

St James The Great Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100825
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	323356
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Natalia Power

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	225
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	Ms Ann Cutting
Headteacher	Mr Edward Dunphy
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Peckham Road London SE15 5LP
Telephone number	020 7703 5870
Fax number	020 7277 1491

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized, one-form entry school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Most pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with pupils from Black African heritages forming the largest group. Around half have first languages other than English, most commonly Ibo, French and Twi, but few are at an early stage of learning English. A higher than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Of these, pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties form the largest group.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils from all backgrounds thrive. It is a happy school and enjoys the support of the vast majority of parents, who appreciate its strong Catholic ethos. One commented, 'St James the Great is a very good school with a good reputation in the community.' The school is, in the words of another parent, 'a lovely, friendly school, well led by the headmaster and his team'. In this secure and peaceful environment, pupils develop good social and personal qualities. They behave well and are considerate towards others. Pupils show their enjoyment of school through their exemplary attendance. The majority of pupils never miss a day of school in the entire year. One parent commented, 'My daughter loves school, her friends, work and teachers. She moans when she is on holiday as she wants to go back to school!'

Good teaching enables pupils to make good overall progress throughout the school. Children begin the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age. Their skills improve year after year, and by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, their standards match those expected for their age. Pupils reach average standards in English, but do less well in writing than in reading. They do not always have sufficient opportunities to gain fluency by writing in a range of subjects across the curriculum. Teachers tailor work effectively to pupils' differing abilities. This enables pupils of all levels of ability to make good progress. Pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and through specialist help, and make good progress in line with others.

Leaders and managers know their school well and provide clear direction with a good focus on raising standards. They track pupils' progress effectively and use the information to provide personal targets for pupils, helping them to direct their efforts successfully. They have created 'a good community and parish school', in the words of one governor. School leaders recognise, however, that not enough is done to make pupils understand the many different ways of life that people lead in Britain and in the world beyond. They have put in place policies to raise awareness of other faiths, heritages and ways of life, but these are at an early stage and have not yet been fully implemented. The school works in good partnership with parents and with other schools and agencies. It has tackled the areas for development in the previous inspection by improving assessment procedures and enabling higher-attaining pupils to do as well as their national counterparts. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join with language, social and numeracy skills that are generally below those expected for three-year-olds. By the end of the Reception Year, most children achieve the goals expected for their age and achieve well. However, their writing skills, knowledge and understanding of the world that are weaker than expected. Staff have recently focused on activities and extra support designed to improve performance in these areas. Children have made a number of visits to local places of interest, and computers are being used more frequently. These measures are starting to bear fruit. Children benefit from a carefully planned induction process, and close partnerships are fostered with parents, helping children to feel safe and secure and to settle in quickly. Children's good achievement stems from good teaching and a good curriculum. Children have fun because the activities they are given are varied and interesting. This is especially so in the Nursery, where a stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment fosters a very good balance between activities led by adults and those where children make

their own choices. Children make good progress in the Reception class, although they would benefit from more opportunities to initiate their own learning. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The teacher in charge has a clear idea of what needs to be done to improve further, although the plans need to be more sharply focused on identifying children's next steps in learning and achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have as many opportunities as possible to write fluently in all subjects to raise standards in writing throughout the school.
- Promote community cohesion more effectively by encouraging pupils to understand and experience a wide variety of faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress overall and achieve well, reaching average standards from starting points which are below average. Children enter the Nursery with language and social skills which are below those expected for their age. Through good teaching and welfare they make good progress, leaving the Reception Year with skills and understanding not far below the level expected for their age. Pupils continue to make steady progress from Years 1 to 6, because of good teaching from a settled and stable staff, and through the effective promotion of their well-being. Year 2 pupils reach standards which are close to national averages. Their mathematical and reading skills are strong, but pupils lag behind in writing skills. Year 6 pupils reach average standards in mathematics, science and English. However, their writing continues to be less strong than their reading, because they have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. Pupils capable of reaching the highest levels are provided with challenging work in Years 3 to 6 and do as well as their national counterparts in the tests taken at the end of Year 6. Pupils with varied learning needs and those for whom English is an additional language are effectively supported and make good progress in line with others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well as individuals as they move through the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know right from wrong, acquire good social skills and make a positive contribution to their school and parish. The school council has raised pupils' awareness of how to get to school safely, has organised a 'healthy school week' and has raised money for local charities. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Racist incidents are rare and pupils are very tolerant of people from other cultures. As one girl said, 'People in England can look very different on the outside but if you look inside we are all the same.' Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe from harm. For example, they understand how to use the internet safely. Many pupils are taking advantage of the nutritious meals offered by the school and most, though not all, lead a healthy lifestyle. Attendance is excellent. The good progress pupils are making in their basic skills and their good social skills mean that they are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan well to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. They work in close partnership with teaching assistants who make an important contribution to the quality of education, especially for pupils with emotional or learning difficulties and those for whom English is not their first language. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their classes and, as a result, pupils behave well in lessons and enjoy learning. Teachers introduce lessons well so that pupils are clear about what they will learn, and they involve pupils successfully in revising what has been learnt. In the best lessons pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. In one lesson, for instance, pupils acted the part of private investigators to find out from their classmates information about the local area to help them learn statistical skills. Teachers are successful in encouraging pupils to read for enjoyment, but do not always encourage them to write fully in a range of subjects, not just in English, to develop their fluency.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is matched well to most pupils' needs, and there is a good emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills. Information and communication technology is a strength of the curriculum. It is used successfully in a range of subjects, and pupils are encouraged to develop their own web pages and to interact electronically with other schools. The school provides pupils with a stimulating programme of visits to places of interest to enrich their understanding, particularly of history and the arts. The school is beginning to develop good links between subjects to make the curriculum creative and stimulating. However, this is at an early stage, and opportunities to encourage writing on exciting topics are sometimes missed, limiting pupils' fluency in writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for well and this contributes to their good progress and well-being. As one parent wrote, 'My son's special needs were quickly identified and the good support that has been provided has meant that he is much happier and is making good progress.' Pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties receive good counselling and support from a skilled learning mentor. Pupils know and understand their targets in English and mathematics, and these are displayed in each classroom. There is some good marking which makes clear to pupils how their work could be even better. However, there are other examples that merely indicate if answers are right or wrong, without showing pupils what to do next to make faster progress towards meeting their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy headteacher, has created a happy and successful school based on a strong Catholic ethos shared by staff and parents alike. Leaders, managers and governors know the school well, and their evaluation of its strengths and areas for development is accurate. They recognise that the school is not yet doing enough to encourage

pupils to interact with those of other faiths, cultures and backgrounds. The school tracks pupils' progress rigorously, using the information to set them clear and challenging targets. These enable all pupils, whatever their needs, to make good progress. Leaders and managers have set up good programmes to involve parents in their children's learning. Governors have grown in strength since the time of the last inspection. They support the school well and are ready to hold it to account.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

05 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James The Great Roman Catholic Primary School, London, SE15 5LP

We very much enjoyed our recent visit to your school. It was lovely to see how happy you are, and how friendly and polite you are to visitors and to one another. You told us how much you enjoy school. You show this clearly through your excellent attendance. You behave well in lessons, and are kind and thoughtful to one another in the playground.

Your school takes good care of you and helps you to make good progress in most subjects. The adults in charge of your school run it well, making sure that you know what to do to improve your work. The adults know that some of you do not do quite as well in your writing as pupils in other schools. We have asked them to give you more writing to do in all kinds of subjects, so that you become as fluent as possible.

You are fortunate to go to a school where Catholic principles are important, and these help you to have a good understanding of right and wrong. Your school is important in the parish. Now we want you to understand even more about what goes on in the wide world, and we have asked those in charge to help you to reach out to people from other faiths and backgrounds. In the meantime, you can play your part by working as hard as possible at your writing, and taking an even greater interest in the constantly changing and exciting world around you.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Natalia Power

Lead Inspector