



St James' CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131673
Local Authority Sandwell
Inspection number 293810
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wolverley Crescent
School category	Voluntary controlled		Oldbury
Age range of pupils	3–11		B69 1BG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5525491
Number on roll (school)	416	Fax number	0121 552 2794
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Jon Goodwin
		Headteacher	Alison Passmore
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006	Inspection number 293810
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is larger than most primary schools. Attainment on entry to the school is below average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average. The number of pupils taking free school meals is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a few pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. There have been several changes in teaching staff over the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is improving under the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. There are clear priorities for whole school improvement. As a result, whilst below average, standards have risen overall over the last three years. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory from their below average starting points. Despite strong leadership at senior level, leadership, management and self-evaluation across the school as a whole are satisfactory. This is because other leaders, although gaining confidence in improving their subjects, do not yet have full knowledge of provision and standards in their subjects across the school. As a result they do not have sufficient influence in raising achievement and standards.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with good features. New teachers are working together well with teaching assistants to improve the curriculum. There is a good range of interesting activities inside, but outdoor provision is only satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although progress is not even across the school. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 where teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide challenging work. However pupils do not always make enough progress in Years 3 to 6, especially in writing, investigative science and mathematics. In some lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough and work is not sufficiently challenging, particularly for more able pupils who often complete similar tasks to their peers. This slows the pace of their learning. Whilst the curriculum covers all subjects satisfactorily, investigative mathematics and science have a low profile, limiting the opportunity for pupils to use their knowledge and reasoning to solve problems. The school makes good use of its strong links with the Church, other schools and people from the local community to enrich the curriculum and engage the pupils' interests.

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. Pastoral care is a particular strength and procedures for checking pupils' progress are securely in place. The school is successful in its aim to provide 'A happy and safe setting where everyone is valued'. As a result, most pupils have good attitudes towards learning and behave well. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. They become increasingly polite and friendly individuals and show maturity when undertaking responsibilities. They have a good understanding of what they need to do to remain safe and healthy. However pupils' personal development and well-being are only satisfactory because several pupils have their learning interrupted due to their poor attendance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the challenge in writing, investigative mathematics and science to raise the standards of more able pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- Provide work that consistently meets the range of pupils' needs in each class.
- Work with parents and carers to improve attendance.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they are more knowledgeable about provision across the school and more involved in raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children in the Foundation Stage make at least satisfactory progress, although standards are below the levels expected for their ages when they move to Year 1. They make best progress in personal, social and emotional development because members of staff support them well in forming good relationships and gaining confidence.

National results by the end of Year 2 have increased significantly in the last few years. Despite a dip in 2005, pupils' standards by the end of Year 6 have also risen over the past few years and are below average. Test results in 2006 have improved further. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory but pupils make better progress up to Year 2 than in Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 6, too few pupils reach the higher level in writing. In mathematics and science their investigative skills are not as good as they should be. More able pupils in particular are not completing work of suitable challenge in some lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

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Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In the Nursery and Reception classes teaching is satisfactory, with good features. Members of staff use praise well to boost the children's confidence. However, there are occasions when children are expected to sit still for too long at an activity. At these times they lose attentiveness and their learning suffers. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and manage pupils' behaviour well enabling them to make good progress. For example, pupils in Year 2 were observed working hard on their own 'Goldilocks' stories and making good progress

in developing their writing. In Years 3 to 6 teaching is satisfactory but, because its quality varies, progress is patchy. Although good systems have been developed to track pupils' progress, assessments are not used sufficiently well to ensure that work set matches the capabilities of all pupils. Teachers do not consistently expect enough of the more able pupils and sometimes pupils in the higher ability sets are given virtually the same work as those in the lower sets. Occasionally the behaviour of a few pupils disrupts learning. Throughout the school teachers use interactive whiteboards well to engage the pupils' interests. Learning is helped because good relationships with all members of staff ensure that most pupils work hard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In the Nursery and Reception classes there is a good range of interesting activities that capture the children's attention when working indoors. Work has started on making the outdoor area more inviting. However members of staff do not monitor the children's choices to ensure that they all receive a balanced curriculum. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 emphasises basic skills in literacy and numeracy well, but in Years 3 to 6 it does not always challenge the more able pupils enough. In particular, there are insufficient practical investigative activities in mathematics and science. The school promotes healthy and safe living successfully. Good links are made between subjects. Many visitors and visits impact positively on pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school. For example, 'theme days' for history topics together with 'Book' and 'Healthy School' weeks help to bring the curriculum alive.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Children are well supported when they first start school and their progress is checked carefully in all areas of learning. The school provides a wide range of responsibilities to enable pupils to develop maturity. The arrangements for ensuring health, safety and welfare are good. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive satisfactory support enabling them to make at least appropriate progress. Teachers frequently assess the pupils' work to gain a clear understanding of their progress. However, they do not consistently use this information when planning work. The marking of pupils' work usually provides constructive comments. Nevertheless not all pupils have a good enough understanding of what they need to do to improve. Their personal development is enhanced well by the guidance given, particularly in personal and social education lessons. Pupils feel safe in school and are willing to go to any adult if they need help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well as a team. Strategies to raise standards are beginning to be effective and pupils' progress has improved over the last three years, especially in Years 1 and 2, demonstrating the school's sound

capacity to improve further. However, teaching and learning are not consistent enough to ensure that pupils' progress is even through the school. Several subject leaders are new and are developing their roles well. However, they do not have a full enough understanding of teaching, learning and progress through the school to enable them to play their full part in the drive to raise standards. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory and there are clear plans to improve the school. But because self-evaluation is largely undertaken by the headteacher and deputy headteacher other members of staff are not sufficiently involved in the process of analysing what is going well and what still needs further development. Governors are supportive and kept well informed, but do not yet do enough to hold the school to account.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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?	3
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.

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	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. You attend a satisfactory school. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are leading the school well and it is improving. It does some things well and some things need to be better.

What your school does best:

- The school helps you to learn how to keep healthy and safe.
- Your teachers are caring and look after you well.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher know what needs to be done to make your school better.
- You get on well with your teachers and each other.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help older pupils to improve their writing and their investigative skills in mathematics and science.
- Make sure that your teachers provide you with enough challenge and give you work that is neither too hard nor too easy.
- Encourage you not to miss school without a good reason.
- Help those in charge of subjects to understand how well you and your teachers are doing.

We thoroughly enjoyed listening to you and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future. You can help your teachers by coming to school regularly and by always paying attention in class.