

St James' Church of England First School, Alderholt

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113752
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311358
Inspection date	11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Hensel
Headteacher	Clare Tickel
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Park Lane Alderholt Fordingbridge SP6 3AJ
Telephone number	01425 653063
Fax number	01425 655373

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

St James' is a village first school. The vast majority of pupils come from a White British background and none speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils come from traveller families. Attainment on entry varies, but it is around average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Activemark and Investors in People awards as well as the local authority Self Evaluation award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St James' provides a good standard of education, which is appreciated by the community. Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are also good. Both parents and pupils express their great satisfaction with all that the school has to offer. As one parent wrote, 'I could not have been happier with the school that my child has attended.'

Teamwork amongst staff and governors is excellent, due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and her deputy, together with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. There is a firm commitment to improvement. Self-evaluation is regular and accurate so that weaknesses are easily identified and speedily addressed. The school is continually improving and some aspects of its work are already excellent. Staff and governors are fully aware that still more needs to be done and are working successfully to improve provision and raise standards even further, thus the school's capacity to improve is good. Leadership and management is good overall. There have been a number of staff changes in recent years and some subject leaders are still developing their roles in monitoring and supporting school development.

St James' is an exceptionally caring school where the Christian ethos is evident in all its work. Care, guidance and pastoral support is of very high quality and, together with the excellent programme for personal, social and health education, results in pupils' personal development being outstanding. Pupils love coming to school and participate enthusiastically in lessons. Behaviour is excellent, as are pupils' relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils are very good at using a 'talk partner' to sound out their ideas. Their knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe is especially good and pupils play an outstanding part in the life of the school and the local and wider community. Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully, allowing staff to intervene quickly and provide special programmes of work for pupils who may be falling behind or who are finding work easy. Pupils have individual improvement targets and are becoming increasingly involved in helping to set and check these. However, this is not yet fully established as an integral part of teaching and learning and, when pupils' work is marked they are not consistently advised on how to improve.

The excellent curriculum is rich and enthuses pupils, motivating them to work hard and achieve well. Pupils have frequent opportunities to reflect on their work, which helps them to become good learners. Excellent partnerships with other schools and agencies, for example with the local sports college, greatly benefit pupils' education and welfare. Teaching and learning is good. The practical activities provided are especially good and keep pupils fully involved. However, on occasions, pupils are kept sitting too long listening to the teacher or other adults, which slows the pace of learning. The school has been working hard this year to improve progress in writing, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, which has already raised standards. The high quality support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for traveller pupils ensures they make the same good progress as their classmates. Pupils' good achievement means that, by the end of Year 4, standards are above those expected for pupils of this age.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good provision is well managed and has some outstanding features, which help children achieve well. Progress in personal and social development is excellent and children become very competent independent learners. The curriculum provides an especially good balance

between activities where children work with an adult and 'Let's Explore', when children organise their own tasks and discover things for themselves. The new programme for linking sounds to letters, together with especially good role-play and drama activities, has resulted in children making very good progress in their communication, language and literacy skills this year, particularly in writing. Teaching is good, especially so in whole-class activities where the pace of learning is very good. When working with adults other than the teacher the pace of learning sometimes slows as children lose concentration while having to wait too long for their turn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers set a rigorous pace throughout lessons, involve pupils more in setting and checking their own targets and, when marking their work, indicate how they can improve.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and pupils' progress in order to support school improvement more.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good across the school and is very good in writing. By the end of Reception, standards are generally above those expected. In 2007, standards in the Year 2 national tests were significantly above average. Although standards are around average this year, progress remains good as a high proportion of the current Year 2 pupils have significant learning needs. This has also been the case for Year 4 pupils in the last two years. These pupils have built on their good progress to reach standards above those expected by the time they leave. Average and higher attaining pupils also achieve well. Pupils develop a good range of skills to support their future economic well-being.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils display high standards of behaviour in and around school. They are polite and reflective, being very keen to contribute to lessons. Attendance is above average. Pupils enjoy school very much, describing it as 'a very healthy and very safe school'. The daily 'Wake and Shake' activities and excellent opportunities for sport are very popular. Pupils are confident that adults will help them and that their problems will be taken seriously. Pupils value the way the school involves them in its work and responds to their views, commenting, 'We always get to improve things'. Their excellent spiritual and moral development is enhanced through daily acts of worship with opportunities for reflection, 'WOW' boards celebrating exceptional times in school life, and effective links with the church. Gained through many activities such as special themed weeks, cultural development is very good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall, although it varies in quality. In particular, some staff do not always capitalise enough on pupils' good attitudes. The well-planned lessons provide many practical activities which engage pupils' interest. This is a direct result of the school's focus on active learning. On occasions overlong teacher inputs result in loss of interest and limit the progress pupils make in their individual tasks. Work is well matched to the level at which pupils are

working and those with learning or social needs are supported well, especially when working with the well-qualified teaching assistants. Throughout lessons, frequent discussions help staff to check pupils' understanding and move them on to the next stage. On some occasions staff miss opportunities to refer to pupils' individual targets to encourage them to improve. Work is carefully marked to show pupils how well they have done, although not all teachers indicate how pupils could do better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

An outstanding feature of the curriculum is its breadth and richness that, together with a particularly good emphasis on practical activities, supports learning especially well. For example, the well-established French programme helps prepare pupils well for their future life and there is a wealth of excellent opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development. The curriculum is especially well adapted to meet pupils' needs and school priorities, as is seen in the success of the new programme to improve progress in writing. Excellent partnerships with other schools help ensure that pupils have access to a high level of expertise, for example in physical education. The outstanding range of special focus weeks, visits, visitors and clubs, greatly enhance learning and pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff are very vigilant and rigorous attention is paid to pupils' well-being. Health and safety audits are up to date and child protection procedures and staff vetting arrangements fully comply with government guidelines. Systems for encouraging good behaviour and hard work are excellent. Well-maintained and effective procedures help identify vulnerable learners and address their needs. The 'Sunseeker Club' and 'Nurture Group' are exceptionally good in helping pupils with learning or social needs gain the most benefit from their education. Very good systems for monitoring pupils' progress help staff to plan appropriate future work and set pupils individual improvement targets. The school is now working hard to ensure that pupils are more involved in setting their own targets and monitoring their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is not complacent and receives exceptionally clear direction from the senior leadership team and experienced governors. The commitment to achieve a high standard of education is evident in the challenging improvement targets they set and reach, which are in the process of being raised further. Their vision for the school is shared by the wider school community, which ensures a consistent and successful approach to school development. The schools' focus on continuous improvement is evident in the good systems in place for monitoring and evaluating its work so that weaker aspects are accurately identified and strategies to address them are included in development planning. The success of the school's work is evident in the good progress now made in writing partly due to the more challenging improvement targets set. The school is already working hard to further improve the quality of teaching and to involve pupils more in monitoring and setting their own targets, although the full impact of this is not yet apparent. Subject leadership is good with some being given more opportunities to increase their skills in monitoring provision and pupils' progress. There has been a considerable turnover

of governors in recent years. Nevertheless, through their excellent leadership and well-organised committees, governors support school evaluation and development well.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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

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?	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?	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	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	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

12 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' C of E (VC) First School, Fordingbridge, SP6 3AJ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful, and particular thanks to the school council pupils who gave up their lunch time to speak to us. We think your school is good and are pleased that you and your parents agree.

Here are some of the things we found that are good about the school:

- Staff take exceptionally good care of you and you enjoy school very much.
- You make especially good progress in your personal development. Your behaviour is excellent and you all get on very well together.
- Staff plan lots of very interesting activities for you to do and you are well taught.
- You make good progress and, by the end of Year 4, standards are above those seen in most schools.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are leading your school very well and, together with staff and governors, they are working successfully to help your school improve further.

Here are some of the things we have asked your school to improve:

- Make sure that you do not spend too long sitting listening to staff so that you have more time to get on with your work, and give you more opportunities to check how you can improve.
- Help all subject leaders to keep a careful check on your progress and on how well the school is doing so that it can become even better.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson Lead Inspector