

# St James' C of E Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112298
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	310842
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Oglesby

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	185
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev John Bannister
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Winzor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Wellington Row Whitehaven Cumbria CA28 7AG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01946 852660
<b>Fax number</b>	01946 599926

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school, close to the centre of Whitehaven. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds which, taken overall, are broadly average. Several families choose to travel from other areas. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all the pupils are White British. A very small number are learning English as an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils are proud to belong and enjoy all that the school offers. It provides a good education in a welcoming, friendly atmosphere. Parents have confidence in the school. They appreciate the high standards of care and communication and that their children are happy and learning. Typical of many comments was, 'We are delighted with the progress that both our children have made and are very grateful to the staff for their hard work and dedication.'

Pupils are now achieving well and reaching above average standards. This is a comparatively recent improvement. The school has made a determined effort to raise standards and improve the rate of progress. Leaders have introduced new systems to track pupil's progress, made improvements to the curriculum and analysed the quality of learning in lessons. Both teachers and pupils have responded well to these changes. Lessons are enjoyable, yet busy and purposeful. Everyone is clear about what is to be learned and the standard expected. Pupils work hard, concentrate and want to improve. Consequently, standards in the national test results of 2007 were the best for many years. Evidence from the inspection is that the rate of learning is accelerating. Consistently good teaching is enabling pupils to catch up from some earlier underachievement.

The provision for personal development is very effective. Pupils are polite and considerate with adults and each other. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils learn to accept responsibility and take their jobs seriously. For example, the impressive school council prepared rigorous interviews for headteacher candidates. The good curriculum is enriched by many events, visits, visitors and clubs. These broaden pupils' experience, add enjoyment and help learning.

A key factor in the recent rise in standards has been the analysis and use of accurate assessment data. This has enabled teachers to plan work at the right level for all pupils. Leaders have used the information well to identify weaknesses and set priorities. However, some of the systems are now rather unwieldy and time-consuming. The school has reached a stage where the data could be streamlined, with a stronger focus on pupils' progress across the school.

St James' is a rapidly improving school. It is self-critical and determined to achieve more. The school has resolved all the issues from the previous inspection. There is excellent leadership by the headteacher and deputy. They have taken the school a long way in a short time. An effective governing body has been a tower of strength throughout a difficult period. The school is well placed to improve further and offers good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Review and simplify assessment and tracking procedures to make them less time consuming and more focussed on pupils' progress.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Pupils join the school in Year 3 with above average attainment, particularly in reading and writing. The new leadership team introduced a number of strategies to further raise standards and increase the rate of progress. The results in 2007 showed that these are beginning to succeed. Pupils achieved their best

ever scores, with a significant improvement in all subjects. A higher proportion of more able pupils performed beyond the expected level, whilst careful tracking and support ensured that every pupil achieved at least their predicted target.

Work seen during the inspection indicates that this improvement has continued. Standards are above average in mathematics and science, and well above average in English. Pupils with learning difficulties, and the small number learning English as a second language, are all making good progress. Standards in information and communication technology have improved since the last inspection and are satisfactory.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development is good overall with some outstanding elements. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in their good attendance and positive attitudes. They feel safe, valued and listened to. Pupils have many opportunities to share ideas and feelings, for example in the popular philosophy lessons. This is having a positive impact on their social and emotional development. Behaviour is good and often very good in classrooms and around the school. Pupils display mature and sensible attitudes to work and play. Now and then the standard of behaviour slips, for example on the rare occasions when parts of lessons are slower or there is too much listening.

Good spiritual, moral and cultural development stems from the broad curriculum, excellent relationships and the school's strong Christian ethos. The school has very good links with the local parish and with the wider community. Citizenship development is a strength of the school with a wide range of opportunities for the pupils to be involved in the democratic process. For example, they have been involved in several projects with the local press and councillors. Pupils show a high degree of responsibility in carrying out their many duties, for example running the healthy snack bar or mentoring pupils in the infant school. They have a very good understanding of how to follow a healthy lifestyle. They know the importance of good diet and exercise, taking full advantage of the healthy school meals and the many opportunities to play games and sport.

Pupils leave St James' with positive attitudes, good social skills and good standards in literacy and numeracy. They are well prepared to succeed in the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, and have improved since the last inspection. Lessons are well planned and enjoyable, and pupils know what is expected. Consequently, they concentrate and work hard. Teachers explain new ideas clearly and are good at motivating their classes. Pupils say that they like being challenged, and appreciate that support and encouragement are never far away. Common strengths in lessons include careful preparation, an interesting range of activities, and a good pace. In a very small number of lessons, the pace slows at times so pupils' concentration and behaviour dip. A good feature in many lessons is the time given for purposeful learning through discussion in pairs or groups.

Work in lessons is carefully prepared for all abilities, so that pupils are neither struggling nor coasting. The very good team of teaching assistants make an important contribution to this. Another factor is the effective way that teachers encourage pupils to think about how well

they are learning and what will improve their work. Staff provide clear advice, through marking, individual targets and identifying the qualities to aim for. This sort of teaching is one of the reasons for the rise in standards and improvement in individual progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A good curriculum, with a wide range of additional activities, meets pupils' needs and captures their interest effectively. Support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly good. This helps them to be confident in their learning and achieve well. Pupils' good personal development owes much to the school's very good and improving programme of personal, social and health education. They develop a good understanding of the elements of a healthy and safe lifestyle.

Since the last inspection, the school has made many improvements to the curriculum in English, mathematics and science. This has been one of the reasons for the recent rise in standards. Staff are now exploring ways to improve the breadth and relevance of the whole curriculum. One way is in making greater use of the local area and its history. For example, pupils show a mature awareness of the impact of the slave trade on Whitehaven. The school is also introducing a more creative approach with links between subjects and key skills to make learning for the pupils more practical and enjoyable.

Regular visitors, events, clubs and visits to places of interest such as museums broaden pupils' horizons and aspirations. Residential visits and activity weeks also help develop social skills and cultural awareness. For example, the older pupils were very keen to talk about their residential visit to Manchester.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The day-to-day care for pupils' well-being is very good and parents recognise this. Typical of many comments was, 'The dedication of the head and staff is fantastic.' The school's positive and caring atmosphere helps pupils to develop confidence in their own ability; they are willing to try and are not afraid to make mistakes. Pupils feel safe and the staff provide good opportunities for them to talk about any worries they may have. Bullying is extremely rare and pupils are confident that if it occurred it would be sorted out quickly. The school is good at celebrating thoughtful behaviour and good work. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet current guidelines.

Support and guidance given to pupils in their work are good. Pupils say that this helps them to make progress because they know exactly what has to improve. Leaders have introduced thorough and accurate systems to check each pupil's performance and see where more help or challenge is needed. This has had a good impact on standards, although the school has now reached a stage where these systems could be simplified and revised to give even more clarity on progress. Support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and her deputy provide excellent leadership. They have steered the school to its present success following a difficult period of staffing changes and the school now has an exceptionally clear vision of the way ahead. The new leaders have inspired pupils, teachers and parents by their enthusiasm, common sense and determination to provide the best possible care and education for every pupil. Good teamwork and high morale are evident everywhere. Self-evaluation is accurate and leads to well chosen priorities.

Governors carry out their responsibilities well. They are involved in many aspects of school life and have a good understanding of its performance. They provided strong leadership during the period of change and all of the present staff appreciate their continued support and advice. Subject leadership is good. Coordinators are increasingly effective in driving improvements, even though some have limited previous experience in this role. The school gives excellent attention to the promotion of equal opportunities for all pupils.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	2
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	1
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**

25 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' C of E Junior School, Cumbria, CA28 3JG

You may remember that Mrs Havard and I visited your school recently. We came to see how well you were all learning. We had a very enjoyable two days; I'm sure that all your visitors say the same. Thank you for letting us see your work and talking to us about what it's like to be a pupil at St James'. We thought you were all very well behaved and were considerate to both adults and other pupils.

You said you were a good school and we agree. You are making good progress because teaching is good and you work hard. We liked the way teachers challenge you to tackle more difficult work, but at the same time are always there for you if you have a problem. You are growing into thoughtful young adults; we were impressed by some of your ideas in the philosophy lessons. You study some interesting things. I don't think many people realise how big the slave trade was in Whitehaven.

Your headteacher, governors and teachers have some excellent ideas on how the school can become even better. I know that your own ideas are listened to, so keep thinking. We liked all the information the school keeps on how well you are learning. It helps your teachers to plan work at the right level for you. However, we have asked staff to look for ways to save time, keep it simple and concentrate on the important bits.

You can help by continuing to make good progress!

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby

Lead inspector