

# St James' Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115668
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312021
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Caroline McKee

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	308
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Henry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Martyn Walley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2005
<b>School address</b>	Merestones Road Cheltenham GL50 2RS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01242 516836
<b>Fax number</b>	01242 526254

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St James' is a larger than average primary school. It is a popular school and oversubscribed. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and English as an additional language are below the national average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The school holds a number of awards including Investors in People, Healthy School status, and Active-Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Every child really does matter and is encouraged to grow in confidence and achieve as well as possible in many different activities. The pupils make outstanding progress. They attain standards that are exceptionally and consistently high by the end of Year 6. The headteacher's outstanding leadership is very well supported by the staff, and by an exceptionally knowledgeable governing body. They know the strengths of the school well and introduce plans that address aspects requiring improvement. These plans have improved the standards for boys in writing although they are still below those of girls. The school recognises the need to have a more efficient tracking programme in place to ensure that detailed assessment information is available and used by all teachers. This shared vision for a school that provides a rich and all-encompassing range of opportunities contributes most effectively to the pupils' outstanding personal development and achievements. The parents are overwhelmingly supportive, with many echoing this quote: 'The school exceeds our expectations and has been transformed in terms of creativity.' The school is well placed to improve further.

Children make outstanding progress in the Foundation Stage. They settle quickly because of the excellent induction programme and consistently positive partnerships with parents/carers. This enables them to benefit fully from the exciting and varied provision. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress, building successfully on their basic skills and reach standards that are well above average and which have further improved since the national assessments in May. Teachers' assessments are sometimes too low in writing at Key Stage 1, and do not truly reflect the standards that pupils reach.

In Key Stage 2, pupils accelerate to make outstanding progress. This is a cumulative effect of strong parental support, the school's outstanding curriculum, care, support and the guidance they are given from the time they start in the Foundation Stage to when they leave in Year 6. The outstanding teaching ensures that they have exceptionally good basic skills that enable them to work independently, with confidence and resilience. They help themselves and others with the next stage of what to learn because the teachers provide them with excellent information to which they can refer. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages of their life. Teaching assistants throughout the school are skilled practitioners and play a major role in how well pupils achieve.

The pupils are exceptionally well behaved and move around the school sensibly despite the cramped conditions. They clearly enjoy coming to school, as is reflected in the consistently above average attendance. They say how much they like all the extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, music and art. They feel safe and show a mature approach in how to manage their lives. They fully understand how to eat healthily, regularly participate in sport and actively look for opportunities to take on roles of responsibility that will make a positive difference to school life and the wider community. A few parents expressed concerns about supervision and some bad behaviour, but pupils said that on the rare occasion that this happens, it is dealt with quickly and sensitively.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Children start school with skills that are above those expected for their age. The vast majority of them exceed the skills for children of a similar age and by the end of Reception they achieve

well above average standards. The children settle quickly and clearly relish the exciting and challenging activities both indoors and in the secure outside learning area, stimulating their learning both in groups and on their own. The children feel safe, secure and valued by the adults and because of this, they thrive and become confident and competent learners. They are polite, courteous and mindful of the needs of others. Outstanding leadership actively enables teaching assistants to take a full professional role in the team, which means provision is consistently high and this has a major impact on standards and the children's personal development. One parent wrote, 'My son's confidence has grown visibly with the tremendous support he has received.'

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Provide a more effective and manageable assessment system so that teachers can be sure that pupils are reaching their full potential.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards reached by the end of Year 6 are exceptionally and consistently high. Pupils make outstanding progress in Reception and Years 3–6 and good progress in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 are consistently well above average and there have been improvements this year in mathematics. Boys do not always do quite as well as girls in writing. The rate of progress accelerates again in Years 3–6 to become outstanding, with the pupils having an exciting and varied range of experiences where they use their basic skills well to enhance their learning. They have outstanding information, communication and technology (ICT) skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 created animated films using clay models designed and modelled by themselves. Their independence in learning enabled them to continue the whole process under supervision despite the absence of their class teacher. Pupils with LDD make outstanding progress because of the early identification and improved provision and support.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils are very proud of their school. They enjoy and appreciate all of the available opportunities such as the wide range of musical experiences. They show initiative, such as setting up their own rock band and organising regular practices. The school council is proactive and pupils enjoyed interviewing the prospective new teachers. They are articulate and know that their voice is heard, helping them to grow in confidence. They are exceptionally well prepared for future life and regularly use skills of organisation, teamwork and communication. They have a very good understanding of how to eat healthily and regularly take part in exercise. They feel safe and know how to manage difficult circumstances with sensitivity and assurance. They enjoy taking part in local community events such as the History Project and regularly participate in local musical events. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a particularly good understanding of other cultures and show patience and understanding when working with others less fortunate than themselves.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Teachers are highly skilled, resulting in the pupils being fully engaged in what they are learning. They have opportunities to solve their own problems and to find out more for themselves. They are able to assess their own work accurately and that of others in nearly all classes because the teachers provide the information and examples which enable them to understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers' assessments of the pupils' writing in Key Stage 1, however, err on the side of caution. Classes are very well managed despite the lack of space, and resources are used innovatively indoors and outdoors. The teachers have good subject knowledge and create excitement in the pupils' learning experiences, giving them opportunities to develop their skills across a broad range of subjects. Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to the pupils' learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum fully meets the needs of all groups of children, enabling them to meet very high standards, and contributes strongly to their personal development. There is a logical progression of skills from year to year. The local area is used well to enhance, for example, the pupils' understanding of ecological, geographical, social and emotional issues through their study of flooding. There is a strong and effective focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. These are exceptionally well developed through topic work, music and art. All pupils are fully included and links with the two local special schools enable staff to improve the provision for pupils with LDD and share the latest specialist knowledge. Pupils also gain considerably from working alongside children with disabilities. There is a wide range of activities, visits and residential trips that pupils really enjoy and these contribute very effectively to their learning. Some parents were not fully aware of the extent of these activities and the school recognises the need to inform them more regularly.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding caring and supportive environment that is safe and secure. The school and pupils have been proactive in encouraging a healthy lifestyle. The 'Have a Go' week gave pupils, parents and staff the opportunity to try new physical experiences such as rock climbing and to further their knowledge of healthy eating. The gardening club teaches pupils how to grow their own vegetables, furthering their understanding and interest. The school meets all statutory requirements for child protection and risk assessments. Academic guidance is good. Pupils with LDD and their parents are fully involved in setting targets. This has led to their accelerated progress. There are examples of outstanding assessment in the classroom but this is not consistent in all classes. The school's tracking system, whilst informative in the long term, does not give immediate information about whole-year groups or specific groups of pupils to identify their current progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher has a clear vision of a fully inclusive school. He has extensively broadened the curriculum so that pupils get a rich and varied range of experiences. These contribute strongly to their outstanding achievement and personal development. This involves the governors, staff and parents, and leads to the outstanding improvement made since the previous inspection. A broader management style has resulted in middle managers who take on more accountability and responsibility. Together with an outstanding governing body, they provide a stable base for continued improvement. There is a strong team ethos with good communication between teachers and management. Senior leaders have a very good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. There are good plans in place to bring about further developments across the school. The headteacher has an astute knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning and this has led to continued improvements in Years 1 to 6.

The governing body holds the school suitably to account for its performance through regular meetings and by asking the school pertinent questions. Their vision for the school is clear and well thought out.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### 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	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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

<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>	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

11 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School, Cheltenham GL50 2RS

Thank you very much for welcoming the inspection team to your school. It was a delight to talk to you and see you working so hard in lessons. We think that the way you support and help each other and your attitudes to learning are excellent. We were very impressed with how independent you are and how seriously you take your responsibilities. These things and the excellent teaching contribute much to making the school outstanding.

You reach exceptionally high standards and make outstanding progress, particularly in Reception and Years 3 to 6. We think that the boys are getting better at writing in Years 1 and 2 but that you could all still improve further. We were impressed with your use of ICT, particularly in Year 6 with the planning and making of a film. We thought that you managed your learning very well in the absence of your normal teacher, showing how well you behave and how you are so determined to succeed. All staff and governors help to ensure the school provides excellent care, support and guidance so that you improve your work and make excellent progress in your personal development.

We think that you have an outstanding headteacher and that he has provided you with an excellent and exciting range of activities that you told us motivates and challenges you. We could see how well you sing and enjoy taking part in musicals, plays and sport. He is very well supported by the governors and leadership team and they are equally well placed to support the new headteacher.

So that the school can improve even more, we have asked staff to:

- Assess you more accurately and find a system for tracking how well you do that is easy to manage and saves them more time.

Thank you again for allowing us to be in your delightful and exciting school and we wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Caroline McKee Lead Inspector