



St James Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121882
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 281121
Inspection dates 27 September 2005 to 28 September 2005
Reporting inspector Christopher Kessell RISP

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	St James' Street
School category	Community		Daventry
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Northamptonshire NN11 4AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01327 702783
Number on roll	175	Fax number	01327 702783
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Judith Amery

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 27 September 2005 - 28 September 2005	Inspection number 281121
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St James Infant School is smaller than the average primary school. The children start the school with levels of attainment lower than those normally found at that age, particularly in their language skills. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is 17% and this is about average. Eight per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. There have been significant disruptions in staffing since the previous inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St James Infant School is a good school. This is also the school's view. The pupils are making good progress and by the end of Year 2 standards are above average. Teaching and learning are effective. The personal development of the pupils is good and they are well cared for. Some aspects of the care provided by the school are outstanding. The parents are pleased with the school and support all that it does. However, the attendance of a small minority of pupils could be better.

Children make a good start to school in the reception classes. Parents are pleased with the induction procedures. Their children have settled into school well and are safe and happy. By the end of reception, children reach the expected levels in all areas of learning. Pupils throughout the school are provided with an exciting curriculum and the needs of individuals are met well.

As a result of staffing difficulties, some of the progress since the school's previous inspection has been slow. For example, weaknesses in pupils' writing took time to address and still require improvement. The school has entered a stable period and leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and agree with the inspector's judgements. However, better use could be made of national data to measure performance against other schools. The senior management team is well placed to continue improving the school. The school provides good value for money.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

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- Continue to improve standards in pupils' writing
- Make better use of the available data about the school's performance
- Continue to promote the importance of attendance with parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children start school in reception with weaknesses in their language and literacy work. As a result of recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum, children in reception now make good progress. Personal development is particularly well promoted and the children make up any deficits in their language skills. By the time they enter Year 1, the vast majority of children are at the expected levels in all areas of learning.

The pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress as a result of good teaching and the pupils' very positive attitudes to their learning. Standards are above average. The school's challenging but realistic targets for the Year 2 pupils demonstrate its commitment to raising standards further, particularly in reading and writing. This continues the improvement started in the 2004-05 academic year when standards in

reading were above those found nationally, whilst standards in writing moved to levels similar to those found nationally. This was a significant improvement on the previous year when standards in writing were low. Standards in mathematics have been high for many years and these were maintained.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates. This is a result of good support provided by the school's effective teaching assistants. Some of these pupils make very good progress. The needs of more able pupils are also met well. They are provided with activities that challenge them successfully.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development, especially their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is good throughout the school. The pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is apparent in their very keen involvement in lessons. They talk enthusiastically about their work, particularly mathematics and the sessions in the experiential room where they work at a range of activities to develop their organisational skills and work with others. When describing the school mascot, 'Spencer', pupils show a clear understanding of the importance of his rules for good behaviour. Both in assembly and in lessons, they respond well to opportunities to think through their personal reactions to people and events. Relationships with each other and with teachers are good and attitudes to other cultures are positive. Pupils listen well to the views of others.

The school's good efforts have improved pupils' punctuality but their attendance is only average because of the high proportion of holidays taken in term time. Sports clubs and healthy school meals are popular, and the pupils have an excellent understanding about keeping safe when taking exercise and playing in the playground. Their attitude to the community is positive, especially in terms of caring for the environment. The school is recognised as an 'eco-school' and the pupils have a mature understanding of terms such as 'recycle'.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

As a result of good professional development, teaching has improved in the school, especially in the reception years and in the teaching of writing. Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress in all subjects. The teachers and teaching assistants in the reception classes work well together to provide well planned activities that cover all of the recommended areas of learning.

The good work continues in Years 1 and 2. Teachers know the standards expected in reading, mathematics and writing and assess thoroughly, so that their planning has a sharp focus on the needs of each child. In most lessons observed, the pupils' enthusiasm was the result of lively presentations offering a variety of experiences and leading to very good levels of attention and behaviour. The pupils' are confident and relaxed about their learning. They talked to inspectors enthusiastically about their activities and gave detailed explanations of what they were doing.

Children enjoy the assessment system based on 'Spencer's bones' so that they know their targets and understand what they have to do next. They also respond well to the 'two stars and a wish' system that gives them immediate targets in most lessons. Well qualified teaching assistants work with groups so that children with learning difficulties and disabilities are given the help that they need and have their performance closely monitored. Teachers work closely with parents. Reading homework is set regularly, and the school is organising a parents' curriculum evening to help parents support their children's writing.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils are provided with an exciting range of experiences through a curriculum that is well planned to support their personal development as well as their achievement in the National Curriculum. Mathematics is a strength of the school. As a result of recent revision of areas of the curriculum, especially writing, children are now progressing well. There are good opportunities for children to use information and communication technology (ICT) both in ICT lessons and independently at other times. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well served by opportunities for them to learn within the curriculum. The outstanding broader aspects, such as experiential lessons in a classroom specifically designed for these activities, encourage independent thinking and awareness of environmental issues. Pupils' horizons are broadened very well by the design of the playground, which has very good areas for structured play, for exploration of the environment and for sitting quietly. There are very good resources for the development of knowledge of other cultures. The school places a strong emphasis on health and safety in lessons, in play and in the many opportunities for clubs and activities outside school times. High numbers attend such voluntary activities, and children speak highly of them.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care of the pupils is good throughout the school, and in some aspects it is outstanding. The school takes exceptionally thorough steps to make sure that pupils are safe, for example through its 'meet and greet' system, whereby every pupil is met on arrival and the entrances are secured after registration. Reasons for absence are rigorously

monitored. Accommodation is thoroughly checked at regular intervals and any health and safety issues, immediately addressed. All staff look out for any problems pupils may have and deal sensitively with their needs. They consult the educational psychologist and specialist support agencies regularly. The child protection system is fully in place. Risk assessments are carried out and recorded for all activities. Access to a first aid practitioner is always available.

Health and safety is a high priority and promoted well, for example through a healthy eating policy that includes healthy snacks. The school gives pupils very good opportunities to express their views through questionnaires and in the school council and responds positively to their opinions. The school keeps good records of pupils' progress and of any actions taken to address issues that have had an impact on their welfare. Teachers make pupils aware that they care about their progress through regular discussion of the extent to which they are meeting short and long-term targets. Pupils feel very secure and look forward to coming to school.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since the previous inspection, the school has had to face a number of challenges relating to staffing. The turnover of staff, long-term absence and some ineffective teaching did not initially help the school's drive for improvement after the previous inspection. However, leadership and management are now good and pupils are provided with high levels of care and a good education. Weaknesses such as standards in writing and reception provision have been effectively addressed. The senior management team is made up of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and early years co-ordinator. They bring a good range of knowledge, expertise and experience which serves the school well.

The senior management team and governors have a good understanding of what the school does well and what needs to improve. Improvements that have taken place are based on objective self-evaluation. Assessment information is used well to set challenging targets for learning, and the performance of individual pupils is carefully monitored through a good range of procedures. However, the senior management team and governors could make more use of national data to judge how the whole school or different subjects are doing in a national context. Senior staff make good evaluations of teaching and its impact on learning.

Governance of the school is good. Governors are actively involved in the school's strategic development and ensure that the resources provided to the school are used appropriately. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant improvements in the school's accommodation and provision for subjects such as ICT. Governors successfully achieve value for money when making important decisions about resources. National initiatives, such as the Primary Leadership Strategy, have been used well to raise standards particularly in writing.

The school now has a strong team of teaching and non-teaching staff who work well together to ensure that pupils learn well and work and play in a safe environment. Staff know the pupils well and look to ensure that all individuals can do as well as they can, in all of the activities that they are offered, during their time at the school

Grade: 2

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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	Yes
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	Yes
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

30 September 2005

Dear Boys and Girls,

Thank you for letting us visit your school. We enjoyed watching you in your lessons and talking to you around the school. We particularly enjoyed the assembly about working together in a three-legged race.

What we liked most about your school:

You were friendly and always said, 'Hello', when we saw you around school.

You work hard for your teachers and work well together.

Your teachers make lessons exciting and interesting.

All of the staff look after you carefully so that you are safe.

Your headteacher and other staff are always trying to make the school even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

Improve your writing.

Make sure that all of you come to school regularly.

Check regularly to see if your school is as good as other schools.

Yours sincerely

The Inspectors