

St James' CofE Primary School Gorton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105497
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	287238
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms B Barraclough
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Bayley
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2002
School address	Stelling Street Gorton Manchester Lancashire M18 8LW
Telephone number	0161 2232423
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is of average size with an increasing number of pupils on roll. It serves the ward of Gorton North, which is an area of high social and economic deprivation. Very high numbers of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A well above average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very high numbers leave or join the school other than at the usual time. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is high and is increasing. It includes a significant number of refugees and pupils from asylum seeking families. Three quarters of pupils are White British and other pupils represent a wide range of different heritages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St James' Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. This is an improving school where teaching is good and the strong leadership of the headteacher drives a clear programme for raising standards. One parent wrote, 'I feel there have been lots of good and positive changes in school and there is much more parental involvement now too, and much more communication.' Inspection evidence supports this view.

National test results for pupils in Year 6 have been significantly below average in recent years. However, despite the high numbers of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal times, standards are rising. This is because the school identified that there were poor conditions for pupils' learning and acted successfully to deal with this. Alterations to the internal building have created quieter classrooms, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well to minimise disruption and staff are deployed according to their skills and expertise. Consequently, results in 2006 rose dramatically and provisional scores in 2007 show this has been sustained. Although standards are well below average, given the starting points of these pupils this represents satisfactory achievement. The school recognises that standards are not high enough, especially in mathematics and English. Standards in writing are especially poor and boys do not achieve as well as girls. There is regular assessment of pupils' work that is used effectively to identify pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils are supported well with a good programme of support. However, teachers do not use the information sufficiently to plan the next steps in learning for all pupils and to set them targets for improvement. Overall, teaching is good and is the major reason why pupils are making increasing progress in their learning. The headteacher and the local authority undertake effective monitoring of teaching. The good practice is identified and shared; and weaknesses are being remedied through training that makes maximum use of the many strengths of the staff.

The school places a high priority on pupils' personal development. They are very well cared for and in return are polite and well behaved. Pupils enjoy school, and say they feel safe and know what to do if there is a problem. Attendance at school has improved markedly in recent years. This is due to the school's effective strategies, which encourage pupils to come to school by rewarding and celebrating not only attendance, but also, most importantly, pupils' achievements. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and this too helps make school a place where pupils want to be.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and her deputy headteacher are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The results of their monitoring inform the school's plans for improvement. Several parents wrote about the positive impact of the headteacher on improving many aspects of school. Middle managers have recently adopted restructured roles and the impact of this is beginning to be seen; for example, curriculum leaders are taking responsibility for monitoring pupils' progress. It is early days, however, and more remains to be done before their work impacts sufficiently on standards. Governance is satisfactory and provides valued support to the headteacher and staff. Governors are not sufficiently involved in the school's self-evaluation process though they are beginning to access the training that is available from the local authority.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start school they have poor skills and some are at an early stage of learning English. They get off to a good start and, throughout the Foundation Stage, make good progress in acquiring the basic skills. Teaching is good and staff use their understanding of how young children learn to prepare interesting and varied experiences. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to provide a high level of support to the children. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good and gives a clear focus, which rapidly improves the children's communication and language ability. Children are happy coming to school and they are very well cared for by the committed staff. Assessment procedures quickly identify children who may be vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and disabilities. The physical condition of the outdoor surface is poor but there is good supervision by staff and there is a suitable range of activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics and improve the achievement of boys.
- Strengthen the roles of curriculum leaders.
- Develop the skills of the governors in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.
- Use the results of the assessment of pupils' work more rigorously to plan the next steps in their learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most children enter school in the Nursery class with well below average skills. They make good progress throughout both the Nursery and Reception classes, due to good teaching and support with a strong emphasis on developing communication, language and literacy (CLL) skills. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children remain well below average in their attainment but have made up much ground. In Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress overall because of satisfactory teaching. Standards are well below average. There is a continued emphasis upon developing pupils' skills in CLL and this accelerates learning in this area, though pupils' attainment in reading and writing is well below average. During Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress. Currently, progress in some lessons for pupils is good due to recent improvements in the quality of teaching, but this has yet to impact fully upon pupils' performance in tests. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 6 are well below average. Pupils' achievement, given their very low entry point, is satisfactory.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well and make satisfactory progress in their basic skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They understand how to live healthy lifestyles. They enjoy school and some remarked that, 'school is fun and challenging.' Relationships between adults and pupils are good and pupils are confident that they can talk

to staff if they have any problems. Pupils feel safe in school because of the good care they receive from the staff. They behave well in class and around the school. In lessons, this aids learning. The pupils warmly welcome visitors. Attendance is a priority area for the school and strategies to improve this are increasingly successful as shown by the consistent improvement in recent years. The school council makes a positive contribution to the life of the school through charity fundraising and projects such as an anti-bullying initiative. Older pupils enjoy being 'playground friends' to the younger ones. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Improvements to the premises have nurtured pupils' respect for each other and for their environment. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect and articulate their feelings in assemblies and church-related activities. Pupils' cultural awareness is satisfactory and involvement in the International School Awards is helping to promote pupils' global thinking.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The quality ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. All teachers expect high standards of behaviour from pupils and they are rewarded by pupils who show increasingly positive attitudes to learning. Despite good teaching, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but the high expectations which teachers have of pupils' academic progress is beginning to raise the expectations pupils have of themselves. Good classroom management minimises any disruption and ensures pupils are able to concentrate. The staff are enthusiastic and committed to providing good lessons for pupils. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. There is good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to deliver lessons in an interesting way, which captures the attention of pupils. An example of this was in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 6 where a digitally projected theme of a popular television quiz show resulted in pupils being totally absorbed in their learning. Most lessons make effective use of planning specific objectives for pupils' learning. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from teaching assistants who are skilled in knowing when to listen and when to intervene. Teachers praise pupils' achievements regularly in lessons and this builds their self-esteem and confidence. In the best lessons, the activities are well matched to pupils' needs and to their prior knowledge and skills. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and is not used well to indicate to pupils what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of work and activities for pupils. Organised play and physical activity at lunchtimes promotes pupils' personal development well and a strong emphasis is placed on teamwork and sharing. The school rightly prioritises the time given to teaching pupils the basic skills in literacy and numeracy, recognising their very low starting points. The good use of ICT enhances learning across the curriculum. Provision is good for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities both in appropriately differentiated classroom activities and through the additional provision of external support. Provision for the highest attaining pupils is less well developed. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to the community are satisfactory. The inclusion of French in the Key Stage 2 curriculum enhances learning experiences and develops speech and language skills. A suitable range of educational visits and visitors as well as out-of-school clubs enriches the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The school places a high emphasis on caring for pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils very well and are committed to their well-being. Good personal support provides for those who may be vulnerable through good liaison with external agencies. Procedures to protect pupils and ensure their safety are in place and meet current government guidelines. Staff training needs updating to fulfil the very latest national requirements. The school completes risk assessments for day-to-day lessons and for school visits but not for some occasional activities which may carry extra considerations.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. The school records pupils' attainment using a thorough assessment framework. This is particularly successful in identifying pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there is a good range of intervention strategies. The school does not use the data sufficiently to measure the progress that all pupils make. Targets for pupils to guide their work are not in widespread use across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher gives a strong steer and very clear direction to the school. She guides staff and governors effectively and in turn receives good support and absolute commitment. Recent restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities is the result of the headteacher's determination to match individual experience and expertise to the school's priorities. Staff appreciate the consideration given to recognising their strengths and areas for development.

The quality of school self-evaluation is satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a good awareness of school needs because they monitor lessons and school initiatives to improve learning. This is shared with staff and used effectively to identify priorities for school improvement. Staff with curriculum leadership roles are beginning to monitor aspects of their subject but this is at an early stage of development. The local authority gives good support to the school's leadership. Strategies to improve the standards in reading have successfully improved pupils' test results with a considerable rise in Year 6 scores in 2006, which is sustained in 2007. Improvements to the conditions for learning have been achieved, as open plan classrooms have been partitioned to create a quieter environment. The school's very good relationship with parents encourages good involvement in the children's learning and improvements to pupils' behaviour results in their good attitudes to school work. These successful developments demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.

Governors provide a supportive body and are very keen to help the school improve. They take an active interest in the school. The governors are informed by reports from the headteacher and they take a particular interest in the building developments and in the financial management of the school. Recently, governors have begun to attend training provided for them by the local authority and this is increasing their awareness of school management and improving their ability to question the school, where appropriate. Governors rely heavily on the results

of the headteacher's monitoring and evaluation of school improvement and pupils' academic performance. There are insufficient opportunities for governors to check things for themselves.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ 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**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Following our visit to your school, we would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your experiences. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

Pupils and parents told us that St James' is a caring school and we agree. You are receiving a satisfactory standard of education. Most of you work hard, attend school regularly and are well behaved. Teaching is good. Your headteacher is very good at improving your school. You make satisfactory progress and, by the time you are ready for secondary school, you have learned much that will help you. Many of you enjoy being at school. You told us you feel safe in school and that staff are approachable, caring and helpful. We agree.

We have asked the adults to improve some parts of your school. We have said that the school must make sure you achieve higher standards in English and mathematics. In particular, boys need to improve their achievement. The staff that manage subjects need to have a bigger impact on how well you learn and the standards you achieve. The school has lots of data about your learning but the staff need to use it better to measure how well you are doing. Governors want to get more involved in the school and we agree that they should.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St James' Church of England Primary School an even better school.