrections and improvements asked for.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 21 lessons. Several of these observations took place together with members of the school’s senior leadership team. The inspectors also made shorter visits to a number of other lessons and school activities. They attended an assembly, examined pupils’ written work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body, as well as members of staff.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and the diocese. Inspectors also held informal discussions with a number of parents and carers.
- Inspectors examined a number of school documents, including records of pupils’ attainment and progress, and records of attendance.
- Inspectors looked at safeguarding procedures, as well as the school’s self-evaluation, its processes for setting targets for teachers and monitoring teachers’ performance, and a range of other school documents.
- Inspectors considered the 12 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, as well as the school’s own recent survey of parents’ views. They also took account of 23 questionnaires, which had been completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Michael Appleby, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephanie Peters	Additional Inspector
Richard Kentish	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above-average sized primary school.
- There are two classes for each age group, including for Reception children, who attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average. The largest groups are Black Caribbean, Black African, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi.
- The proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding provided for disadvantaged children who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school appointed five teachers in September 2013, who are now in their second year of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - keep a close check on pupils' learning and progress in lessons, particularly that of the most able, and adapt activities if pupils find that work too easy or too difficult
 - give pupils more opportunities to apply their English and mathematics skills in other subjects
 - give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work and check that they act on this advice.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, working closely with other leaders, provides very clear direction for the school. He has improved the quality of teaching and learning and the way pupils are cared for. He has ensured that all staff keep clearly focused on providing the best possible education for all pupils. As a result, pupils behave well, make good progress, feel safe and enjoy school.
- There has been good improvement in the areas for development identified at the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further. The school has made good progress in the areas for further development that were identified during the Ofsted monitoring visit in July 2013.
- Senior leaders use a very effective system for checking the progress of individuals and different groups of pupils throughout the school. They make sure that teachers are fully aware of the standards that pupils are reaching and whether or not they are making good progress. Leaders encourage staff to use this information to plan and provide activities and support which are well matched to pupils' different needs and abilities. However, some activities continue to be too easy or too demanding for individual pupils, and this prevents them making the best possible progress.
- The leadership of teaching is strong and the school has effective systems for managing teachers' performance. Senior leaders monitor teachers' work systematically and identify what they are doing well and how they could improve. Leaders provide good support for less experienced teachers. All staff have good opportunities to improve their effectiveness through training. The success of teachers in meeting their agreed targets determines whether or not they receive increases in pay, or promotion.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to provide disadvantaged pupils with additional support, particularly in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. The funding and additional support the school provides are having a positive impact on the achievement of eligible pupils. All pupils have the same good opportunities to succeed and enjoy full access to the learning opportunities the school provides. There is no evidence of discrimination in any aspect of the school's work.
- Middle leaders (key stage and subject leaders) make a strong contribution to the quality of education in the school. These leaders provide good support and advice to colleagues, and monitor teaching and pupils' achievement effectively in their areas of responsibility.
- The curriculum is well planned and has been appropriately focused on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The school has pupils from many faiths and cultures, and these are celebrated and used effectively to promote tolerance and respect for others. Leaders regularly update the curriculum to ensure all subjects are taught as effectively as reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders and staff successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This ensures that pupils show care, consideration and respect for others. Leaders also ensure that all staff promote key values, such as equality, fairness, tolerance and helping others, throughout the school. Pupils at St. James are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's provision for pupils' welfare and its safeguarding arrangements are both good. The staff and governing body ensure the school is a very safe and secure learning environment. Statutory safeguarding requirements are met in full.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium funding to provide disadvantaged pupils with additional support, particularly in speech and language development, literacy and numeracy. The funds are also used to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils in the Reception class. This funding is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. All educational visits are fully funded by the school and so disadvantaged pupils have full access to all the learning opportunities the school provides.

- The school has used the primary physical education and sport funding well to increase pupils' participation and skills and to improve teachers' expertise in teaching physical education. The school has employed specialist coaches to work directly with pupils to improve their skills and to demonstrate effective teaching, for example in gymnastics and dance. New equipment has enhanced the school's provision and range activities.
- The local authority has a good understanding of the school's performance and provides good advice and support when needed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Improved and effective governance has contributed well to the school's improvement. Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and how it performs against other schools. They use data well to rigorously check the achievement of different groups of pupils. They closely monitor pupils' standards and ask challenging questions about pupil achievement, the quality of teaching, and the support being given to those pupils who fall behind or have barriers to their learning. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school as a result of their visits to lessons, discussions with pupils and staff, and the clear and honest reports they get from the headteacher. They ensure that teachers' performance, as measured by their success in the classroom, is appropriately rewarded.
 - The governing body ensure that finances are spent effectively to benefit the pupils. Governors know how the sports funding and pupil premium funds are spent and are aware of the impact on pupils' progress.
 - They ensure that all aspects of safety and safeguarding requirements are fully met and procedures are followed correctly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good throughout the school, from Reception to Year 6. As a result of the consistent way teachers apply school rules and make clear their expectations, pupils behave well and get on well with each other whatever their background. The school's records indicate that pupils' behaviour is typically good over time and any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils treat each other and adults with respect, and form good relationships. They are polite and courteous. They play together harmoniously at playtimes, and lunchtimes are calm and sociable occasions. Inspectors agree with the views of pupils, staff and parents who say that behaviour in the school is good.
- Pupils generally concentrate well and listen attentively to their teachers and each other. Pupils work together well and willingly help each other. The school takes every opportunity to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills well. Leaders provide regular opportunities for reflection about right and wrong, working together and the importance of understanding people of other faiths and backgrounds; this helps pupils to develop tolerance, respect and friendships.
- In lessons where the work is interesting and well matched to their ability, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and work hard. Sometimes the concentration of a few pupils lapses if the work they are set is too hard or too easy.
- Attendance and punctuality are improving because of the determined and robust actions taken by the leaders of the school. Although still slightly below the national average, the school is working very effectively with parents to improve attendance.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents are confident that their children are safe. Leaders and staff take effective measures to help ensure that all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, are well cared for and protected.

- Staff carry out regular risk assessments to ensure that the school is a safe place for pupils and checks made prior to off-site visits are robust. The site is secure and well maintained. Leaders' regular checks on equipment, such as the climbing apparatus in the early years outdoor area, ensure pupils' safety.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying and say that there is very little in school. They report that any problems are quickly sorted out by the staff, and school records confirm that this is the case.
- Pupils have a keen awareness of the potential dangers they may face when using social media and know exactly what they should do if they have a concern. This is because cyber-bullying and the dangers of the internet are taught in assemblies, displayed in classrooms and regularly discussed in lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school. It has improved as a result of effective leadership and training, good advice from external consultants and good support from the Teaching School Alliance. This improvement has been validated by external checks, and a monitoring visit by Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) in July 2013.
- Teaching is now consistently good and, consequently, all groups of pupils make good progress. The judgements contained in leaders' checks on the quality of teaching suggest that it has steadily improved over the past two years, and that it is continuing to do so. Inspection evidence confirms this view.
- Teachers ensure that most activities are well suited to pupils' abilities and interests, and make sure that pupils know what is expected of them. They do not always ensure that lesson time is used as well as it could be. This is because teachers do not always check thoroughly enough during lessons that pupils are not finding the work too hard or too easy.
- Teachers encourage good attitudes to learning from the time children start in the early years and continue to do so throughout the school. They expect pupils to share ideas and work purposefully when in pairs, so that they learn to listen to others and respect their views. Relationships are positive and pupils want to please their teachers.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is good. Teachers mostly use assessment data effectively to set pupils tasks that develop their knowledge and skills. Occasionally the work is too easy, including for the most-able pupils.
- The teaching of phonics (the links between sounds and letters), which the last inspection identified as a weakness, is now a strength. Children learn their letter sounds effectively from the early years onwards. This ensures that they have a good grounding in reading and spelling. Pupils who are at the early stage of learning English are supported well and quickly improve their phonic knowledge and reading skills. Older pupils develop good comprehension skills during regular reading sessions.
- The school has improved the teaching of writing since the last inspection. The good training it has provided for staff, and leaders' and teachers' careful monitoring of pupils' writing, have had a very positive impact on the achievement of pupils in the last two years. Although teachers provide some opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills in other subjects this is not done frequently enough.
- The teaching of mathematics is good and pupils make good progress in the development of their mental and written calculation skills and their knowledge and use of number. However, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to apply their writing and mathematical skills in their work in other subjects such as science, geography and history. Consequently, their knowledge and skills, whilst secure, are not always as advanced as they could be.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that all pupils receive the support they need during lessons to complete the tasks they have been set, and to ensure they understand what is being taught. Adults' well-planned and effective use of intervention ensures that pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, and those whose first language is not English, all make good progress.

- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and often. They make sure that pupils understand what they have done well and what could be improved. However, not all teachers comments make it clear to pupils how or what they need to improve. Not all teachers ensure that pupils act on their teacher's comments by completing corrections or making improvements.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Key Stage 2 test results from 2013 and 2014 show that pupils from a range of different backgrounds make good progress from their starting points. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- In 2013 and 2014, the proportions of pupils who made the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics during Key Stage 2 matched the national averages for all three subjects. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress was higher than the national average. The dip in Year 6 results in 2014 was due to the very low prior attainment of that year's cohort.
- Pupils' performance in the Year 1 reading check rose in 2013 and 2014 to match the national average. The systematic and effective teaching of phonics in the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes has resulted in pupils being able to sound out letters and blend them successfully to read and spell unfamiliar words.
- As a result of the effective use of pupil premium funding, disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress to other pupils in school in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6 in 2014, their attainment was approximately four months behind their school peers in mathematics and writing, but at a similar level in reading. The in-school gap had narrowed considerably for writing and mathematics from the previous year. Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates are closing across all year groups.
- Disadvantaged pupils performed as well as other pupils nationally in reading. However, in writing, they were approximately four months behind, and a year behind in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because teachers assess their needs carefully and provide effective support. The carefully targeted teaching they receive in lessons or in small withdrawal groups ensures that these pupils are set appropriately challenging tasks and so they learn effectively.
- Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. Pupils who are at early stages of learning to speak English, particularly those who are new arrivals, generally make good progress in acquiring English. The teaching and provision provided by the school helps these pupils to develop their vocabulary and understanding of English quickly.
- The number of most-able pupils in Year 6 in 2014 was too small to comment on their achievement. Inspection evidence for this group currently in school found that, while they make good progress over time, they are not always sufficiently challenged by the work they are set in all lessons. This prevents them making maximum progress.
- Pupils' learning and progress in most lessons are good. However, pupils do not always make the best possible progress in all lessons. This is because sometimes teachers do not check and adapt tasks quickly enough when pupils make slower or faster progress than they had expected.

The early years provision is good

- The early years' setting is a productive, safe and happy place. Good teaching provides children with a secure start to their learning. They are provided with many stimulating learning activities in the classroom and outside, such as those about insects and other very small animals. Adults take every opportunity to develop the children's language and social skills.
- Although children make good progress in all areas of learning, particularly in their personal and social

development, in 2014 only about half reached the good level of development expected by the time they joined Year 1. About three-quarters of children join the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are below those that are typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. About half of the children speak little English when they start school. These children are given very effective support to quickly develop their language skills and work successfully alongside others. They are well prepared for their learning in Key Stage 1 when they leave Reception.

- Teaching is good. Teachers set well-planned and interesting activities, which hold children’s interest and keep them involved in learning throughout their play, both inside and outdoors. The adults question children thoughtfully to assess and consolidate their understanding, and further develop their vocabulary.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. The phase leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. Children’s progress is frequently measured and teachers use this information to plan activities, which build on their skills and knowledge.
- Safeguarding and child protection are a key focus for staff, who ensure all pupils are safe and well cared for. All staff are trained to the appropriate level for their posts, including in paediatric first aid. Children respond well to the expectations set by staff and so they behave well and feel safe. They show good behaviour for learning by listening well to each other and adults, talking confidently about their ideas and playing cooperatively with others.

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	103401
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	462591

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father David Isiorho
Headteacher	Mark Lanyon
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2013
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