

St James Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106239
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	324355
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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)	124
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	Fr Paul Hughes
Headteacher	Mrs J Walker
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cheriton Close Off Underwood Road Hattersley Hyde Cheshire SK14 3DQ
Telephone number	0161 3683455

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Inspection number	324355

Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small school is situated in an area of socio-economic disadvantage. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from other heritages. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found in most schools. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school currently provides a satisfactory standard of education. Good teaching and good pastoral care enable pupils to flourish in their personal development and well-being. However, the school has struggled in recent years to raise attainment and standards above a broadly average level. Significant variations in the size and ability profile of year groups have been a contributing factor to fluctuating standards at the end of the key stages. The school recognizes, however, that more needs to be done to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they possibly can. Several key improvements have already been made in provision and some early signs of their impact are becoming evident.

Children's skills on entry to Nursery are below expectations for their age group. A small but increasing number are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Children's progress and achievement are satisfactory overall in Early Years Foundation Stage, although they enter Year 1 with skills that are still below expected levels particularly in literacy and numeracy. Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 have been below average for several years, reflecting generally satisfactory progress across the school. This year, however, a whole-school drive to raise standards in writing and mathematics has resulted in an improvement in pupils' rate of progress. An increased proportion has reached the higher level in both subjects in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2. Overall standards in English, mathematics and science are still below average, though not exceptionally low. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning to speak English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points and abilities, because of the inclusive provision the school makes for them.

Good quality teaching underpins pupils' improving progress and ensures that they enjoy learning. The school is currently working to improve its satisfactory curriculum. Actions to strengthen provision in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) have been chosen and planned well and are starting to help pupils to achieve and to progress more rapidly. Good pastoral care enables pupils to feel secure and ready to learn. Assessment and procedures to track progress have been improved and a formal review of all pupils' progress now takes place each term. This important new development has not yet had time to impact fully on standards. Work has begun to involve pupils in reviewing their own progress against individual learning targets, to give them a clear understanding of how well they are doing. This new initiative is not sufficiently systematic and has not yet been introduced into all the classes. Although marking is sometimes supportive and helpful, it is not consistent across the school and, therefore, pupils are not always supplied with the advice they need on how to improve their work.

A strong community ethos is reflected in the positive endorsements of parents: a typical response described the school as a, 'special and loving place'. Pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes mean that lessons run smoothly and playtimes are happy. Pupils develop good social skills and moral values. Their spiritual development is nurtured well through opportunities for reflection in assemblies and in lessons. Satisfactory opportunities are provided to develop their cultural awareness and to prepare them for life in a multicultural society. Pupils are active fund-raisers for a range of charitable causes and they show concern for the needs of others. The school's strong focus on healthy living and community involvement contributes well to pupils' good personal development. The school prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education. Overall, rates of attendance are unsatisfactory. This is owing to the poor

attendance of a small minority of pupils and the school is working hard to ensure they attend regularly.

Satisfactory leadership and management ensure that the school runs effectively. The headteacher and the supportive governors are united in their resolve to bring about school improvement. Systems for monitoring the quality of provision are currently being improved but currently they do not involve all staff and governors. The school has satisfactory capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Satisfactory provision enables children to make an effective start to their education and to become happy and receptive learners. From low starting points on entry to Nursery, they achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development and satisfactorily in the other areas of early learning. By the end of the Reception Year, although overall attainment remains below expectations for the age group, children have gained confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Sessions focusing on letters and sounds are helping to boost early reading and writing skills and this is starting to have a positive impact on children's achievement in literacy. Teaching supports the children's learning and the curriculum provides activities which provide them with interest and fun. Improvements to the outdoor area have begun and, although this is still work in progress, children now enjoy access to learning out of doors. Good arrangements are in place to ensure children's welfare. They interact well with each other and enjoy warm relationships with the caring staff. Parents appreciate the good communications between home and school and the good care provided for their children. The provision leader and the staff work together as a team to promote the children's progress and well-being. Vulnerable children, those with additional learning needs and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, are all supported well. Children's progress is observed and regular assessment ensures that additional support is given to those who need it. Good links with external agencies promote children's health, welfare and progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stages 1 and 2 and in literacy and numeracy in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve procedures to monitor the quality of provision, involving staff and governors more fully in the process.
- Develop the consistent use of individual learning targets and improve the quality and consistency of marking, so that pupils understand how well they are doing and so that they are always given clear advice on how to improve their work.
- Improve attendance to bring it in line with the national average figure for attendance.

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

Achievement is satisfactory but improving, as a result of changes which have been made to teaching and assessment. These improvements have not yet had time to have their full effect

on raising standards. Pupils' progress is accelerating and they are eager and ready to learn in lessons as a result of the good teaching they receive. From below average starting points on entry to Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress in all subjects in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were below average in 2008, particularly in writing, with no pupils reaching the higher level in that subject. Inspection evidence shows that overall standards are still below average in 2009. However, some improvement can be seen, with an increased proportion of pupils in the current Year 2 reaching the higher level in writing and in mathematics. The picture for Key Stage 2 is similar. Standards at the end of Year 6 were below average in 2008. Inspection evidence shows that this is also the case in the current year, although an increased proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 are working at the higher level in mathematics. The school's assessment information shows that the rate of progress made by pupils in writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 5 speeded up during the current year, showing the positive impact of a whole school drive for improvement in these subject areas. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils who are learning English as an additional language all achieve satisfactorily in Key Stages 1 and 2, as a result of the provision made for them in this inclusive school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development contributes well to their improving achievement. It is shown in their excellent behaviour, courtesy and positive attitudes to school. The school's nurturing ethos ensures that pupils grow in self-esteem and form good quality relationships with staff and with each other. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their satisfactory cultural development is supported through the religious education curriculum, which gives them an awareness of world faiths. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as play leaders or as proactive school councillors. They are active fund-raisers for charitable causes and this is helping them to be aware of the needs of others. They collaborate well in groups or with a partner in lessons. These important life skills are developed well, and this, together with their improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy, means that pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the future. They have a good awareness of personal safety and healthy lifestyle issues, reflected in the external awards the school has achieved. Although most pupils attend well, persistent problems remain and attendance is currently unsatisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are planned to meet the range of pupils' needs, activities engage their interest and pupils are responsive and apply themselves well. This good teaching and learning is starting to accelerate progress and raise standards. Pupils are given a clear understanding of the purposes of their learning tasks and of what they are expected to achieve in lessons. ICT is used well to make learning interesting. Happy relationships in the well-managed classrooms enable pupils to feel secure and ready to learn. Teaching assistants work in partnership with class teachers, making an effective contribution to all pupils' learning, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Assessment procedures have been revised and strengthened, so that teachers now have an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing in literacy and numeracy. This has made it possible to identify where support is needed and to target it with improved accuracy and to good effect.

Staff have begun to use individual learning targets to help pupils to understand how well they are progressing and what the next steps in their learning will need to be. This development is at an early stage, however, so it is too soon to measure its impact on achievement and standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets requirements and contributes satisfactorily to pupils' personal, social, health and academic development. In recent times, the school has correctly given high priority to improving pupils' basic skills and this is starting to bring about improvements in standards and achievement. Skills in ICT are developed well and pupils use computers with confidence in their work across subjects. Science lessons provide satisfactory opportunities for investigations and experiments. The curriculum is enriched well through visitors to school, educational visits, including residential trips and after-school activities. Pupils appreciate and enjoy sports coaching by specialist instructors. The school has recently started to review how it delivers the other subjects of the curriculum with a view to improving opportunities for pupils to practise and develop key skills through topics that bring subjects together. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this development on standards, however.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils. It supports its most vulnerable pupils very well, working sensitively with them and their families to help to tackle the barriers to learning they may be facing. Pupils are confident that adults are readily on hand to help with any problems that arise and this makes them feel secure. Those who have additional learning needs or are learning English as an additional language are supported well. The school liaises effectively with external agencies to promote pupils' progress, health and well-being and complies with current government requirements for safeguarding. The quality of the academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory overall and pupils are given good verbal feedback in lessons. The school tracks pupils' progress carefully and uses the information gained to target extra support where it is needed. Staff recognise that marking practice needs to be more consistent to ensure that pupils are always given clear advice about how to improve their work. Determined measures are being taken to improve attendance, through the use of positive incentives and through working with families for whom regular attendance is a problem, but these have not yet been successful in all cases.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher's clear vision for taking the school forward is shared by governors and staff at all levels. Although a good start has been made through the establishment of effective procedures to track pupils' progress, systems for evaluating how well the school is doing are in need of further development. Subject leaders have begun to help ensure the good quality of provision, but evaluations are still largely carried out by the headteacher. Governors have very recently begun to take on a monitoring role. Although this has begun to increase their capacity to hold the school to account and act as its critical friend, the development is at too early a stage for its full impact to be felt. Whole-school improvement targets are challenging and aspirational and leaders identify and plan appropriate actions to achieve them. A team

ethos enables staff to share and develop their skills and to try out new ways of working with increasing confidence. The school addresses community cohesion satisfactorily through a good range of partnerships that promote pupils' health and well-being, through its activities in the community and the parish, and through its links with Sure Start and with other schools in the locality. The school is inclusive and promotes equal opportunities well. Partnerships with parents are developed well through regular communications and family learning opportunities which support parents' involvement in their children's learning.

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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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	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	4
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	3

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?	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**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. As you know, I came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. I found that the school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education. These are some of the best things I discovered about the school.

- The school is improving and you are starting to make more rapid progress in your learning. Keep up the good work!
- Your teachers make lessons interesting and this is helping you to improve your skills, especially in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are caring and thoughtful young people.
- The grown-ups in school look after you well.

There is still work to be done to make St James the best school it can possibly be. I have asked the headteacher and the staff to continue the drive to raise standards and achievement across the school. I have asked them to do this by:

- ensuring that when your work is marked you are always given clear advice on what you need to do to improve
- working with you on your individual learning targets, so that you will know how well you are doing and what the next steps in your learning will need to be
- improving the ways they check on teaching and the curriculum to make sure that everything they are doing is helping all of you to achieve as well as you possibly can
- helping you to improve your attendance, so that no-one misses out on coming to school without a very good reason.

You can help by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future.