

St James CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102136
Local Authority	Haringey
Inspection number	307908
Inspection date	8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Lenton
Headteacher	Ms Carol O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2003
School address	Woodside Avenue Muswell Hill London N10 3JA
Telephone number	020 8883 6540
Fax number	020 8365 3767

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, investigated and evaluated the following aspects: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, the curriculum, care guidance and support and leadership and management. The following areas emerged from the school's pre-inspection documentation as specific areas to be explored:

- The factors contributing to the school's consistently high standards.
- The action being taken to increase boys' progress in writing in Years 3 to 6.

Evidence was gathered through class observations, discussions with pupils and staff and the examination of pupils' work, school records and parents' questionnaires.

Description of the school

St James Church of England School is an average size primary school. About 80% of the pupil population come from a White British background. The remainder come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds including other White backgrounds, Black African and Black Caribbean. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. A few pupils speak English as an additional language but very few of these are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low when compared to other schools. At the time of the last inspection, the school was experiencing considerable staff changes. Staffing has been more settled during the past two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St James CofE Primary is an outstanding school. Pupils achieve exceptionally well because of outstanding teaching and a highly effective curriculum. Standards are exceptionally high by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Excellent care, guidance and support and a very positive school atmosphere lead to outstanding personal development and well-being for pupils. The school's mission of 'Learning to Live, Living to Learn and Learning from Christ' pervades all aspects of its work.

Parents and the community hold the school in high regard. Typical comments from the parental survey were, 'Very happy with the school, teachers and headteacher', 'High standards of teaching and behaviour', 'Our children progress very well', 'Warm welcoming atmosphere' and 'Couldn't ask for any more, the school is excellent.'

Outstanding leadership and management are the crucial factors contributing to the school's effectiveness and success. The headteacher, senior staff and governors successfully promote outstanding educational provision and this gives rise to outstanding outcomes for pupils. The experienced and highly competent headteacher provides outstanding leadership and educational direction. Other senior leaders provide excellent support. A more settled staff has enabled the school to share leadership responsibilities more widely. The strong emphasis on professional development and support means that all leaders contribute positively to the school's effectiveness and improvements. The school's performance is systematically reviewed and findings are used very well to guide planning for improvement and to set challenging targets. Governors are committed, supportive and have an extremely good understanding of the school's performance. Accurate self-evaluation, improved attendance, improved provision and the consistently high standards of the past two years demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

High quality teaching enables pupils to make outstanding progress. Teachers' enthusiasm, strong subject knowledge and creative use of resources inspire and motivate the pupils. The purpose of lessons is made clear so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Outstanding relationships have been established between teachers and their pupils. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and informative. Skilful questioning is used to challenge pupils' thinking and to check their understanding. Pupils are extremely articulate, confident and thoughtful in their responses. They are enthusiastic learners who respond really well to their teachers' high expectations of learning and behaviour. Interesting activities and tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and needs. As a result, all pupils, including higher attainers, are challenged well, are highly productive and make exceptional gains in their learning. Pupils work extremely well collaboratively in discussions or when solving problems. Teaching assistants are well directed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those with learning difficulties. Information and communication technology is used well by teachers and pupils to support teaching and learning. For example, in a geography topic, Year 5 pupils created good quality multi-media presentations to highlight the problems of the lack of protected water in Tanzania. The marking of pupils' work is highly effective. Praise and encouragement is given for good work and constructive comments help pupils to improve.

Standards are exceptionally high across the school. Over the past two years, standards by the end of Year 2 have improved from the above average levels of 2005 to be well above average. National tests results for Year 6 indicate that standards are exceptionally high in English,

mathematics and science and that pupils make outstanding progress overall through Years 3 to 6. However, in 2007, pupils' progress in English was good rather than outstanding. The school's rigorous analysis of pupils' performance quickly identified that this slightly lower rate of progress in English was attributed to boys performing less well in writing. Positive action is being taken to tackle this. Teachers are providing visual stimuli and topics, which are appealing to boys. More opportunities for drama, role-play and discussion are being provided to help improve boys' writing.

The curriculum contributes exceptionally well to pupils' progress, enjoyment and to their personal development. There are good links between subjects, which add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. Provision for art is a strong feature and there are varied and high quality displays of pupils' work across the school. A good range of additional activities contributes to pupils' interests and enjoyment. Residential trips for Years 5 and 6 provide new outdoor activities. The teaching of French adds an interesting dimension to pupils' learning and cultural development. School clubs include ballet, football, gymnastics and mathematics. A few pupils and parents feel that there is scope to extend the range of clubs offered. The inspection and school agree with these comments.

Care, guidance and support make an outstanding contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. Very effective systems to assess and track pupils' attainment have been established. This provides teachers with a good overview of how well each pupil is doing. Pupils are set specific personalised learning targets in English and mathematics so that they know what they are working towards to improve. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected by their enthusiastic participation in lessons and their well above average attendance. This represents a significant improvement because attendance levels were only average at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are friendly, polite and show considerable care and respect for others. High expectations by staff, outstanding relationships and well-known systems of rewards lead to exemplary behaviour. A parent commented, 'The school has a strong positive ethos which contributes to good discipline. I feel my child is learning in a safe secure environment.' Pupils show an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating, taking regular exercise and keeping safe. They thrive on additional responsibilities such as being playground buddies, prefects or house captains. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and have contributed to improving outdoor playground equipment and organising fund-raising. Pupils contribute well to the local and wider community by raising money for charities such as Children in Need. Pupils at St James are extremely well prepared for the future because, by the time they leave, they possess outstanding literacy and numeracy skills. In addition to these, their personal and social skills are exceptionally well developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Nursery with attainment above that expected at this stage. Inspirational teaching and an exciting curriculum enable children to make exceptionally good progress in all areas of learning. A wide range of stimulating activities are planned and teachers and teaching assistants provide a highly effective blend of direct teaching and allowing children to explore, work independently and be creative. By the end of Reception, children have acquired high levels of skills, which prepare them extremely well for the next stage of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

In the context of the school's high standards and outstanding achievement:

- Ensure that teaching and the curriculum enables the boys, as well as the girls, to make exceptionally good progress in writing in Years 3 to 6.

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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	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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

20 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James CofE Primary School, London, N10 3JA

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed the visit and would like to tell you what I have found. St James CofE is an outstanding school and one you can be extremely proud of.

These things are strengths of the school.

- You thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is excellent.
- The school is a very friendly, caring and pleasant place to be.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school.
- Children in Nursery and Reception get off to an excellent start.
- Teaching is outstanding, which is why you make such exceptional progress.
- Standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science.
- You show an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- A very interesting range of learning activities are provided for you, including clubs and residential visits.
- The school is exceptionally well led and managed by the headteacher and other senior staff.
- You show considerable care and respect for other pupils and adults.
- Staff know you very well; they take excellent care of you and give you outstanding support.
- Your parents are very pleased with the care and education provided.

There is just one area that the school is working on to make it even better.

- Some of the boys could make even more progress in writing in Years 3 to 6 and your teachers are working hard to make this happen.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards,

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector