



# St James CEVA Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 122035  
**Local Authority** Northamptonshire  
**Inspection number** 292299  
**Inspection dates** 29–30 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ted Wheatley

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>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Harleston Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Northampton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		NN5 7AG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 751475
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	282	<b>Fax number</b>	01604 751475
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Frank Lilley
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Barke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
4–11	29–30 November 2006	292299

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school and pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds. About half of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and most of these are Bengali speakers but some speak German or Polish. Most of these pupils also speak English well. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average and the school has specialist provision for those with behavioural problems, including a learning mentor.

Along with other schools in Northampton, St James' was subject to reorganisation in the last two years and recently moved into new buildings. The headteacher took up appointment in September 2006.

## 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 and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Standards are well below average and pupils' achievement is inadequate. However, the rate of progress that pupils make varies through the school. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start and make good progress because teachers plan work to meet their specific needs. In Years 1 and 2, progress is satisfactory but in Years 3 to 6, it is unsatisfactory. This is the situation for pupils of all ethnic backgrounds. However, pupils with learning difficulties benefit from extra support and make satisfactory progress.

The reasons for underachievement are unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Teachers do not have a good grasp of how well pupils perform and what they need to do to make progress. Consequently, work is not properly tailored to the needs of pupils, although there are signs of recent improvements in some year groups. An unsatisfactory curriculum contributes to underachievement. Sometimes, pupils spend too long on one subject or the subject matter does not interest them. Additionally, there are too few opportunities for the pupils to develop their basic skills. The range of extra-curricular activities is limited, although more visits are being introduced to make the curriculum more interesting.

The new headteacher has accurately identified the school's weaknesses and has the commitment of staff and governors to deal with them. Steps have been taken to bring about improvement, but recent initiatives have had insufficient time to make an impact on pupils' achievement, so the capacity for improvement is unconvincing and therefore inadequate. The headteacher provides strong leadership, but leadership and management overall are unsatisfactory. This is because middle managers have not been able to play an effective role in planning and bringing about improvements in the areas for which they are responsible. Many governors are new and are not as effective in supporting the school as they should be, but this is improving.

Despite the weaknesses, pupils mostly enjoy school. Recent improvements in dealing with absence are having a positive effect and attendance is improving, albeit from a low and unsatisfactory base. However, there is still work to do here. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory and they understand about healthy lifestyles, but they are not gaining the basic skills to prepare them for future life. Most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes. This is a recent improvement due to the work of the school's specialist support staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They have a sound grasp of fundamental Christian beliefs and values and of those of other faiths and cultures.

Care, support and guidance are unsatisfactory because academic guidance is inadequate. However, pupils feel secure and the school has effective procedures to ensure their safety.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and improve achievement by establishing clear assessment procedures so that teachers know how well pupils are doing and can plan work matched to their needs.
- Plan the curriculum so that pupils experience a variety of subjects, study relevant and interesting topics and have opportunities to develop their basic skills.
- Involve subject leaders in taking active roles to improve teaching and the curriculum.
- Work with families of pupils who are frequently absent to improve attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Children start in the Reception class with poor basic skills and especially weak language and social development. They make good progress because teachers focus on the areas that are particularly weak and provide effective support for individuals and small groups of children. By the time they enter Year 1, children's skills are still well below what is expected, but they have made marked progress from their starting points.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain well below average. Work is not consistently matched to pupils' needs and continued weaknesses in language limit the progress of many pupils throughout the school.

In Years 3 to 6, achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 are well below average. In many instances, the higher-attaining pupils do not achieve their potential because they do the same work as other pupils. Lower-attaining pupils sometimes do not achieve their best because tasks are not matched closely enough to their needs and interests. Progress has improved recently, notably in Year 3, where work is matched to pupils' needs and they know how well they are doing and what to do to improve.

Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. This is largely due to recent improvements in the quality of support they receive from specialist teachers, support staff and teaching assistants. Pupils in the early stages of learning English also make satisfactory progress due to the support of specialist staff.

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

### **Grade: 3**

The majority of pupils enjoy school and behave well. Personal and social development in the Reception Year is strong, with children developing good listening skills and responding well to clear routines. Behaviour in other year groups is improving but a small proportion of pupils behave badly in lessons because work does not match their

needs. Attendance is below average but is beginning to improve as a result of recent action in this area. Pupils' moral, spiritual, social and cultural development is satisfactory and the 'gathering' assemblies support this. Pupils feel safe in school because new behaviour and race equality policies are having a positive effect on behaviour.

Pupils are increasingly confident about contributing to lessons. Learning mentors have played a significant part in helping pupils become more involved in their work. Pupils appreciate this support, one commenting 'They always help us with our problems.' Relationships are good and pupils work well together. Their contribution to the local community, for example in supporting charities, is satisfactory. Preparation for their future life is unsatisfactory, mainly because standards of literacy and numeracy are so low.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

Teaching in the Reception class is good because teachers focus on matching work to children's needs, promote good behaviour and encourage children to listen carefully. However, this good start is not built on in other year groups.

In many lessons in Years 1 to 6, the way that pupils' progress is assessed and the use of assessment information are inadequate so teachers are unsure of the standards or progress of individuals. This means that work is not always appropriate for the lower-attaining pupils or challenging enough for the potentially higher attainers. Teachers do not systematically address poor language skills so that pupils do not always understand new words used. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils could work out perimeters but could not adequately explain what the term meant. Teachers' marking is conscientious and includes points for improvement, but it is not consistently accurate because of assessment weaknesses. In addition, the younger pupils cannot always understand the comments about their work. Most teachers manage pupils effectively so that for the most part pupils behave well and lessons run smoothly.

The needs of pupils with learning difficulties are effectively met, often by the well deployed teaching assistants. Pupils in the early stages of learning English benefit from extra support to help them to participate in lessons.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 4**

In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum does not take account of pupils' needs. There are too few planned opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and writing skills and sometimes too much time is spent on one subject in a day. This limits pupils' creativity and restricts opportunities to apply basic skills in other subjects. The curriculum is not carefully tailored to pupils' differing abilities, significantly limiting their progress. There are too few opportunities for pupils to engage in interesting activities, for example, group

projects or drama. Older pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop an understanding of the world of work.

The school is beginning to enrich the curriculum through visits to interesting places. For example, work in history was brought alive by a visit to Cannons Ashby. Provision for extra-curricular activities to further develop pupils' interests is limited.

The Reception Year curriculum is good. Well planned, interesting activities grab children's attention so most settle quickly, achieve well and develop positive attitudes to learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 4**

The school is committed to improving pupils' personal development and self-esteem and staff work hard to provide the pupils with positive role models. The school recognises the need to help pupils reach higher standards, but the guidance they get to help them to do so is inadequate because teachers do not always know how well pupils are doing.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare are secure with policies that put pupils' safety first, a focus of the governing body. The child protection policy is particularly effective. The school has good and improving relationships with parents but is still working to encourage them to make sure that their children attend school regularly. The dedicated community room is a positive sign of the school's commitment to engaging parents in supporting their children and the school. Outside agencies are used well to support the school's care and support procedures. Recent work with attendance officers is having a positive impact on improving pupils' attendance.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

The headteacher has identified accurately the school's major weaknesses and she is giving a clear direction to raise standards. However, initiatives to bring about improvement have yet to make a difference to pupils' achievement, although they have had a positive impact on their behaviour. Subject leaders have not been involved until very recently in identifying and tackling underachievement so improvement has been limited. Staff now have a clear understanding of their roles and are committed to the headteacher's programme for improvement.

Governance is unsatisfactory. The governing body is newly formed with several new governors and a newly appointed chair. Its knowledge of the school is limited but governors are striving to become better informed so that they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. They are committed to the school's improvement and the headteacher's vision for the school.

The school has good and improving links with parents. It takes their views into account and listens to the views of pupils. For example, pupils were active in initiating lunchtime clubs for all year groups.





## 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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	3

### 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	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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>	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	4

<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.

## 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 feel welcome when we visited your school. We spoke to many of you in lessons and meetings, and you helped us to gain a clear impression of your school. The school does not always ensure you do as well as you ought to, but there are some good things happening.

The best things about your school are:

- Your new headteacher knows exactly what the school needs to do to improve. The teachers, other staff and governors are working closely with her to make sure the school does improve.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start and learn well.
- Most of you behave well and work hard, and most of you come to school regularly.
- The school takes good care of you and makes sure the school is a safe place to be.
- The school has good relationships with your parents and families.

To improve things, we have asked the school to:

- Make sure that teachers know how well you are doing in lessons so that they can plan work that meets your needs.
- Organise the timetable to make sure that the lessons are interesting and help you improve your literacy and numeracy skills.
- Involve everyone with responsibilities in helping improve teaching and the way subjects are organised.
- Help the pupils who are often absent to understand how important school is and to attend regularly.