

St James CofE Primary School, Farnworth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105208
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	324181
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	300
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	Mrs Liz Jefferson
Headteacher	Miss Paula-Jane Green
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hillside Avenue Farnworth Bolton Lancashire BL4 9QB

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Inspection number	324181

Telephone number

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Age group 3–11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of pupils' attendance, behaviour and high mobility on achievement; the dip in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 in writing in 2008; and the steps taken to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of their place in the United Kingdom and the global community. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; observations of the school at work; discussions with pupils and representatives of senior staff and the governing body; a scrutiny of school documents and parents' questionnaires. 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 form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than the average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well above average, and the school caters for some pupils with complex emotional and social needs as well as a small number with physical disabilities. Many pupils join and leave the school at times other than their normal starting or leaving points.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St James Church of England Primary School is an outstanding school that successfully combines outstanding achievement, extremely high standards of care and lots of fun. It provides outstanding value for money. Outstanding leadership and management promote very high aspirations and have created a school that expects the very best for each and every one of its pupils. This is reflected in excellent outcomes both in terms of academic gains, and pupils' exceptional personal development. The relentless focus on 'raising the bar' comes directly from the headteacher who undertakes her role with great vigour and who is highly respected by all who are associated with the school. She is ably supported by a dedicated senior management team who also make a very significant contribution to the outstanding provision in the school. Relationships with parents are very good. Parents are delighted with the school and say their children have come on in 'leaps and bounds'.

Children join the Nursery with very limited skills but by the time they reach the end of Year 6, pupils are reaching standards that are broadly average. Achievement is outstanding through both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This is because of outstanding teaching and learning combined with an outstanding curriculum. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is rapidly increasing in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 reflecting the school's high expectations. Although early indications are that the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 4 in writing fell slightly in 2008, this was due to the arrival of pupils who were very new to the school. More pupils than ever reached the higher Level 5 in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the excellent support they receive. Many pupils join and leave the school at different points in the school year. These pupils are made very welcome and are well supported. They also make excellent progress from their individual starting points.

Pupils say that they have 'the best teachers you could ask for'. Instructions to pupils and explanations of concepts are crystal clear and as a result, pupils know exactly what to do in lessons and are able to make rapid progress. The very precise marking of pupils' books identifies specifically where pupils can improve, which in turn reinforces pupils' learning. Pupils respond extremely well to this guidance and are keen to improve their work. The curriculum is outstanding because it has been very carefully tailored to meet the needs and raise the aspirations of all pupils in this school. The promotion of basic skills is outstanding; the relentless reinforcement of high expectations of punctuation and presentation is helping pupils to succeed. The curriculum encourages active learning and recently strengthened links between subjects result in very enjoyable lessons and better learning. Musical activities both in and out of school also add to pupils' enjoyment and they particularly like the musical activities that take place in association with the local high school. A well thought out programme of personal social and health education ensures that pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. The first two weeks of each school year are spent setting out the school's expectations and this has an enormous influence on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. A sharp focus on social and moral education contributes to pupils' outstanding behaviour and ensures that they are able to make a considerable contribution to the school community. Pupils respect and value each other. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that any minor problems will be dealt with immediately by their teachers. Outstanding achievement combined with good manners and a strong work ethic means that pupils are well placed for future economic success.

A typical pupil comment that 'teachers are kind and helpful and always there for me,' reflects outstanding care, guidance and support. Procedures for safeguarding meet government requirements. The school caters for some very needy children, including some with emotional and behavioural problems, but ensures they are carefully nurtured so that they gradually start to overcome their difficulties and begin to blossom. Very effective work with external agencies helps to make sure that these vulnerable pupils are very well supported; the dedicated support staff and high quality mentoring also make a significant contribution to securing their well-being. Attendance rates are improving because the school is very meticulous in its efforts to monitor attendance and encourage regular attendance at school. Infrequent attendance does hold back the achievement of a small number of pupils, but the school's good efforts means that this is increasingly rare.

The school appreciates the needs of the local community and this is reflected in the design of the curriculum and the very strong partnerships with other schools and a wide range of professional agencies. Although pupils are able to understand their place in the local community, the school is aware that the pupils' understanding of the national and global community could be further developed. The school has a very robust understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses that spring from high quality monitoring and the careful tracking of pupils' achievement and standards. This underpins the school's relentless and successful drive for continuous improvement. Its capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the Nursery with poor skills. All make good progress and some make very good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes in relation to their starting points, particularly in their personal development. Staff work very hard to develop children's language skills through well directed questioning and extensive discussions with children. There is a good balance between activities that are led by adults and those which are chosen by children. Provision for outdoor play has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is being used well to extend children's experiences. Much time is spent successfully encouraging children's social development. Very good care is taken of children, and children settle quickly into school. Relationships between children and staff are especially warm and supportive.

Parents say that 'teachers have time for both parents and pupils' and they find that very reassuring. Leadership and management are generally good and this has led to continuous improvement. Staff have worked very hard to try to make sure that all the new requirements for Early Years education are met including new welfare standards. Although children in the Nursery have access to a key worker, this is not yet the case for all Reception children. Records are kept of children's progress in different areas of learning. However, these are not drawn together to form a coherent record of the development of each individual child that supports the judgements made in the Foundation Stage profile.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage has access to a key worker and has an individual record of their progress to support the judgements made in their Foundation Stage profile.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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

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?	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
The extent to which 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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

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

Inspection of St James C of E Primary School, Farnworth, Bolton, BL4 9QB

It was a delight and a privilege to inspect your school. I really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You attend an outstanding school.

It was good to hear that you know lots about keeping healthy and safe. I was very impressed by your outstanding behaviour. You have good manners and make visitors very welcome indeed. You told me that your teachers look after you well and that they always try to help you. You have lots of interesting things to do in and out of lessons. I especially enjoyed hearing about all the trips, as they sounded great fun!

You are making much better progress than pupils in most other schools. You start off behind other pupils in other schools but you quickly catch up. By the end of Year 6 most of you reach standards that are similar to those reached by other pupils elsewhere but more and more of you are managing to get to the higher levels - well done! This not just because of the outstanding teaching you receive, but also because you work very hard indeed.

The younger children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and have lots of fun. I have asked your teachers to improve the records they keep for children in these classes and to make sure they all have a key worker.

Your teachers work very hard indeed to make sure your school just gets better and better. Managers at your school are doing a terrific job, and with your help they have made your school one of the very best.

I wish you well for the future.