

St James Church of England Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116286
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312246
Inspection date	11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Ash
Headteacher	Miss Claire Epps (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	Bellevue Lane Emsworth PO10 7PX
Telephone number	01243 372715
Fax number	01243 372715

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, leadership and management, personal development and well-being, and care, guidance and support, gathering evidence from observations of lessons and an assembly, documents and scrutiny of pupils' work. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with parents, children, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves an area of relative prosperity. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Pupils are of predominantly White British heritage; there are well below the expected numbers of pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well below the national expectation, and there are two pupils with a statement of special educational need. Currently, there is an acting headteacher, with a headteacher now appointed for next term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its pupils. Some parents have commented on the unsettling absence of a permanent headteacher. However, reliable management systems in the school have contributed to the continuation of above average academic standards, coupled with the outstanding personal development of pupils. One parent correctly wrote, 'The school provides a happy and safe environment in which my children have flourished. The pupils are well led and have a great sense of community'. The pupils told of their enjoyment of school, and this shows in their very high levels of attendance.

Pupils begin Year 1 with slightly above the expected levels of knowledge and skills and make good progress throughout the school. This includes the small number of pupils with learning difficulties. Many pupils achieve very well. In recent years standards in English, mathematics, and science, at the end of Years 2 and 6, have been consistently well above average. Such academic performance is the consequence of consistently good teaching across the school as well as the very positive attitudes towards learning that the pupils adopt.

Pupils say that the teachers make their lessons fun. This results from the careful attention paid to planning a wide range of activities that cater for the pupils' different learning styles. For example, pupils who respond more to a visual approach to learning are well motivated by the use of the interactive whiteboards in literacy lessons. On occasions, teachers' questioning does not sufficiently challenge pupils or involve them in commenting on the answers of others. Relationships are extremely positive. Pupils know their views are respected, and want to be involved. This is very apparent when they keenly evaluate their own work, using the 'Grow Green' or 'Tickled Pink' strategy to show how much of the work they have understood. Crucially, this is then picked up by teachers, who identify any appropriate support that is needed.

The very high levels of pupils' personal development reflect the fact that the pupils are independent learners, who behave exceptionally well, and receive excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. They listened carefully and reflected on some serious issues raised in a stimulating period of collective worship. Pupils were eager to be involved in discussions about the differences between their experience and children in parts of Africa. They are rightly proud of their good contribution to the community, their successful charity fund-raising and their sponsorship of a Thai child. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. The very good levels of basic skills prepare pupils well for later life, but the school recognises the need to develop further their information and communication technology skills.

Pupils also commented positively on the varied activities provided for them. They very much enjoy the good clubs on offer and special themes, such as 'International' and 'Book' weeks. One parent wrote, 'The school instils a sense of commitment to learning. The staff are approachable and the children have fun'. The curriculum meets well the literacy and numeracy needs of the pupils. However, there are missed opportunities for a more creative curriculum to be developed, through linking subjects together and by offering pupils greater challenge in investigations and problem-solving activities, particularly for those pupils who have particular gifts and talents. The school recognises this, rightly evaluating the curriculum as satisfactory.

Pupils receive very good pastoral care. For example, the introduction of judo in Year 3 has resulted not only in a rise in the levels of skills, but also in pupils' recognition of the need for self-control and taking care of others. Teachers make good use of marking to help pupils improve their work. They also set targets for pupils, but these are often not sufficiently

challenging. This is because, at a whole-school level, the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is insufficiently rigorous.

Able led by the acting headteacher and deputy, the school has focused, very appropriately and successfully on standards of attainment. Their success is shown by the consistency with which pupils receive good teaching, as well as in the most recent national tests, which are at similar high levels to those of previous years. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, because, until recently self-evaluation has involved only senior managers. Whilst this has been adequate to maintain the good provision, it has not been sufficient to drive through major improvements. The acting headteacher and deputy have put in place strategies to hand more responsibility to subject leaders. This is having a positive impact. For example, pupils' spelling has improved as a consequence of analysis and actions taken by subject managers. The headteacher designate is already involved with staff in training and in planning the school's next steps. Senior managers have recently worked on raising the standards of boys' writing. New resources and guidance for teachers have resulted in boys saying how much they now enjoy their written work. Governors visit regularly and know the school's strengths, and areas for development. They have undergone training that is allowing them to raise relevant questions of the school. There is a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

'My child has just started, but he has settled in well, and is very happy. I like the 'family' ethos - there is a really friendly and welcoming atmosphere'. Observations demonstrated how accurate this parent was. Very thorough induction procedures, including home visits, help to ensure that the children feel confident in their new surroundings. Good teaching helps ensure the good progress of children, who enter Reception with expected levels of knowledge, and leave with most exceeding the expected learning goals. Children's social and personal development is particularly strong. They care for each other and respect their environment; one boy cautioned, 'We shouldn't push - she's only little', as the class eagerly approached a teddy bear. The children show their enjoyment in the various activities on offer. The good curriculum gives appropriate opportunities for children to make choices and learn independently. The school recognises the need to develop the external play area. Leadership is good, with very appropriate partnerships being forged to support learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop whole school assessment and tracking systems in order that pupils' progress can be rigorously monitored and more accurate targets set for them.
- Provide more challenge and enjoyment for all pupils through developing a more creative curriculum.

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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 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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?	3
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

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	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	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

29 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James Church of England Controlled Primary School, Emsworth, PO10 7PX

Thank you for the welcome you gave me when I recently visited your school. After listening to you carefully, looking at your work and seeing how the school operates I agree with you that it is a good school. I particularly liked the way that you work hard, are keen to learn and are making good progress. You do well in English, mathematics and science. You do so well because of your excellent attitudes to school, but also as a result of the good teaching you get. You said that lessons are fun and challenging. You told me how safe you feel and that the adults listen to your views. That is good to hear.

The way you behave and develop as young people is outstanding. You are very well able to work on your own, get along so well with other people and are caring towards each other. I very much liked how carefully you listened to the Curate telling you about Africa. Well done and keep up the very good charity work that you do!

You must be looking forward to having a new headteacher. Miss Epps and her deputy have successfully helped to make sure that standards have not slipped since the last headteacher left. Also, you are now benefiting from the school's work in producing new and good guidance about how to improve your writing.

Even good schools can get better. I have asked the school to watch more carefully how you get on in your work and this will help teachers to plan work and set you targets that are more challenging for you. I have also asked that the school look at ways of making your work even more interesting through giving you problems to solve and investigate.

A school councillor said, 'The school is the best in my life.' I hope you continue to enjoy it and I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Pye

Lead inspector