

Saint James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116331
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312264
Inspection date	7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Brian Pickett
Headteacher	Mr Alec Smith
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	Moorgreen Road West End Southampton SO30 3EG
Telephone number	02380 900995
Fax number	02380 900996

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work, assessment information, documents, interviews and discussions. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: the impact of teaching on pupils' progress; the impact of leaders and managers on improving standards especially in writing and in mathematics; and evidence from parents and pupils on quality of personal development and care, support and guidance. 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

St James is a larger than average, popular primary school. Most pupils are White British. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than that usually found. The proportion of pupils who have learning needs or disabilities is below average. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and is also designated as an Enhanced Healthy School. Alongside this it has the Activemark for 'exceptional delivery' within the National School Sporting Strategy.

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 is a good school with some outstanding features. Of the many parents who returned questionnaires almost all highlighted the happy ethos and positive learning environment. A parent wrote 'I feel that when my children go to school it's like a second home for them.'

Overall standards are above average and, from their starting points, boys and girls of all attainment levels make good progress through the school. English test results have consistently been above average although analysis by senior leaders recognised that pupils' writing skills were not high enough. Over two years, the new approach to developing pupils' writing skills has been a successful feature of the curriculum and is gradually working through to all years. Its success is exemplified in the good quality writing in pupils' books and on display around the school. The work has justly earned the appreciation of both parents and pupils. The impressive Year 3 display in the school hall of pupils' writing on 'How to prepare breakfast' is a good example. Test results in mathematics have been above average but dipped to average in 2007. The school identified that pupils' problem-solving skills were not as good as their number skills. Since September 2007 the coordinator has provided improved teaching and learning resources for investigative mathematics, including software programs for the electronic whiteboards. There is already evidence that teachers are using these resources well to enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills more confidently, although this is not yet consistently so across all year groups. The school is on course to meet its challenging targets at the end of Years 2 and 6.

The positive learning environment is a reflection of the outstanding levels of care and concern shown by all adults for the personal development and well-being of each pupil. This approach, defined on the school badge as 'Care, Co-operation and Consideration', is modelled superbly around the school by the headteacher. 'It is seen as a treat by the children if he teaches them,' commented one parent. The open plan arrangements in the school cater for many more pupils than originally intended and space is at a premium. Nevertheless the teaching is good and pupils learn well, showing good levels of concentration despite potential distractions around them. The introduction of a themed approach to learning appeals to pupils and they enjoy their involvement in new initiatives such as 'circus week'. Citizenship education is good and has relevance to the real world. It contributes well to pupils' future economic well-being.

Teachers regularly mark and assess pupils' progress. Support assistants work effectively in partnership with teachers and parents confirm that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are met well. Assessment records and the termly monitoring of pupils' progress by senior staff are handwritten. This is time consuming. The school is in the early stages of introducing computer software to speed up the process and so provide more immediate academic guidance to individual pupils as to how well they are progressing.

A high proportion of pupils participate in music, arts and physical activities. These extracurricular activities are strengths that extend pupils' enjoyment of learning outside the classroom. In contrast to the general lack of space inside the school, there is a well-used and extensive outside play area. It has an imaginative arrangement of playground markings, small copses, different seating arrangements, adventure playgrounds and trim trails as well as a grassed playing field, all of which provide pupils with a welcome release from the physical constraints of the building. A high proportion of pupils have school dinners and parents and pupils are very aware of what constitutes healthy foods as well as the importance of an active lifestyle. Topics such as road

safety, 'stranger danger' and drug awareness are emphasised effectively in the curriculum and in educating pupils to stay safe. Pupils broaden their cultural awareness by visits to churches, temples, mosques and chapels. The school works closely with the local authority advisers to ensure fairness and balance in their Arts fortnight, which has the theme of 'Many Cultures.'

Good school procedures to counter bullying or name-calling are followed closely. Pupils confirm that they tell a teacher or the headteacher straightaway when they occur and that such incidents are dealt with very quickly and effectively. There have been no exclusions in the past two years, behaviour is excellent and attendance is above average. These important factors support pupils' good achievement and confirm their enjoyment of school life. Pupils make a significant contribution to the wider community. In addition to raising thousands of pounds each year, there are imaginative individual projects such as the younger pupils' project for developing the local Parish recreation ground. In this case, some of their ideas became reality. School council members carry out their roles in a mature and responsible way. One member was keen to point out that they were not just discussing their own views at their meetings but brought to them the shared views of their class.

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders are not complacent about standards and accurate self-assessment procedures identify key priority areas. The headteacher, with the full support of his governors, has a clear vision for the school and leads teachers and support staff well. All feel valued and keen to respond to the needs of the pupils and further raise achievement. Together with the good progress made since the last inspection, the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage provides an outstanding start to children's education. The following comment is typical of the sentiments of a great many Reception parents. 'My son has come on in leaps and bounds. I cannot believe how he now recognises letters and words in such a short time. He finds school fun.' From starting points that are typical for their age the children make rapid progress across all areas of learning and exceed expectations by the time they start Year 1. Their outstanding all-round development is largely due to inspirational teaching which prepares children so effectively for their transition into Year 1 and the Revised Primary Strategy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics.
- Implement fully an assessment system so that teachers can respond more quickly to the needs of individual 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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	1

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

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

19 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint James' Church of England Primary School, Southampton, SO30 3EG

I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed our visit to your school. It was a pleasure to talk to so many of you and I very much appreciated the help you gave me during the day. You will be pleased to hear that I think that St James is a good school and that you are making good progress in your lessons. Here are a number of things I like about your school:

- You get an excellent start to school life in Reception classes.
- You make good progress in your reading and writing.
- You are keen to come to school, enjoy learning and respond very well to each other, to your teachers and to all adults and visitors.
- You are keen to follow a healthy lifestyle and make an excellent contribution to the life of the school.
- You enjoy taking part in activities outside the classroom.

The challenge now is to achieve even higher standards in your work. I have asked your teachers, with your help, to

- raise achievement in mathematics
- make more checks on your progress as you move through the school. You can help by always telling your teachers when you do not understand the work you are given.

Once again, thank you for being so friendly and helpful.

Brian Evans

Lead Inspector