

St James and St John CofE Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110410 |
| Local Authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 310291 |
| Inspection date | 25 September 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Christopher Parker |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 130 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ms Helen Kimble |
| Headteacher | Mrs Sally Hughes |
| Date of previous school inspection | 3 October 2005 |
| School address | Main Street Chackmore Buckingham MK18 5JE |
| Telephone number | 01280 812291 |
| Fax number | 01280 812291 |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is an amalgamation of two very small first schools. It is housed on two sites with pupils in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 taught in Akeley and those in Key Stage 2 taught in Chackmore. It opened in September 2006. Pupils come from favourable backgrounds with most attending pre-school before they start school. All pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion with learning difficulties is low. The pupils who have just started Year 6 are the first cohort to complete their primary education at the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'...there is not much fault to find considering the circumstances of the school.' This was the conclusion of the inspection of Radclive cum Chackmore School on 25th September 1889. On the same date in 2007 the inspection of the new school of St James and St John reached a very similar conclusion. The new school is thriving. It is very popular, the number of pupils is increasing and the governors are planning to extend the accommodation.

St James and St John is a good school where the pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The headteacher has established an ethos in which pupils feel safe, valued and confident to contribute wholeheartedly to the school community. The care and support for pupils is excellent. As a result, their behaviour and attitudes to work are exemplary. They respond very positively to the good and, in some lessons, outstanding teaching. The pupils and their parents welcome the many opportunities the school provides particularly, 'the excellent music teaching' and the 'wide range of sporting activities'.

The pupils achieve well. The school is adjusting to the demands of the full primary age range and is seeking to maintain the high standards achieved in the former first school. The pupils reach well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The school's tracking of the pupils' progress through Years 3, 4 and 5 shows that they continue to do well in reading and writing but in mathematics their progress is not as rapid. Although standards in mathematics are above average the school has rightly recognised that action is needed to ensure the pupils reach the very high standards to which they and the school aspire. The assessment and analysis of the pupils' work and their progress in mathematics, are not as precise as they are in English. Discussions with the pupils and scrutiny of their work confirm that some tasks are not sufficiently demanding to challenge them to achieve highly.

Parents hold the school in very high regard. 'A great school,' '...unreservedly impressed,' '...really delighted with the school', 'fantastic school,' and 'What a gem of a school!' are just a few of the many very positive comments made by parents.

The school is well led and managed. The strong leadership of the headteacher is successfully guiding the school through the transformation from first to primary school. The senior management team and the governors check the school's performance. Recent developments in the analysis of data are providing a good insight into the pupils' progress and achievement but some aspects of this are not frequent or incisive enough to ensure that all pupils reach the highest possible standards, notably in mathematics. The school is well placed to tackle these shortcomings through its successful school improvement programme.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children enter school with a better developed range of skills than expected for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress. The teaching is good. The teacher sets good activities and challenges. Relationships are positive and the adults provide good support for the children. They carefully monitor and record the children's responses to check their progress. In one activity using the story of 'Titch' to look at members of a family, the children were able to order the teacher's family members by their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils reach high standards in mathematics through consistently challenging tasks and by making frequent and incisive checks on their progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and the standard of their work is generally well above average. By the end of Year 2 pupils reach well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In the national tests in 2007 all pupils attained the expected level and more than usual reached the higher level. Through the transformation from first to primary school good progress in reading and writing has been maintained. The school has not been as successful in ensuring older pupils make the same rapid progress in mathematics. Consequently, some pupils in Years 4 and 5 are not working at as high a level in mathematics as they are in English. This is evident from the school's tracking of the pupils' progress through Years 3, 4 and 5, scrutiny of work in their books and discussion with some of the pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties are fully involved, and well supported in lessons. As a result, they make good progress. The pupils are developing good basic skills that will equip them well for the future.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The excellent singing of the choir during collective worship significantly enhances the spirituality of the occasion. The pupils' thoughtfulness and growing ability to show empathy for others is illustrated very well by their perceptive contributions to discussions. For example, when talking about the feelings of children, and their parents, as they were evacuated from London during the Second World War.

The pupils' behaviour in lessons and on the playground is excellent. They know the importance of staying safe and healthy. The pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have for exercise and the school's survey of pupils' views confirms that they greatly enjoy school. This is very evident in lessons. The pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. Members of the community contacted the school to express their appreciation of the choir's recent contribution to the Harvest Festival.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The lessons seen during the inspection were consistently good and some were outstanding. The lessons were thoroughly planned to meet the needs of the range of abilities within the class. As a result, pupils were engaged in challenging tasks and activities. In an outstanding English lesson in Year 4, the teacher helped pupils to make effective use of powerful verbs and adverbs, in preparation for writing linked to their study of life during the Second World War. The learning support assistant carefully observed and noted the pupils' spoken contributions to the lesson.

Two mathematics lessons were observed. Both contained good opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills through games and activities. However, the work in some older pupils' books is not always demanding enough to ensure rapid progress.

The school has an established marking policy, which the teachers implement fully. Verbal feedback combined with conscientious marking give the pupils guidance and support to make good progress. However, there are few comments on the older children's work that remind them how to refine and improve the finer points of their writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a very broad and creative curriculum in which art, music and sport make an outstanding contribution to the pupils' personal development and well-being. An excellent range of opportunities provided for the pupils both during and beyond the school day. Information and communication technology is used well to extend the pupils learning, for example, in geography. In a lesson in Year 2, the pupils used satellite images to locate features in the local area.

In the Foundation Stage the curriculum makes full use of both the indoor and outdoor areas to provide the children with a wide range of activities led by the teacher and that they can choose themselves.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school gives a very high priority to the care and support of the pupils. Every child is valued and well known to the staff. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring the health and safety of the pupils are excellent. The school is successful in developing very productive partnerships with parents, who greatly appreciate the efforts of the staff.

Aspects of academic guidance for pupils are good. Teachers and learning support assistants provide very effective guidance in lessons and carefully assess their contributions. Pupils have broad long-term targets but do not have sufficiently detailed targets to help them move rapidly to the next stage in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership of the headteacher provides a clear direction for the new school. She has successfully brought together the staff, governors and pupils of the two former first schools and established a very caring ethos that unites the new school. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together to identify where improvements are needed and to make sure development activities have the desired effect.

Some of the monitoring of pupils' progress and analysis of data that worked successfully in the smaller first school are not sufficiently incisive for the older year groups in the larger primary school. The school has made good steps forward in checking the progress of pupils in English but in mathematics it is not frequent or detailed enough to pinpoint precisely where improvement is needed. In all other respects, self-evaluation is good.

As the first cohort of pupils enters Year 6 the school has embarked on setting statutory targets. Whilst these targets are realistic, in mathematics they are only adequately challenging and do not reflect the high aspirations of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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|---|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| 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? | 2 |

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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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

5 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James and St John CofE Primary School, Buckingham, MK18 5JE

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to the inspectors. Your school is a good school that helps you to make excellent progress in your personal development. You feel safe, behave extremely well and listen very carefully to each other. You benefit from an excellent curriculum that includes a very good range of musical and sporting activities.

The adults who work in your school, led very well by the headteacher, provide excellent care and support for you. This is why it is such a calm and friendly place to learn. I really enjoyed the assembly and particularly the singing of the choir. The extracts from the old school logbook from 1889 were fascinating. I hope the teachers did not take you into the playground to practise your marching once I had left!

You are doing well in lessons because the teachers make them interesting and you know what is expected of you. You concentrate on your work and make good progress. The teachers have been successful in helping you to do very well in your reading and writing but I think that some of the older pupils could do even better in mathematics. I have asked the teachers to give you work that really challenges you, so that you reach very high standards. I have also asked them to make frequent checks on your progress to make sure you all do really well in mathematics.

I hope that in the future the school is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector