

St James' C of E Primary School

Romney Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, OL6 9HU

Inspection dates	4–5 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and their attendance is above average. Their good manners, caring and friendly attitudes and willingness to help and support each other are impressive.
- All groups of pupils achieve well, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, those learning to speak English and those who are disadvantaged. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. The curriculum provides a rich range of learning and extra activities. Pupils learn traditional British values and grow into responsible individuals, who respect and appreciate different cultures and religions.
- The early years provision gives children a good start and a firm foundation to their learning.
- Pupils are taught well. Behaviour in lessons is often excellent. Activities build on pupils' enthusiasm, making them want to learn more, so they work hard and progress well.
- Parents rightly agree that their children are happy, kept safe and make good progress at school.
- Senior leaders, staff and governors are totally committed to providing the best for every pupil. Since the previous inspection, attainment has risen. Progress is accelerating, the quality of teaching is improving and there is strong capacity for further improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is improving securely, but does not yet result in outstanding achievement.
- Attainment in mathematics lags behind that in other subjects.
- In Key Stage 1, achievement in writing has improved but is not as strong as in other subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on improvements in the quality of teaching to further raise achievement throughout the school, particularly in mathematics by:
 - extending and developing staff skills and knowledge in the teaching of mathematics
 - improving pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts, such as fractions and place value, so they are able to use and apply their knowledge in a wide range of different situations.
- Further raise achievement in writing in Key Stage 1 by enabling pupils to think about, plan and organise their writing more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the time of the previous inspection, senior leaders, governors and staff have worked tirelessly to achieve their vision and drive forward school improvement. Morale is high and there is a great sense of unity and purpose. Thorough and accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses results in plans that are sharply targeted on the right priorities; for example, raising the quality of teaching. Consequently, all groups of pupils achieve well, and standards are rising.
- Leaders now check the quality of teaching regularly through lesson observations, analysis of progress data and scrutiny of lesson plans and pupils' books. Staff have to implement improvements and undertake professional development to strengthen their skills and eradicate any underperformance. Any who do not meet their targets cannot progress to the next salary level. Despite improvements, mathematics teaching is not as effective as in reading or writing.
- Senior leaders model good management and teaching skills. Good leadership of the provision for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs ensures they progress well. Middle leaders carry out their responsibilities well and produce clear action plans for further development but have not completed any teaching observations.
- The early years provision is led well and, as a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is rising.
- Pupil premium funds are used effectively so disadvantaged pupils progress as well as, and very often faster than, their classmates. School data show that the very few small remaining gaps are rapidly closing.
- Pupils really enjoy additional activities and skills provided through sports funding, for example specialist coaching. Staff have acquired new skills, and more pupils participate in physical activities and establish the basis of a healthy lifestyle.
- The curriculum has been revised recently. It provides well-planned activities, suitably adapted so every pupil can make good progress in all subjects, and acquire the numeracy and literacy skills they need across the curriculum and for the future. Clubs, such as football or chess, are popular and provide different experiences, for example participation in the Halle Shine project to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through music.
- Very well-promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means the school is a calm, orderly environment where pupils from a very wide range of backgrounds and cultures feel safe and secure and mix happily together. The school council teaches democracy in action and recently visited the Town Hall and met the mayor. Pupils become increasingly responsible, respect different religions, lifestyles and cultures, and are well prepared for their future life in our multicultural society.
- The school successfully ensures equality of opportunity for every pupil. Extra support for those who find learning difficult, or whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, ensures they can participate in everything the school offers. There is no discrimination and very good, secure relationships between pupils and with adults are seen throughout the school.
- Parents receive regular updates about their children's progress, and responses in the school's own survey of their views show they feel welcome and well informed. The breakfast club helps working parents. The school website is easy to access and informative, and the learning mentor liaises well with families and provides courses to help parents support learning at home.
- The local authority has provided good support for school leaders with staff training and development, as has the Diocese of Manchester.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Since the previous inspection, governance has been reviewed, strengthened, and is increasingly effective. Governors spend time in school, regularly meet their link class teachers, and receive achievement information and reports from staff. This gives them a knowledge base so they can challenge leaders and hold them to account. For example, they ask about what is being done to raise attainment in mathematics.
 - Governors compare the school's performance with other schools locally and nationally using a range of data and class progress reports. They check how pupil premium funds are used, and know this is effective because disadvantaged pupils often outperform their classmates and do well in comparison with other pupils nationally.

- Governors know that staff performance management leads to further professional development to improve teaching, increase management skills and develop future leaders. They ensure salary rewards are only given when staff enable their pupils to learn well.
- Governors make sure that all pupils are well equipped for future life and acquire traditional British values in a safe, secure environment.
- Governors know how primary sports funding is used to improve provision, including sports coaching, and that the wider range of activities has increased participation in sports.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements. Records are carefully maintained, information is clear for parents, and all staff are trained in child protection procedures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- School monitoring records and inspection evidence show that leaders' rigorous monitoring and well-planned professional development have improved the quality of teaching. Consequently, attainment has risen and all pupils make good progress.
- 'The teachers help us with our learning', and 'Our work is about right', were typical comments from pupils. Very positive relationships were seen in all lessons, both with staff and between pupils, who are very quick to help each other, which aids learning and good progress. The very great majority of pupils are keen to learn and persist with their tasks, although very occasionally some work slowly and do not complete their tasks.
- Classrooms are well organised, with lots of helpful prompts, such as punctuation reminders and mathematical terms. Teachers explain tasks clearly, build on what pupils know and ask questions that encourage and stimulate them to think hard, reason and explain. For example, pupils were challenged to multiply decimals by 10, then 100 and then by 1,000.
- Lessons are planned using progress information provided by good assessment systems. Staff carefully ensure that pupils are given tasks that stretch those who find learning easier and provide direct support for those who need help. As the school has identified, some staff lack skills in aspects of the teaching of mathematics.
- Teaching assistants are always deployed well. They make a strong contribution to the good progress made by all groups, especially those who find it hard to learn or who may be vulnerable.
- Work is marked thoroughly, with extra challenges and comments about how to improve that pupils are given time to work on. The green and pink marking code is clear and pupils say teachers' comments are helpful. Homework is set regularly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school is a harmonious setting where pupils work and play happily together and become increasingly mature and sensible. They enjoy roles of responsibility, such as organising the hall for assemblies, serving on the school and eco-councils and helping younger pupils by organising games in the playground.
- Pupils said, 'The teachers safeguard us', so they feel safe, and bullying is not seen as an issue. Pupils know bullying can happen in different ways, such as cyber bullying, and would always tell an adult, because they trust them to listen to and act on their concerns. Pupils say name-calling happens occasionally, but there is no racism.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations such as on the roads or in water.
- The breakfast club gives those who attend a healthy snack and secure start to the day.
- Attendance is above average. Staff follow up any absences quickly to ensure all pupils attend regularly and on time. The school does all it can to boost attendance with rewards and class certificates, making pupils and families well aware that education is highly important and vital for their future lives.
- Any pupils who may be vulnerable receive extra support, often from the learning mentor or through the

school's links with external agencies, enabling these pupils to participate fully and progress as well as their classmates.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- School records and inspection evidence show good behaviour is typical over time, and parents agree. Exclusions are extremely rare, and there is no record of any discrimination.
- Good learning behaviour in class results in good progress for all pupils. Many examples were seen of pupils quickly stepping in to help a classmate who was unsure how to tackle their work, without being prompted.
- Pupils know their actions have consequences, understand the school's 'Good to be Green' system of managing behaviour, and say it is fair.
- Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is 'mostly good'. Many examples of excellent behaviour in lessons were seen during the inspection, and pupils were enthusiastic about their tasks. Very strong supportive relationships between pupils and staff help learning proceed smoothly and contribute to good progress, with very few occasions when pupils do not concentrate well on their tasks.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Inspection evidence, school records and data show that attainment is rising and progress is speeding up in all key stages. All groups of pupils make good progress in all subjects, from starting points below those typical for their age, and most exceed the progress expected of them. When they leave the school, pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education.
- The increasing numbers of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times means that each year group changes considerably over time. As a result, there is great variation between year groups and patterns of attainment fluctuate from year to year. Nevertheless, all achieve well during their time in the school.
- Throughout the school, pupils look after their books, write legibly and are careful to present their work neatly.
- Inspection evidence, assessment records and the work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to reach their targets in reading, writing and mathematics.
- When pupils leave the school, attainment is typically very close to national averages in all subjects. In 2015, provisional data show that a small number of pupils attained the highest level, Level 6, in writing, mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar. Although it is early in the school year, pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to meet their targets in all subjects.
- School records, inspection findings and the work seen in pupils' books show that pupils progress well in mathematics but often find some aspects difficult, such as fractions and decimals. They do not always recall number facts quickly and can lack confidence in using their knowledge in different situations. The school has made this a priority for improvement, and is implementing training and development to boost skills and knowledge, so staff are better equipped to help their pupils.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils practise letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) every day and know how to tackle new words. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was above the national average, an improvement on previous years. The school benefits from many volunteers who listen to younger pupils read each day. Older pupils talk about favourite authors, such as Michael Morpurgo, and their reading skills support their work across the curriculum.
- Although progress in writing is good, school records show attainment at Key Stage 1 lags behind that in reading and mathematics. Actions in place to overcome this have yet to make a full impact. However, in the older classes, pupils confidently write at length and use their skills in all subjects. For example, they write biographies of historical figures.
- Additional challenges in lessons for pupils who find it easier to learn deepen their knowledge and understanding. They benefit from many enrichment activities, such as the BBC Ten Pieces music project, where work built on pupils' response to a production viewed at the cinema.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs receive well-informed support and help, with learning matched to their individual needs, so they progress as well as their classmates.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language progress in line with their classmates. Bilingual

support, when needed, helps them learn well. For example, a newly arrived pupil, who was taught in French while acquiring English, was made to feel secure and thus able to learn well.

- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. They make good progress, often progressing faster than their classmates. In 2015 almost half the pupils in Year 6 were disadvantaged, and their attainment was behind their classmates by three terms in mathematics, but only one term in reading and half a term in writing. In comparison with other pupils nationally, the picture is the same. Carefully used pupil premium funds, to provide extra support, mean these gaps are closing over time, especially in reading and writing.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start school with skills below those typical for their age, especially in language. From their different starting points, they make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes and are ready for further learning when they move to Year 1. Just over half reach a good level of development, including those who are disadvantaged, those new to learning English, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This is just below the national figure but school data show the proportion is increasing each year.
- Children are well cared for so they feel safe, secure and quickly gain confidence. They behave well and tackle tasks enthusiastically, happily sharing equipment so there is no interruption to their learning. At snack time, they choose their drink and food confidently. Nursery children served each other politely, saying 'please' and 'thank you', learning good manners and growing in independence.
- Lively practice of letters and the sounds they make get children ready for reading and writing. Reception children suggested firework words, such as 'boom' and 'fizz', carefully sounding out each letter. Most used the wall displays to find the letters, some could write the words, and several were delighted to see that letters from their names also appeared in the firework words.
- Good teaching provides well-planned activities that capture children's interest. Children learn in the fresh air in the well-resourced outside area where they have plenty of space to run about, dig in the garden or engage in quieter activities like reading, writing, counting or painting.
- Staff work closely together and analyse the information in each child's 'learning journey' booklet to plan activities, check that all groups of children are progressing well and to see where extra help may be needed. Teaching assistants contribute well to children's good start in school.
- Good leadership focuses on improving provision for every child and helping parents to be fully involved in their children's learning. Leaders are aware that arrangements for moving children from attending part-time in the Nursery to being full-time in the Reception class lack clarity. They have plans to address this.

School details

Unique reference number	106231
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10002195

This inspection 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	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shelagh Walton
Headteacher	Verna Marsh
Telephone number	0161 330 2008
Website	www.st-james-ash.tameside.sch.uk
Email address	admin@st-james-ash.tameside.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of Pakistani heritage, about one third are White British and others come from a range of European and Asian heritages.
- More pupils move into and out of the school than the national average and many are international new arrivals, who know little or no English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is just below the national average.
- Early years provision is housed in a separate building, and is part-time for children in the Nursery and full-time for children in the Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school offers a daily breakfast club.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, there have been a number of staffing changes, and new governor appointments, including the Chair of the Governing Body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed lessons in all classes, including one observed jointly with the headteacher and another with the deputy headteacher, and visited small-group sessions.
- The team looked at methods to monitor and check the quality of teaching, and examined current achievement data and the systems the school uses to gather an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils were checked.
- Inspectors talked with some parents and held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Manchester.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of pupils' workbooks, observed pupils moving around the building, in the dining hall and outside at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to readers from Years 1, 2 and 6.
- There were not enough responses on the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, for the results to be shown, so inspectors looked at the school's own recent survey of parents' and pupils' views. In addition, they looked at the 29 questionnaire responses received from staff.

Inspection team

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