



St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119502
Local Authority Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 291440
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Allan Torr HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Oozebooth Terrace
School category	Voluntary aided		Blackburn, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		BB1 8EN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 698335
Number on roll (school)	395	Fax number	01254 679108
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Stephen Tranter
		Headteacher	Mrs Marjorie Owen
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007	Inspection number 291440
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St James' is a large primary school located on two sites just to the north of the centre of Blackburn. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds; the highest proportion is of Indian heritage and almost a third is of Pakistani background. The vast majority of pupils are Muslim. Two thirds of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible to receive a free school meal is almost double the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average, within this, a large proportion have complex difficulties such as autism. The school was awarded the ActiveMark in 2006 and has been successfully reassessed for its Investors in People status.

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' is a good school in which children of different faiths and cultures mix happily and easily. The school has established strong links with St James' church and the local Muslim community and these have ensured that pupils have respect for and are sensitive to the backgrounds and values of others. This was evident during the inspection in a visit by a local school, which had a population of pupils of a White British background. They joined in classes and worked closely with St James' pupils who were welcoming, respectful and friendly. The school lies at the heart of the community and is outward looking. It provides facilities for the community to use; classes and training for parents; out of hours clubs for pupils and provision during holidays.

Parents' high regard for the school was evident from the 172 returned questionnaires. One parent's view, echoed by pupils and other parents was, 'A fantastic school! As a family we are very pleased with the teaching staff at St James', also the constant feedback from the staff about our child's progress.' This praise is well deserved because St James' is a happy, welcoming school where children thrive and make good progress particularly in learning to understand and speak English. With this comes increased self-esteem and confidence, which enables pupils to take an active role in the school and in the community. They readily take on extra responsibilities such as the role of school councillor, house captain or playground buddy.

Standards, when children start in the Reception class, are well below what is typical for their age. They get a good start in Reception and continue to make good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. By the time they leave Year 6, standards are in line with the national average. However, relatively few pupils reach the higher levels because in some lessons expectations are not high enough and pupils could be challenged more. Pupils enjoy lessons because teaching is often lively and interesting and the curriculum has been enhanced by a wide range of visits, visitors, clubs and whole school events. Marking and feedback does not always show pupils what level they are working at in each subject and they are not always clear about how they can improve their work. Teaching assistants play a key role in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, often drawing on home languages to ensure that they understand fully what is being taught. Well planned additional support at an early stage in their school career has boosted pupils' progress in English.

Inspectors particularly noted pupils' good manners, empathy, polite curiosity and good behaviour. Pupils move around school sensibly and are active at play and lunchtimes. Pupils generally make healthy food choices and are aware about how to keep healthy and safe. For example, the school council campaigned successfully, on behalf of pupils, for traffic calming measures on the neighbouring street.

Central to the school's success is the leadership and management of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior teachers. Their focus on raising standards and accelerating progress has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. They know the school well and take effective action to make necessary improvements.

Recent successes, for example, in raising standards in English, show that the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations to ensure all pupils, particularly the more able, are challenged in lessons.
- Raise standards further by ensuring pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from a starting point in Reception that is well below average, particularly in their early literacy and numeracy skills. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 they have caught up in several areas of learning and are in line with national expectations. Progress is best in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them, creative and physical development, and personal and social skills.

As a result of good progress in Key Stage 1, pupils reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are expected for their age. Few pupils however, reach the higher grade of Level 3 in the end of Key Stage 1 assessments. Despite a dip in standards in 2005, results in Key Stage 2 have risen over time and are in line with national averages. This however does not show the full picture. In 2006, nearly all pupils achieved the expected Level 4 in English and in science but a smaller than average proportion achieved the higher Level 5. In mathematics achievement was broadly in line with the national average. Work in pupils' books shows that their progress in other subjects is at least satisfactory and often good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school has been successful in implementing its mission to build inter-faith and inter-cultural respect under the umbrella of the Christian faith. As a result, pupils are tolerant and have an outstanding cultural awareness. Their spiritual, moral and social understanding is good. Pupils work well together, show empathy for others and are keen to contribute to the school. For example, they raise funds for charities and for a Birmingham hospital, which treated a pupil. They enjoy school and talk with enthusiasm and pride about trips, events, subjects and the kindness of teachers. They feel safe, secure and valued and have a good appreciation of what they need to do to stay healthy. They make good use of equipment at play and lunchtimes to keep active. Pupils choose healthy options at school meals and playtime. However, this is not always the case when pupils bring packed lunches.

Attendance is good and there are few absences other than for religious and cultural reasons sanctioned by the school. The headteacher works well with the community support officer and education welfare service to minimise any disruption to learning

due to a pupil's extended holidays. Pupils behave well and any poor behaviour is tackled effectively by the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned and well structured to meet the needs of most pupils. Resources such as the interactive whiteboard and puppets are used to make lessons interesting and lively. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and are supported well by skilled teaching assistants. Throughout the school, there is a focus on the development of language skills. Teachers make sure that pupils whose first language is not English fully understand what has been taught and what they need to do in the lesson. In the best lessons, pupils' learning is reinforced as they are required to explain their reasoning, methods and opinions. Nevertheless, in a few lessons there is too much teacher talk and pupils have to listen for long periods. The expectations and challenge for pupils, particularly more able, are not always high enough. Teachers collect information from assessments so that they can monitor pupils' progress throughout the year. Some pupils, however, are unaware of how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good range of experiences inside and outside of lessons plays a major part in pupils' academic and personal progress. Pupils learn about and celebrate different cultures and beliefs. For example, they learn about life in Pakistan through a link with a school in Lahore. This link is to be further developed as the school has secured funding through the British Council for some teachers to visit the school in Pakistan. Visits and visitors, such as musicians and artists, are planned well to enrich and enhance what is taught in class. For example, pupils' creativity and skills of collaboration were enhanced during the music, art and drama week held in school. The school has adjusted the school day to enable pupils to attend a good range out of hours activities including mathematics club, sport, chess and art clubs.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is matched to the needs of most pupils, particularly those who have learning difficulties. The school has introduced good opportunities to discuss their work in pairs during lessons, which has boosted the fluency and literacy of pupils in the early stages of learning English; this however, is not consistently applied across the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for in a happy and safe environment. Child protection and other checks to safeguard pupils' health and safety are in place. The school's community

support officer helps pupils and parents to become more involved in the life of the school; she puts on workshops for parents so that they can better support pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy.

Staff know the pupils well; they show high levels of care and relationships are good. Staff identify and intervene quickly to support pupils with learning difficulties. In class, skilled teaching assistants ensure that pupils are included in all lessons, sometimes repeating and explaining key words and translating them into Gujarati or Punjabi to enhance their understanding. Good induction and transition procedures help pupils to settle quickly into the school and prepare older pupils to move on to secondary education.

Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and teachers set targets based on detailed observations and assessments. However, these are not always passed on to pupils, which means that they are unclear about what stage they are working at and what to do next to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear vision for an inclusive school in which all pupils thrive, whatever their culture or religion. She is ably supported and complemented by the deputy headteacher and senior teachers who have a strong focus on raising standards and improving pupils' personal development. Subject leaders are effective in taking steps to promote pupils' achievement. Day-to-day management is effective and the impact of the school being split over two sites is minimised.

The governors are committed, supportive and carry out their responsibilities well through a strong committee structure. They are linked to subject areas and visit school regularly to act as critical friends. They help the school to review what it does thoroughly and to take action where necessary. Financial management is good and resources are well deployed, this has led to improvements in the ICT infrastructure, accommodation and to staffing. The school gives good value for money.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The School Council

St James' Church of England Primary School

Oozebooth Terrace

Blackburn

Lancashire

BB1 8EN

2 March 2007

Dear Children

Thank you for being so open and friendly with the team of inspectors who visited your school. It was really interesting to talk to you and to look at your work. It was also good to see some of your superb costumes on World Book day.

Inspectors think that you are in a good school. You were all really positive about the school, telling us how good teaching is and how everyone helps you with your work so that you make good progress. The inspectors agreed. We were particularly impressed by the way your school teaches you to respect and appreciate people from different religions and cultures. You learn a great deal from your many visitors; for example, the vicar from the church, artists, musicians and specialist sport coaches and the teachers work hard to make the subjects interesting.

There are two main things which we think the school could do even better. The first is for teachers to challenge you more in lessons, so that everyone reaches as high a level as possible in their work. The second is to make sure that you know what level you are working at and what the next step is to improve your work.

We would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Allan Torr Doreen DavenportPeter McKay

Her Majesty's Inspector Additional Inspector Additional Inspector