

St James' CofE Primary School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	106437
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309127
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Adrian Dance
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Rowley
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Tyrer Avenue Worsley Mesnes Wigan Lancashire WN3 5XE
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Age group	4-11
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Amended Report Addendum

Standards are well below average by the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, progress over time is satisfactory and this is confirmed by the improved monitoring of pupils' performance against national data.

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a below average sized primary school. It serves a diverse population in an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is close to three times the national average. A small number of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and some are at the early stages of learning English. The main first languages are Arabic, Polish and Turkish. A small proportion of pupils are from Traveller families and a small number of pupils are refugees. The school also has a small proportion of looked after children. A well above average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's skills on entry to the Foundation Stage (Reception) are very low. The school has successfully achieved the following awards: European Green Flag, Activemark, Excellence in work-related learning, and the Wigan Quality Standard for Foundation Stage provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school is right to judge itself as satisfactory and it gives sound value for money. The pace of improvement has quickened in the last two years. The headteacher has gained the support of the school community, as is shown in the typical parents' comments. Her strong vision has brought about significant improvements in areas such as behaviour and the tracking of pupils' achievements. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and the school is on a firm footing to move forward.

Pupils' personal development is good and promoted well through the school's caring ethos. Plenty of activities reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding of the importance of leading healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the school and the wider community. For example, the prefects help the younger pupils to enjoy playtimes. Parents and pupils are pleased with all of this and the evidence points clearly to pupils thoroughly enjoying their time in school. Nevertheless, attendance is below average and is only improving slowly. In discussion, pupils rightly point to the good contribution made by external providers, visits and visitors. As a result, pupils are developing independence in most but not in all aspects of their learning. For example, basic skills in writing, mathematics and information and communication technology are not used widely enough in other subjects. This is one of the main reasons why standards and progress in writing are not as good as they should be.

Achievement is satisfactory. Children get a good start in the Foundation Stage (Reception) and make good progress. Nevertheless, standards are still well below expected levels as they enter Year 1. Standards in national tests in Years 2 and 6 in 2007 were well below average, but currently standards in English are much closer to average. All classes have a larger than usual number of pupils who have extra learning needs and all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress. The school has recognised that girls make better progress than boys and provides extra support for the boys where possible. Progress in writing and mathematics is slower than in reading and science. The combination of good attitudes to learning and satisfactory progress means that pupils are soundly prepared for their future schooling and life beyond education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features, such as strong classroom management. Assessment and the tracking of pupils' performance are relatively recent developments in the school. The procedures are good, but the use of the information to match work to pupils' individual needs is not consistent across the school. As a result, the level of challenge is lower than it should be in some classes. In these classes, marking does not give an accurate enough picture of the standards pupils have reached and what they need to do to reach the next level of learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is leading the school effectively, but it is too early to see the outcomes of the well founded strategies for improvement. Senior staff and governors provide good support, and are developing their role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Effective provision has been recognised by a prestigious local award. As a result, children progress well in all areas of learning from the very low skill levels on entry to Reception. Teaching is good and the classroom is organised well so that children use all their senses to learn through discovery. For example, children play with ice cubes, observing how they feel cold then melt

in their hands and change into water. Personal and social skills are developed well and children quickly develop independence by making choices about what activity they wish to do, tidying away resources and self-registering. Staff interact well with children, getting involved with their activities and encouraging them to develop their language skills by asking them to describe their actions. A good example of this was snack time when the children were asked to sort and count the correct snacks for their group. Assessment information is used well to chart children's achievement and aid teachers' planning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly for the boys.
- Improve attendance.
- Make more consistent use of assessment to challenge all groups of pupils appropriately and ensure marking informs pupils how to improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join Year 1 with standards that are well below those expected nationally for their age. Each year group has a well above average number of pupils with additional learning needs. This means that standards in national tests are adversely affected. Standards are well below average by the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, progress over time is satisfactory and this is confirmed by the improved monitoring of pupils' performance against national data. Good progress in the basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation are not consistently expected across all classes. The school's awareness of weaknesses in boys' attainment has led to extra support, such as a small group withdrawn from Year 6 to work with the deputy headteacher on three days a week. Early indications are that this is having a positive effect on developing boys' attitudes and skills, particularly in their gathering of information from their own research. The many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from the wide range of minority groupings also make satisfactory progress because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils' behaviour is good and they respond well to the personal example set by staff and to the school's strong moral code. Most pupils enjoy their education and like coming to school. Rates of attendance are below average because a significant minority of pupils are frequently absent from school. The school encourages good attendance by responding immediately on the first day of absence, and appropriate monitoring arrangements and strategies are in place to tackle persistently poor attendance. The school is successful in developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence by frequent praise and encouragement from all staff and through the intervention and work of the learning mentor. Pupils develop healthy practices such as eating fruit which is made available for all pupils by the school each day. Additionally, pupils have more than two hours' physical activity each week, such as the Year 6 dance presentation where pupils planned and performed their own dance sequence to music. Pupils learn about

other faiths and beliefs and enjoy worship. The preparation of pupils for the next stage of their education is satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Significant features of typical lessons include: strong classroom management, so that pupils participate and learn without disruption and practical investigations which generate a high level of enthusiasm. Sound support by classroom assistants enables pupils with extra learning needs to make satisfactory progress towards their targets. The good information from the tracking of prior levels of attainment is not always used well to set challenging tasks in lessons. The marking of work is regular, but does not provide clear guidance as to how well the pupils are doing and what is needed to improve further. In writing, for example, this leads to weak basic skills and slower progress for some pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The recently introduced approach of linking activities across subject areas enables pupils to make sense of their learning. This is at the early stage of being embedded and it is too early for the full impact of this new initiative to be felt. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French, and a recent Christmas performance was delivered in this language. Designated weeks and days such as the art and environmental week enrich pupils' learning experiences. Visits are made to places of interest such as the local parks and shops. A residential visit is undertaken each year for pupils in Years 5 and 6 where there is a strong focus on developing interpersonal skills. Extra-curricular activities include football, rugby and computing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is satisfactory. All statutory procedures are in place, including those that secure the protection and safeguarding of pupils. Through effective and recently implemented monitoring systems, teachers are able to identify vulnerable pupils quickly, support them effectively and ensure that they make satisfactory progress. This support is targeted to meet the needs and interests of these pupils closely and the school enlists the help of a wide range of relevant agencies. Learning targets are in place for all pupils but these are sometimes not sufficiently challenging to enable all groups of pupils to do as well as they can. Nevertheless, pupils receive adequate guidance and information about their progress. As a result of the care they receive, pupils have a positive attitude towards their school. As they say, 'We like our school because all the teachers want to help us to improve our work.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the headteacher shows a strong vision. This includes further improving the learning environment, structures for performance management, pupils' personal and academic development and the way that information about pupils' achievements is gathered and used.

It is clear that this vision for the school is strongly supported by staff, governors, parents and pupils. Management is sound and improvement planning identifies the right priorities. Performance management supports staff in the improvement of their practice and there are improved systems for monitoring the work of the school. Governance is satisfactory and supportive. As a result, governors have an adequate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, governors are too reliant on the headteacher for their information and do not use enough of their own processes to evaluate the work of the school. Financial management is prudent and the school has adequate processes to obtain value for money in its purchasing of supplies and services.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School, Wigan, WN3 5XE

The inspection team would like to thank you for the warm welcome, courtesy and help you provided during the inspection. These are some of the main findings about your satisfactory school.

What we really liked about your school

- The good work in Reception that gives the youngest children a good start in school.
- The big improvement in behaviour that was commented on by the local authority, staff and many of your parents.
- The good contribution pupils make to the day-to-day working of the school.
- Your good knowledge and understanding of how to maintain a healthy and safe lifestyle.
- Your and your parents' appreciation of the way extra activities enrich your curriculum, particularly the visitors and visits.
- The good leadership of the headteacher.

We have asked your teachers to help you do even better in English, mathematics and science and to go even further to help the boys in these subjects. The school and the inspection team recognise that some pupils are away from school a great deal and that the school works hard to improve on this. Nevertheless, we have requested that the school works even harder to make sure that all pupils come to school regularly. Some of you have a real part to play in this too! Finally, we have suggested that your teachers need to be certain that the way they assess and mark your work is consistent in all classes. By doing this, it will help them to set challenging work for you and you will have a clear idea of what you need to do to make good progress.

My colleague and I enjoyed our time in the school and we wish you well for the future.