

St James Primary School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	131581
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	315836
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Helen Morrison

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	174
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Dixon
Headteacher	Martin Atkins
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Great Charles Street Brownhills Walsall WS8 6AE
Telephone number	01543 452328
Fax number	01543 362049

Age group	4–11
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St James is a small primary school with an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprising the Reception class. The majority of pupils start the school with low levels of skills and knowledge. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage and live locally in an area where many families experience significant socio-economic disadvantage. An above average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average; however, these pupils are not distributed evenly across the school and some classes have significantly more than others.

The school has successfully achieved the Healthy Schools Award.

A separately managed Children's Centre adjoining the school was opened in March 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St James is a satisfactory school. Staff care for the pupils and promote their well-being. Vulnerable pupils, in particular, are identified quickly and supported very effectively. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves fit and healthy. The Parent Support Adviser has formed excellent links with parents and helps them to contribute to their child's education, as well as to participate for themselves in adult learning opportunities. As a result, attendance is now satisfactory and exclusions are no longer a concern. Parents are generally happy with the school and the direction it is taking; as one parent said, 'I think the teachers are very approachable and my daughter is getting a good education'. The EYFS provides a good start to children's education. Induction procedures are effective and links with parents and carers are strong; as one parent said, 'the staff have been brilliant in helping my child settle in'. The EYFS curriculum helps children to develop clear speech and good listening skills that in turn support their growing reading and writing skills. As a result, children make good progress in the EYFS, although standards are still below average by the time they start Year 1.

Standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 1 are below average although pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils also make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and standards are just below average in English and mathematics. Achievement is outstanding in science due to imaginative teaching strategies. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in English but receive less clear guidance in mathematics and so make less progress. Targets set for all pupils in mathematics are not reviewed often enough to ensure that pupils make as much progress as they could.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team members are focused on raising pupils' attainment, although not all monitor and evaluate teaching rigorously enough. The school has a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and effective actions have been taken to address weaknesses in writing so that standards are beginning to rise. When linked with other aspects of progress, for example in EYFS, this demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning experiences for pupils of all abilities. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but in some lessons more could be done to involve pupils in their learning with more practical and creative activities. Where this does occur, pupils enjoy their learning. Lessons are planned well but marking of pupils' work is not linked closely enough to their targets so pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve. More able pupils are not always taught as effectively as they might be. Pupils contribute well to the community and are prepared satisfactorily for their futures.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There are good induction arrangements so that children settle in quickly and enjoy the wide range of activities provided. Relationships with parents and carers are well established and 'homework' tasks, such as children talking about the way in which the heart works, helps parents to share in their children's learning. There is a strong emphasis on developing social skills and children quickly grow in confidence and are eager to try new things. Speaking and listening skills are promoted well and children are encouraged to talk about their feelings and consider those of others. They enjoy learning and want to show what they know and can do. They enjoy

the 'wake-up shake-up' sessions at the beginning of the day and opportunities to take responsibility, for example registering their attendance by placing their picture on the wall. Children of all abilities make good progress as a result of good teaching and support. Every opportunity to apply literacy and numeracy skills is taken and used well, for example counting the days that children have been at school. The EYFS is well led by a highly skilled phase leader who is an excellent role model. She has a clear view of what needs to be done next. Although the classrooms are spacious and well resourced, she has correctly identified the need to upgrade the outdoor area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set clear targets for pupils' achievement in mathematics and provide better guidance for pupils so that they understand what they need to do to improve.
- Provide pupils with more practical and creative activities that promote their enjoyment of learning.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of teaching so that teachers are given clear guidance on how to improve further the quality of their teaching.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start in the EYFS with skills that are well below those expected. They make good progress with an increasing number achieving age-related expectations, although almost half of them did not meet the goals expected by the time they start Year 1. Even though standards fell last year and were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points in Key Stage 1.

At Key Stage 2, standards were just below average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 compared to schools nationally. More able pupils do very well in science but make more limited progress in English and mathematics. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is promoted well in English so that they achieve in line with their peers, although they do less well in mathematics.

Initiatives such as the introduction of a structured phonics programme have had a positive impact on pupils' writing and as a result, standards are beginning to rise. The school, however, needs to do more to ensure that the targets set for pupils in mathematics are reviewed more frequently so that better progress can be made.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall, with particular strengths in the EYFS. Social and moral skills are promoted well and pupils have a good awareness of right and wrong. Pupils move around school in an orderly way, are polite to adults and show consideration for one another. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory although more needs to be done to prepare them for life in a multicultural environment. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of living healthily, and the active school council have campaigned successfully

for healthy food and snacks, which pupils enjoy. They benefit from the school's participation in the Healthy Living Project and participate in a wide range of sports and fitness activities; for example, all pupils are taught to swim. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that any bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively. Older pupils have a good understanding of internet safety. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the wider community through collections for local and national charities and links to a local home for the elderly. Their developing independence and satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and information and communication technology result in them being satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, as a result of which pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers plan carefully to meet the different needs of their pupils. Groups working with an adult receive good support and frequently make better progress than those working independently, often higher attainers, who have to wait longer for support, which slows their learning. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner are used well throughout the school and role-play encourages pupils to extend their thinking, for example in one lesson where a pupil answered questions in the role of Cinderella. Pupils also enjoy solving 'maths mysteries'. In some lessons, pupils spend too much time sitting on the carpet listening rather than being actively involved. This again slows learning, particularly for the more able, who can quickly become bored. Where practical work is used, pupils enjoy their learning more. Teachers generally make helpful comments when marking pupils' work, but marking does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work and, other than in Year 6 literacy, comments are rarely linked to targets for learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has rightly emphasised the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, and recent improvements are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The introduction of a structured phonics programme, for example, has raised pupils' attainment in writing. Very effective links with local secondary schools, together with booster classes, also ensure rapid progress in science. There is a satisfactory range of additional activities that extend the curriculum and enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy the focused curriculum activities such as fitness days, which promote healthy lifestyles. However, they have too few opportunities to learn about different cultures in Britain and internationally. Children in the EYFS benefit from a good curriculum, based on fortnightly themes linking the six areas of learning. This results in good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral and personal support for pupils is good. Staff know pupils well and are concerned for their well-being. Relationships are good and incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with promptly and effectively. Measures to safeguard pupils are effective and robust and meet requirements. Regular risk assessments ensure that pupils are taught in a safe environment.

Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The Parent Support Adviser organises activities that engage an increasing number of parents and carers as partners in children's learning and this has contributed to the increase in attendance and the reduction in exclusions. Good links with parents are made by EYFS staff, beginning with careful induction arrangements, and they are readily available to discuss any concerns. Vulnerable pupils are very quickly identified and supported by staff, who respond well to individual pupils' needs.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Targets are set and, in literacy in Year 6, they are well used as guidance for assessment so that pupils know what they are aiming for. In other subjects and year groups, however, targets are not referred to or changed frequently enough and as a result pupils are unsure of how to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have clear targets for literacy but these pupils make less progress in mathematics where targets are not well used. Although pupils make good progress in science their progress is not currently tracked carefully enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior leaders have identified some strengths and weaknesses of the school and have taken effective action, for example through the introduction of a structured phonics scheme, which is raising standards in writing. Subject leadership is strong in the EYFS and in English but progress in mathematics is slower and improvement has not been tackled effectively. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the tracking of pupils' progress is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all pupils make as much progress as they could.

The governing body are supportive of the school and form 'change teams' to introduce new initiatives. They ensure that statutory requirements are met but, as yet, they do not provide enough challenge to hold the school to account. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and identifies the needs of individual pupils quickly. It promotes community cohesion satisfactorily, engaging with the local community well, though more could be done to promote understanding of other cultures in Britain. The school has very effective links with other local schools through the Brownhills cluster, and links with local secondary schools have contributed to raised standards in science and to pupils' greater understanding of healthy lifestyles.

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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?	3
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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James Primary School, Walsall WS8 6AE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and answering all our questions when we visited you recently. We hope you continue to enjoy solving your maths mysteries. Because you were so friendly, polite and helpful, we found out quite a lot about your school.

- It gives you a satisfactory education so you achieve as you should.
- The children in the Reception class have settled in well and made a good start to their school life.
- Your teachers care for you and look after you and so you feel safe.
- You are learning to live healthily; for example, you eat healthy foods and join in your 'Wake Up Shake Up' sessions.
- Those of you who find work difficult are given lots of support so you make satisfactory progress in English.

In order that your school gets even better, we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to do the following:

- help you reach higher standards in mathematics by setting you targets that you can check with your teachers so you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to get better
- make sure you spend more of your lessons taking an active part in learning, doing activities that you find interesting and exciting and which challenge your thinking
- check that teaching is always good so that you make good progress.

You can help your teachers do this by making sure you come to school regularly and by continuing to work hard.

With best wishes

Helen Morrison

Lead inspector