

# St James' CofE Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102764
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newham
<b>Inspection number</b>	286487
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 February 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paula Protherough

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	303
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Canon John Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Janet Springall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2002
<b>School address</b>	Tower Hamlets Road Forest Gate London E7 9DA
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8534 4030
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8555 3721

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is in one of the most socially and economically deprived areas in England. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils transfer from the neighbouring infant school at the beginning of Year 3. However, pupil mobility is high and many arrive or leave during the course of the school year. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are Black African and Bangladeshi. Seventy percent of pupils speak English as an additional language, but few are at an early stage. The proportion of pupils recorded as having learning difficulties is lower than the national average and two pupils have statements of educational needs.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

Although the school is a happy and harmonious community, it does not provide a satisfactory quality of education. Standards have been very low for many years and all pupils are significantly underachieving, regardless of background and ability. Following a period of high staff turn over the school leadership team has managed to establish a stable staff team. Even so, recently established systems to guide and monitor teachers are not fully effective. Teachers do not yet share an accurate understanding of what constitutes good teaching. As a result their expectations of what the pupils can achieve are often far too low.

Although the headteacher and her senior team are successful in ensuring that pupils feel cared for and safe, their overall leadership and management are inadequate. This is because the approaches to tracking pupils' academic progress have been confused and over elaborate. Information about the achievements of pupils entering the school has not been used to set realistic projections of the levels they might reach by Year 6, or the years in between. Without a clear picture of what pupils have learned previously and what they need to achieve in the months ahead, teachers continue to struggle to ensure that the work they set the children is matched properly to their abilities. This is particularly the case for more able pupils. As a result teaching and learning are inadequate. Revised curriculum planning ensures satisfactory coverage of the subjects of the National Curriculum. However, opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English are too limited.

Since the last inspection standards have fallen and important issues such as the development of the management roles of staff still remain to be addressed. In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI 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 in the school.

The school's current successes lie in its happy working environment and the positive relationships between adults and children at all levels. The different ethnic groups work together harmoniously and respect and celebrate each others cultural heritage. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and they respond well to their teachers in lessons and around the school. They show commitment in their lessons and are eager to improve; 'We would like our work to be harder,' said one pupil. The pupils understand the importance of living healthy lives and have helped the school to achieve the Healthy Schools Award. They also make the most of the good opportunities provided for physical exercise at lunchtimes and after school. However, inspectors agree with the significant number of parents who express concerns about the quality of the school's provision.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the consistency and demand of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Ensure that all those with leadership and management roles can properly account for the standards of pupils' work and the quality of educational provision within their areas of responsibility.
- Track the progress of pupils more closely and set more challenging targets.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subject areas.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Standards are low and pupils' achievement inadequate. When pupils arrive from the local infant school standards are average, but by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 they are amongst the lowest in the country in English, mathematics and science. This has been the case for several years with little evident improvement. Despite their positive attitudes to work pupils are not making enough progress towards the levels expected of eleven year olds and too few pupils exceed them. Underachievement is widespread and not confined to any single group of pupils. It includes higher and lower attaining pupils and all ethnic groups as well as pupils who have been in the school a long time or who have joined mid-way through Key Stage 2. The main reasons for this are weak teaching, inadequate assessment and low expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school's targets for 2007 and 2008 are slightly higher than current levels, but lack the ambition to deliver the necessary dramatic improvement required.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and want to learn but their progress is limited because their independent learning skills are weak. They are courteous to visitors and say 'we would like our work to be harder and be even more involved in helping the school get better'. Good levels of attendance reflect pupils' enjoyment of school, harmonious relationships and the many enrichment activities on offer. Exclusions are low and racial harmony is good. Pupils demonstrate good safety awareness, for example in physical education and when talking about the dangers of drugs and the need for road safety. They take regular exercise and the foods they choose at lunchtime show they have a good understanding of what foods are healthy. Their contribution to the community is satisfactory. Too few pupils acquire adequate reading, writing and numeracy skills before they leave school and consequently they are not provided with a firm foundation for their future learning and development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

Teaching and learning are inadequate because expectations are too low and consequently pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The inspectors agree with the school that there is still inadequate teaching and not enough is of the good quality that would help raise standards. Teachers now use a common format for planning their lessons. However, its use is inconsistent, because too often the tasks that are planned are not varied enough to take account of the needs of all learners in the class. Thus, although some good lessons were seen, the pace of too many was slow and the work given out was undemanding, especially for the more able. On these occasions the impact of teaching assistants is also lessened because they are unclear about to support or extend the pupils learning. However, the adults working with pupils who are at an early stage of learning English do a good job in helping these children take a full part in lessons.

A few teachers have begun to involve the pupils with their own learning by explaining the purpose of lessons and encouraging them to assess what they have learnt. Consequently this

is helping pupils to become more engaged in the lessons and to improve their sense of achievement. However, not all teachers fully understand why this approach benefits pupils' learning. Few lessons provide pupils with opportunities to develop their own ideas and work independently. There are weaknesses in the quality of marking because not all teachers are following the agreed system.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The inspectors' analysis of the school's curriculum plan and the many good quality displays of pupils' work show adequate coverage of all subjects of the National Curriculum. The provision of French in all years adds breadth as does the good provision for extra curricular physical exercise. A rich and popular range of clubs and other enrichment activities helps pupils enjoy school and develop their enterprise and personal skills. Pupils particularly enjoy the school choir which participates in the Newham arts festival and choral events in the local church.

Current curriculum arrangements secure a basic entitlement for all pupils, but are not yet securely matched to the needs of individual learners. Approaches to establishing links between subjects are at an early stage of development. For example, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects beyond English. There is satisfactory use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good. The school has successfully created an attractive and safe environment where pupils feel that they can seek help from adults whenever they need to. Good attention is paid to safeguarding pupils and all aspects of their welfare. Above average attendance is successfully maintained because any absence is followed up promptly to ensure pupils are back in school as soon as possible. Parents and carers are supported in this if need be.

The school leadership team has sensibly simplified its approach to maintaining records of pupils test and assessment data. However, the information is still not used as well as it might be to enhance pupils' learning. General targets are helping different groups of pupils be clearer about what they need to aim for. However, teachers are not yet consistently pinpointing what individual pupils need to do to quicken their progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

Leadership and management are inadequate. Despite positive features such as the good pastoral care of the pupils and the satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum, the headteacher and her team have yet to successfully address an ongoing legacy of low standards and underachievement. The school's self-evaluation shows that it holds an unrealistic view of its performance and is unclear about how to improve things at a suitably rapid pace. For instance, there continues to be a significant proportion of inadequate teaching and weaknesses in the use of assessment information to inform proper target setting are only recently beginning to be tackled. The governors work hard and are supportive of the school. However, they have not challenged the headteacher sufficiently to account for weaknesses in its performance.

The last inspection report identified the need to strengthen the role of middle managers within the school. A period of rapid staff turnover meant that until recently there had been little scope to address this issue; now there are some more positive signs. There is enthusiasm and energy amongst the staff and many new subject co-ordinators know what they need to do to improve provision for pupils if given the opportunity. 'We are nowhere near where we need to be but we have made a start.' The challenge is to turn these good intentions into improved provision and higher standards for the pupils.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school and contributing to the inspection. We all enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. I'd like to share with you some of the things we found out. We discovered that you behave very well in lessons, around the school and at playtimes. You showed us that you get on well with each other and respect each other's views and opinions. You enjoy coming to school, your attendance is good and many of you take part in the extra activities organised for you. You understand how to lead healthy lives. The school looks after you and listens to what you have to say and you take responsibilities such as the School Council very seriously.

However, we agree with you that your work is often not hard enough. Your teachers need to make sure your lessons are more challenging so that you learn faster and get better at reading, writing, mathematics and science. You need to have a clearer idea of what to aim for, so we have asked the teachers to set you sharper targets in your work and to make sure that you know when you have reached them. (The teachers in charge of each subject will have to check that this is happening.) We also think you should practise using your writing skills in other subjects more often. Because there are so many important things to do at St James, we decided to put your school into a category called 'Special Measures'. This means that the school will receive extra help and support and will be checked regularly to make sure that the improvements needed are put into place.

You already make a big contribution to your school through your good behaviour and positive approach in lessons. We hope you will keep this up and work with your teachers to achieve even more in all that you do at school.

Good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paula ProtheroughLead Inspector