

St James' CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131673
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	360305
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Michelle Parker HMI

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Goodwin
Headteacher	Paul Longden
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2010
School address	Wolverley Crescent Oldbury, West Midlands B69 1BG
Telephone number	0121 5525491
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Email address	Headteacher@st-james-pri.sandwell.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Inspection number	360305

Registered Childcare provision	Breakfast club
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	16
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 29 lessons and observed all teachers. Meetings were held with parents, carers, groups of pupils, and the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and educational partners. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at whole school planning, teachers' planning and school policies. In total 108 parent and carer questionnaires were analysed. The team also analysed responses on 106 pupil questionnaires and 39 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective is teaching and learning, in the Early Years Foundation Stage and both key stages, in meeting the needs of all pupils, especially those known to be eligible for free school meals, and is teaching sufficiently challenging?
- How effectively does the school's tracking and assessment systems identify pupils who need intervention and support and does it ensure there is appropriate challenge for every pupil?
- How effective are leaders and managers at all levels in holding staff to account and raising their expectations of pupils?

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school part-way through their education is very high in some year groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a few pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has achieved Platinum Healthy School status, the Basic Skills Quality mark and Arts Mark Gold standard.

At its last inspection in January 2010, the school was given a notice to improve because it was performing less well than could be reasonably expected. Significant improvements were required in relation to English and mathematics. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors monitored the school's progress in July 2010. The school was judged to be making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a satisfactory school that is rapidly improving. This is because the headteacher and staff have worked determinedly and successfully to address the recommendations from the previous inspection. Leadership from the headteacher is outstanding. His energy and drive have encouraged all the staff and fused them into an effective team. The re-organisation of the senior leadership team has reinvigorated and empowered them, so that they work together effectively. The governing body now confidently hold the school to account. Self-evaluation provides an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result, the school now has adequate and a growing capacity for sustained improvement. This is clearly seen in the day-to-day workings of the school. The senior team uses data to accurately monitor, effectively plan and hold staff to account. All staff are now clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is average for all groups of pupils. The school effectively monitors and tracks different groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they make similar progress to others. The re-organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage area has ensured that this is used more successfully. Children frequently use the outdoor area. Improvements in assessment processes ensure that staff now have a clearer and more accurate view of attainment on entry and the progress made by the youngest children, especially in teacher-led activities. However, systems are not sufficiently developed to ensure that independent learning and child-initiated play provide high quality learning at all times.

Pupils' progress in lessons has improved and is at least satisfactory and increasingly good, because teachers have higher expectations of pupils and plan better to meet their needs. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching in English and mathematics has improved because teachers now understand pupils' achievement information and use this to ensure tasks are better matched to the learning needs of all pupils. Teachers make effective use of assessment information during lessons but occasionally marking is not used well and so pupils' understanding of how to improve their work is not effectively promoted. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils increasingly enjoy coming to school and attendance has improved to average. The school has rightly identified that the curriculum, while satisfactory, does not fully provide a sufficiently rich, imaginative and engaging experience for most pupils. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and have risen to the challenges provided to make a strong contribution to their school and the wider community.

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The care, guidance and support provided by the school are strengths. The school is effective in tracking pupils' attendance, behaviour, attainment and achievement. Through this, carefully targeted interventions are put in place. For example, the school quickly identifies pupils who need the dedicated support and help provided by the nurture group. Strong partnership working has improved pupils' social awareness and understanding of healthy lifestyles. Well thought-through mentoring and the imaginative use of resources have helped pupils improve a wide range of skills, from sport to reading.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise standards in English and mathematics through:
 - further developing an imaginative and engaging curriculum
 - ensuring that pupils are more actively involved in learning
 - improving consistency in the quality of marking so that pupils are provided with clear short term targets for improvement.
- Build upon the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage by encouraging and monitoring independent learning and child-initiated play to ensure that all children have high quality learning experiences.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Attainment on entry to the school is below and sometimes well below average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been low but is improving and it is average. In the Key Stage 2 tests set by the school, pupils' attainment was in line with national averages for writing and mathematics, but below average for reading. Since then, the school has worked successfully to make significant improvements to reading. The school's tracking data indicate that reading attainment in the current Year 6 is average. The detailed tracking of data ensures that timely interventions are made for all groups of pupils when needed. Effective systems are in place to ensure that all pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those who arrive at the school part way through their education make similar progress to their peers.

In lessons observed during the inspection, all groups of Year 6 pupils made good progress. The school has quickly identified and addressed where pupils had gaps in their understanding and knowledge. The school has had staffing problems in Year 5 but senior leaders have ensured that these have had minimal impact on pupils. In the best lessons, pupils work well in groups, help each other and discuss how they can improve their work. In a Year 4 'forest school' lesson, pupils displayed high levels of maturity. They cooperated well and took turns. In Key Stage 1, all groups of pupils made satisfactory progress in lessons observed. Writing is still a weakness in Key Stage 1, but well thought through strategies have been put in place to improve this.

Pupils' involvement in their school and the wider community is impressive. They have initiated a wide range of activities from improving the activity play area to cleaning up litter. These experiences have encouraged them to ring companies for quotes for materials

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and to write to their local Member of Parliament. These activities have increased pupils' self-confidence. Pupils explained how much they enjoyed coming to school and were proud of their school and its achievements.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory and improving with an increasing proportion that is good. Lessons are well planned and soundly structured. Pupils understand what the learning outcomes are. In satisfactory lessons, teachers do not always differentiate carefully enough and this limits pupils' opportunities for independent learning. The school is aware of this and has plans in place to address this. Relationships are strong and staff know pupils well. Pupils are encouraged to read each other's work and comment on it. Pupils really enjoyed themselves and their progress was boosted where there were more imaginative approaches to lessons. For example, pupils in a Year 5 lesson were able to use a wide selection of descriptive words to develop their writing. Sometimes teachers talk too much and do not encourage pupils to explain their thinking sufficiently.

Teachers' use of assessment has greatly improved. Frequent checks are made on pupils' understanding and in the best lessons teachers adapt work to take account of this. Marking is positive and frequent, but does not always explain the next steps for pupils and this limits pupils' independent learning. The school has identified these inconsistencies and has plans in place to extend and share its good practice.

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The curriculum is satisfactory and generally well organised. Teachers have identified gaps in pupils' previous learning and these are being addressed during afternoon sessions. The school has piloted developing greater curriculum choices for pupils which have developed practical problem-solving and research skills within interesting situations. Attendance rose sharply during the pilot and pupils were very positive about how much more they enjoyed learning. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their use of English and mathematics across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support are good. The breakfast club provides a nutritious and calm start to the day so pupils are ready to start their lessons well. Vulnerable pupils have mentoring sessions and their own 'key worker' to oversee their health and well-being. Younger pupils are supported in the nurture group and older pupils in 'helter skelter' and their development is tracked carefully to ensure they make at least appropriate progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has developed a culture of high expectations and strong partnership working. He is ably supported by his effective leadership team. New appointments to the team have strengthened it and given a clear focus on school improvement. Each senior manager leads a team of teachers and support staff across the school. This has ensured that school improvement is coherent and is well understood by all staff. Staff routinely make use of a wide range of monitoring information. As a result, target setting is realistic and challenging for all groups of pupils. The school swiftly identifies under performance and speedily addresses pupils' needs appropriately as part of its drive to ensure equality of opportunity. Teams focus on whole school issues and this ensures that all developments occur across all key stages. This has increased staff accountability and encouraged all staff to take up areas of responsibility. All staff now have a secure understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning. Staff understand how to use data to plan effectively for different groups of learners and to track their progress in their lessons.

Governance is satisfactory. New members of the governing body have increased the expertise and confidence of governors. Thus they are better prepared to challenge the school and hold it to account. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place. Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe. Governors take an active role in ensuring safeguarding is promoted. Strong collaborative partnerships ensure risks to pupils are reduced. The school has worked hard to develop strong links with a wide range of partners which strengthen the school's ethos and enhance the opportunities for pupils. These include encouraging greater participation in reading, sports activities, mentoring

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and incentives to support better attendance. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has audited its provision and developed a sound strategy, building upon the enthusiastic work of the pupils in the wider community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly and benefit from well-structured routines and organisation that help them to feel safe, secure and excited about coming to school. They behave well, routines are well established and the children know what is expected of them. This is because adults are good at promoting their personal development and well-being.

By the end of Reception, children have made satisfactory progress, but they attain below average standards in all areas of learning. Children make good progress in learning sounds and letters due to good teaching and the well-structured programme which is in place. This promotes their future success in reading and writing. There is an improved balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities across all areas of learning. There are greater opportunities for independence, investigation and developing communication skills. For example, children took roles from a recently heard story and acted it out. Children worked collaboratively together, taking turns and sharing resources with a high degree of enjoyment. They responded well to the teacher-led activities. Children enjoy their time in this caring environment. However, there are missed opportunities to link observations of what children are doing, to their next steps in learning with sufficient rigour to increase rates of progress. Regular observations and assessments are made but not fully utilised to provide and develop further activities. In addition, opportunities are missed to develop the role of adults during child-initiated activities. Opportunities for enriching children's vocabulary and skills through careful use of questioning are missed. The outside area has been developed recently and promotes learning satisfactorily across all areas of learning.

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The provision is satisfactorily led and managed on a daily basis and the adults work well together as a team. Managers are well supported by the senior leadership team. Staff are more confident in their use and analysis of data. Care is taken to guarantee that all children are equally involved, both indoors and out, with safety and safeguarding being given high priorities. There are improving working relationships with parents and carers. Children value their 'learning journals' which they can share with parents and carers and show their achievements with pride.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers were fulsome in their praise of the school and its work. They valued the support the school gave to them. This view was corroborated by survey evidence. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires were full of praise for the school and the support it provides their children. Parents and carers expressed very few concerns about the school. The replies from questionnaires were well above average for positive responses to all questions. Inspectors investigated all parental concerns. They were able to confirm that the school acted upon any concerns raised by parents and carers, or pupils and followed them up assiduously. The school has appropriate policies in place with regard to the issues raised by parents and carers and procedures are followed consistently.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James' CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 388 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	63	36	33	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	62	57	43	40	1	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	44	54	50	5	5	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	44	56	52	4	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	51	47	55	51	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	38	61	56	3	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	41	60	56	3	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	42	39	57	53	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	32	67	62	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	49	49	45	4	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	28	66	61	6	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	42	39	56	52	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	52	49	45	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' CofE Primary School, Oldbury B69 1BG

Thank you for your warm, friendly welcome that you gave to the inspection team. Your answers and comments were of great help to us in finding out about your school. You go to a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It provides you with a safe and caring environment that enables you to develop well as confident learners and contribute to your community.

Your school is led outstandingly well by the headteacher, who is ably supported by the senior leadership team and your dedicated teachers, teaching assistants and governors. Together they make sure you do well in school and aspire to great things. All staff care about you and encourage you. We were very impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and around the school. You must maintain your high standards of behaviour and respect for each other because this will help you to achieve your high ambitions. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving and you are beginning to learn well; this is helped by the good relationships you have with staff. The curriculum is satisfactory and we have asked the school to develop this so that you can practise your English and mathematics in more interesting ways. Marking is positive and we have asked the staff to improve its use so that you understand your next steps targets more fully. Your attendance has improved - well done! Please keep that up. The school has worked hard to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage. We have asked the school to improve this further by working on the way the children learn through the things they choose to do rather than the things teachers choose.

We wish you continued success in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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