

St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104820
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	308679
Inspection dates	20–21 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Rodney Middleton
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Speed
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Lyme Street Haydock St Helens Merseyside WA11 0NL
Telephone number	01744 678547
Fax number	01744 678547

Age group	5–11
Inspection dates	20–21 February 2008
Inspection number	308679

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals is above average. All pupils are White British. The school has suffered disruptions to staffing in recent years. Temporary teachers are in post in three of the eight classes and the headteacher has been in post for seven weeks. The school has gained the Healthy School Award, Activemark and Early Years Kitemark.

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, HMCI 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 or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Pupils are not attaining as well as they should because the quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Standards are below average when pupils start in Year 1 and, when they leave the school at the end of Year 6, they have declined to well below average in English, mathematics and science for all groups of pupils. This underachievement has been evident for a number of years and, despite advice and support from the local authority, standards have continued to decline.

While a minority of teaching is good, there is far too much that is inadequate. The tracking of pupils' progress is not sufficiently rigorous. This results in lessons that are not pitched at the right level often enough for pupils to learn at the rate that they should. This limits pupils' academic progress and has a negative impact on their attitudes and behaviour. Consequently, their personal development and well-being are inadequate. In many lessons, attention dips and pupils begin to misbehave because they are insufficiently motivated or challenged. Pupils' opinions of school are mixed. Although many say that they enjoy school, in too many lessons there is a clear lack of enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are aware of how to live healthily, but in relation to staying safe, there is concern among pupils that bullying and the poor behaviour of some pupils spoils things for others. Strategies introduced recently to monitor and improve attendance have resulted in improvement and attendance is satisfactory.

The curriculum is inadequate because there is a lack of focus on the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills within subjects studied. The level of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is inadequate. Staff know pupils and their families well. They are supportive of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, pupils are given insufficient guidance through target setting and in their marked work to help them to improve.

The quality of leadership and management is inadequate. The very recently appointed headteacher has some good ideas about how to raise standards, as well as improve provision and the quality of leadership and management. She has quickly gained the confidence of staff, parents, pupils and governors. Parents appreciate the signs of improvement although many express concern about the negative impact which staffing disruptions, bullying and behaviour issues have on their children. However, the headteacher has not been at the school long enough for many of her ideas to go beyond the planning stage; the impact of those that have been implemented has yet to become evident. The role of senior managers in monitoring and evaluating provision and pupils' progress is inadequate. Governance is inadequate. Governors are committed to the school, but do not meet some of their statutory duties, for example, in ensuring staff are trained sufficiently for promoting pupils' safety and well-being.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

Children in the Foundation Stage make a poor start to their education because of an inadequate curriculum and ineffective use of assessment data. The school does not use information received

when children join the school to ensure their learning builds well enough step by step. Staff do not have a clear enough picture of how well children are learning so children do not achieve as well as they could. Most children start the Reception class with skills that are below the level expected for their age and, when they move to Year 1, they are at a similar level. The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. At times, children spend too long listening to adults rather than actively engaged in learning. This, accompanied by insufficient use of the outdoor environment, limits children's experiences and opportunities to develop their independence and curiosity. Although children play happily in the classroom, the environment is not stimulating enough. Leadership and management are inadequate. Links with parents are satisfactory; parents feel staff are approachable and helpful in enabling their children to settle into school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels, including governance, in rigorously monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, meeting statutory requirements and ensuring pupils feel safe.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum and the overall provision within the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate and has been so for several years. Since the last inspection, pupils' standards in Year 2 and Year 6 have declined. Standards are well below average in English, mathematics and science. Throughout the school, too many boys and girls are making slow progress or falling behind in their work. Underachievement is not restricted to particular groups of pupils and includes, for example, more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are weak because teaching is inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

While pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, their social and moral development is inadequate. This is because there is no consistent whole school approach to what is acceptable behaviour. Behaviour at lunchtimes is disruptive and at times unsafe. A number of pupils were observed behaving inappropriately in lessons and this disrupted learning so that other pupils were unable to make progress. Some pupils say they do not feel safe in school and that there is unresolved bullying. This is also highlighted as a concern by a significant number of parents. Cultural development is inadequate because pupils have too few opportunities to learn about other cultures. Pupils in the school council are eager to improve the school and have brought about some changes in providing healthy snacks at break times. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community by raising funds for the school and local charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Pupils' learning is poor because the quality of teaching is inadequate and inconsistent. In Years 1 to 6, teaching ranges from inadequate to good, but with too little that is effective. Where teaching is good, the range of pupils' needs is catered for well, behaviour is well managed and the pace of learning brisk. Typically, however, teaching does not provide enough challenge for pupils. Too often, teachers do not expect enough of pupils in relation to what they are capable of attaining and give them work that is too easy. These weaknesses are evident in inadequate lessons and, to a lesser extent, in lessons that are satisfactory overall. Inadequate teaching is perpetuating underachievement and there is not enough good teaching to enable pupils who underachieve to catch up.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum does not meet the needs of learners effectively and does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop their basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Pupils say that lessons have recently, 'become more interesting and fun'; for example, 'when we do acting in literacy lessons'. However, these changes are at an early stage. Improvements are not consistent across all classes nor have they had sufficient impact to raise standards. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn French and the after-school clubs, many of which are organised through satisfactory links with the local high school and sports college. Visits and visitors to enrich pupils' cultural experiences and to develop their interests and talents are limited. Because pupils' basic skills and personal development are underdeveloped, they are not adequately prepared by the end of Year 6 for the next stage in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The government's safeguarding requirements are in place. However, while staff know their children's needs, they are not trained regularly and thoroughly to promote pupils' safety and well-being. Academic guidance is poor. Most pupils do not have a clear understanding of how well they are doing in their work or what they need to do next to improve. This is because there is no clear marking or target setting policy in place. A significant number of parents are concerned that their children are not happy or safe at school. Many feel they do not receive enough information from the school to let them know how well their children are doing or how they can help at home.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher has rapidly gained a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She demonstrates a good level of expertise and strong commitment to helping the school to improve. However, she has only been in post for a very short time. Whilst the strategies she proposes to move the school forward are well founded, it is too early to determine their impact and as such the school cannot demonstrate sufficient capacity to improve. Furthermore, governors

and school leaders have not held staff to account sufficiently for the progress pupils make, nor are challenging targets used to raise standards. Not only has inadequate progress been made in addressing the key issues identified at the last inspection, most aspects of the schools' work are now considerably worse. The school's self-evaluation is inaccurate because insufficient account is taken of the impact of the curriculum, teaching and assessment on pupils' personal development and learning. The school provides inadequate value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ 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	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	4
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

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

Inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School, St Helens, WA11 0NL

On behalf of the inspection team I thank you for being so friendly during our recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school and what you like best about it. It is good that you know why it is important to lead a healthy lifestyle and that many of you try to do your best for your teachers. It is also good to see that more of you now come to school regularly.

It is our judgement that your school needs extra help to give you a good education.

For this reason, the school is placed into 'special measures', which means that your headteacher and governors will get additional support to improve the school for you. Inspectors will return to check that the school is doing the best it can. In particular, they will check that:

- you are learning new things quickly enough to raise standards in English, mathematics and science
- all your lessons are exciting, interesting and ensure that all of you do well in your work
- the poor behaviour by some pupils is stopped
- the leaders and managers of the school are making their own checks, taking appropriate action on what they find out and doing everything that is expected of them to keep you safe
- children get a better start to their education in the Reception class.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. You can help by always trying hard and making sure that you behave well.