



St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115131
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279519
Inspection dates 12 December 2005 to 13 December 2005
Reporting inspector Dr. Anna Coyle LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Guildford Road
School category	Voluntary aided		CO1 2RA
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01206865747
Number on roll	281	Fax number	01206791589
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father.Peter Walker
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Brian Vidler

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is situated in Colchester, Essex. The vast majority of children are of white British descent. A few, who speak Bengali, Albanian or Arabic at home, learn English as an additional language. Several children have learning difficulties and disabilities that include speech, emotional, behavioural, physical and autistic difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. The inspection findings do not agree with the school's view of itself but find that its effectiveness is inadequate. Improvement since the last inspection has been poor and the school gives unsatisfactory value for money. Achievement is inadequate. From below average standards on entry, children do not make enough progress and many are underachieving by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Standards have been declining, unchecked, at Key Stage 1 since 2003 and are now well below average in Year 2. Standards are also currently below the expected levels in Year 6 and the most capable children lack sufficient challenge. Teaching varies throughout the school and is inadequate overall. Children do not have a good enough start in the Foundation Stage or at Key Stage 1. Inaccuracies in gauging children's capabilities and an under-use of assessment has meant that the curriculum has not been adapted to suit their needs, and teacher's planning fails to pinpoint what children need to learn next to build on their knowledge and skills. As a result, they have many gaps in their learning throughout the school. The school cares satisfactorily for its children. Suitable arrangements are in place for protecting them and making sure that they are safe. Most children enjoy school but a significant minority are not well behaved and they disrupt the learning of others, especially in the junior classes. Several parents are worried about behaviour in the school and their children's lack of progress, and the inspectors agree that there is cause for concern. Leadership and management are inadequate. Considerable difficulties with staff absence due to illness have exacerbated the situation and led to instability in the school. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are keen to move the school forward, having begun to motivate senior staff. However, the school is struggling and in a precarious position. Its capacity for improvement is inadequate because there is no permanent headteacher and the governing body does not have sufficient knowledge of what is happening in its school.

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on: - stabilising the leadership and management of the school by appointing a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher, and strengthen the senior management and governance of the school - raising the standards achieved in English, mathematics and science, especially at Key Stage 1 and amongst the most capable children throughout the school - improving the use of assessment and marking so that teachers plan their lessons more effectively to take account of what children already know - developing the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 to help them learn more effectively through structured play activities - improving the attitudes and behaviour of a few children in some of the junior classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate and standards are too low throughout the school. Many children begin with limited skills in personal, social and emotional development, and in communication, language and literacy. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception class, although they do not attain all of the early learning goals by the time they move into Year 1. However, progress is not assured in Years 1 and 2 because the children are not assessed accurately at the end of the Foundation Stage and so they are not given an appropriate curriculum to suit their needs during their transition into National Curriculum studies. This has led to significant underachievement at Key Stage 1, especially amongst the most capable children. Standards have been declining steadily, unchecked, over the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics. They are now well below average in Year 2. Progress has fluctuated at Key Stage 2 but the national test results show that standards had begun to climb recently. However, they are currently below average by Year 6 and many children are underachieving, especially the most capable, who lack sufficient challenge. Boys are also underachieving generally in the school. Children who have learning difficulties and disabilities are not given precise targets to help them achieve, and children from minority ethnic groups make inconsistent progress because their language needs are not supported adequately. Standards have not improved enough in information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection and are still below the expected levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall. Attendance is broadly average. Most children enjoy school and want to learn but a significant minority of older junior children are inattentive and easily become restless. This is usually because the teaching fails to capture their attention and the work set does not meet their individual needs. Some of the children who have learning difficulties and disabilities find it difficult to concentrate and disturb the learning of others. A few show a lack of respect for adults. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Through the school's Christian ethos, children are encouraged to care for others. Members of the school council enjoy the responsibilities placed upon them and feel that they make a difference to the school. However, children are not given enough opportunities to become independent. Children understand a little about the importance of a good diet and regular exercise but many prefer to buy cakes and biscuits rather than the fruit which is offered at playtimes. Thus, the school does not do enough to ensure that children adopt healthy lifestyles. Children develop a financial understanding by operating the school shop and raising funds for charity, but they do not have sufficient basic skills in literacy and numeracy to contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teachers do not use assessment effectively to help them plan lessons. This contributes to the low standards, especially in Year 2. The school has experienced a period of instability recently and the use of assessment data has been neglected. New systems have been put in place by the acting headteacher to help teachers know what children have attained. However, this has not been developed fully to help drive up standards. Group targets are displayed in classrooms and in children's books but these are not sufficiently challenging for the most capable children. Marking is weak and teachers do not consistently help children to know what they need to learn next. Teachers' expectations of children are too low. Several inadequate lessons were observed across the school in which children were given the same work, regardless of their level of attainment. As a result, they made unsatisfactory progress. Where teaching is better, teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables them to explain what they mean clearly. For example in Year 6, challenging questions are used to promote learning and the activities are well matched to the capabilities of all children. Teaching assistants are usually deployed suitably to support children who have learning difficulties but this is inconsistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. A suitable focus is placed on increasing children's physical and emotional development. However, children are not well prepared for the future through curricular activities and, as a result, the standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are too low. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 is not closely matched to their capabilities and there are insufficient opportunities for them to learn through structured play; learning is made too formal, too soon. A satisfactory range of after-school activities, including art and environmental clubs, encourage the children's interests. Satisfactory links with the local community include library sessions and choir performances in Colchester Castle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Children receive satisfactory care and guidance. Child protection guidelines are in place and first aid systems are effective. Children feel safe and know who to go to if they have a problem. They believe that their views are taken seriously by adults. Children say that there are some issues of poor behaviour and bullying but these are dealt with satisfactorily. However, a significant minority of parents feel that behaviour is not managed effectively, particularly in the playground. A few parents of children who have learning difficulties and disabilities are dissatisfied with the support given to their children. Recent developments in target setting are beginning to motivate some

children and give them a clearer idea of what is expected of them. However, many children feel that the targets are too complicated and do not really understand how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate. The inspection findings do not concur with the school's evaluation of itself but finds that there are significant weaknesses that have not been tackled. The acting headteacher has only just taken on the job of leading the school and is working hard to redress the situation. He has begun to formulate plans for developing the roles of the subject leaders and extending the use of assessment data. However, this has been significantly hampered by staff absence due to illness and the lack of clear direction. The governance of the school is weak. Governors do not have a strong handle on the school's strengths and weaknesses. They accept the information they are given far too passively and do not question the school enough as critical friends nor hold it to account. For example, the serious decline in standards at Key Stage 1 has gone unchecked for three years. The school does not have satisfactory systems for self-evaluation and parents are not sufficiently involved in the process of review. Despite the acting headteacher's efforts to move the school forward, there is little evidence of sustained progress since the last inspection and only limited impact of recent innovations. The lack of focus on driving up standards in the school's development planning and the limited roles of the senior managers have led to the school now being in a precarious position. Its capacity for improvement is inadequate because there is no permanent headteacher. In addition, strategic planning has been poor with no rigorous analysis of standards. Improvement has been inadequate since the last inspection, and the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	4	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	No
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	No
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for helping us when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing you working with your teachers. We think that your school does some things well, but there are quite a few things it needs to do better. What we liked most about your school

- Most of you like school and get on well together.
- You think of others when you learn about stories from the Christian Bible.
- Children on the school council enjoy their responsibilities.
- You told us that you enjoy running the school shop and raising funds for charity.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Appoint a permanent headteacher and help the governors to know more about the school.
- Make sure that you improve your work in lessons so that you achieve higher standards.
- Improve the ways that teachers check how well you are doing.
- Give those of you in the Reception and Year 1 classes more play activities.
- Help you to improve your behaviour and attitudes to learning.

A team of inspectors will visit your school regularly to see how you are getting on. We wish you every success in the future.