

# St James Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121882
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327590
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rajinder Harrison

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	172
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	60
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stafford Young
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Amery
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 September 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	St James' Street Daventry NN11 4AG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01327 702783
<b>Fax number</b>	01327 702488

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

the rate of progress for all pupils and the impact of the school's strategies to narrow the gap between boys and girls

the apparent decline in standards in 2008

pupils' personal development and well-being, and whether pupils have the guidance they need to know how well they are doing and how to improve their work

the effectiveness of leadership and management and the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in raising standards

the quality of provision and care in the out-of-school club.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, sampling pupils' work, discussion with pupils, staff and the chair of governors, scrutiny of the school's documentation and assessment information, and inspection questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

This is a larger than average size infant school. While the majority of pupils are of White British origin, a small proportion is from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. These pupils' needs cover a wide range but are mainly speech and language, behavioural and moderate learning difficulties.

The school provides out of school care that extends from 07.30 to 09.00 and 15.15 to 18.00 for pupils aged four to eleven.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Under the good leadership of the headteacher, the school provides a good education for its pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive, a typical comment being, 'My child is thriving at St James. I feel we are definitely in partnership with the school to ensure children reach their potential. The school is very well led and maintains excellent links with the community.'

Pupils build well on the good start they make in Reception. Good teaching helps them make good progress and achieve well in Years 1 and 2. The increased focus on writing has seen an improvement in standards in this subject since the last inspection. Standards were above average in reading, writing and mathematics from 2005 to 2007. They fell slightly in 2008 but this dip is related to this particular year group. A significant minority of boys did not attain the higher levels in reading and writing, and the emotional and behavioural difficulties of a very small minority adversely affected their progress. While girls continue to perform better than boys, the gap is narrowing. New reading material and the introduction of themes such as space exploration and robots are helping boys to take a greater interest in reading and writing. As one boy said, 'I like writing about robots because one day I want to invent one of my own.' The school successfully targets higher achievers with appropriate challenge by inviting them to attend regular workshops to extend their skills, and encourages parents to join their children. Pupils who need additional help with their learning achieve well because they receive good support from well-trained support staff and the school's numerous volunteer helpers.

The school's welcoming atmosphere, including a warm reception from 'Spencer', the school's mascot, helps pupils feel safe and valued. The pupils' gym, 'Little Jimmies', provides exciting facilities for pupils to exercise and have fun and the 'Kaleidoscope' room is an excellent venue where pupils learn to explore their feelings and emotions. Pupils know they can go to staff if they are worried or upset. Most pupils attend school regularly. The school continues to encourage parents to take fewer holidays in term time. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They behave well and are kind and considerate to others. They play together well and clearly enjoy all that the school has to offer. They have an excellent understanding of the local and wider world community and the need to help others. They raise funds for charity and are involved in recycling and other community events. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and what they need to do to remain safe. One Year 1 pupil explained to another not to run 'because you might bump into something and hurt yourself'. The before-and after-school clubs give those who participate excellent opportunities to socialise with older pupils and develop confidence and independence within a very caring environment.

Teaching is good throughout the school. Improved assessment procedures are beginning to provide teachers with more detailed information about the progress of individual pupils and groups. This is because the recent introduction of relevant computer systems is helping staff to evaluate data more effectively. Consequently, the good monitoring procedures already established are becoming even more rigorous. Teachers generally involve pupils well in lively question and answer sessions and pupils respond enthusiastically. Their response is even better when they explore and discover for themselves. Teachers plan well for most pupils, but occasionally, the work is either too hard or too easy for some, and consequently not all pupils make the progress they should. Progress is also not as good when teachers occasionally spend too long directing pupils, causing a few to struggle with maintaining interest and concentration.

The good curriculum provides a variety of exciting activities to interest all ages and abilities. Recent improvements include adopting themes and topics that pupils find relevant and interesting. It is supported well by a range of additional activities, visits, visitors, special days and 'sleep-overs'.

Care, support and guidance arrangements are good. Systems and procedures to protect pupils are secure and robust. Teaching assistants know the pupils well and offer good support and individual guidance. Outstanding relationships with outside agencies ensure that pupils who need additional support receive the help and guidance they need to achieve as well as their classmates. Teachers set pupils individual targets and involve parents in this process. However, pupils do not always understand these targets and have too few opportunities to check their work against these targets. The marking, while done regularly, is not always clear enough for pupils to understand what they have done well or how to improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. The leadership team, strongly led by the headteacher, involves all staff and governors in strategic planning. The deputy headteacher has an excellent grasp of the need to use tracking and assessment data to set targets that are more challenging and to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. The monitoring of teaching is done regularly but not enough emphasis is given to checking that all pupils work to their full potential. The governing body, again strongly led, monitor the school's performance well and check that agreed priorities are followed through successfully. Excellent links with local businesses, local schools and schools abroad show that the school strives to provide pupils with good opportunities to be valuable young citizens. Raising standards has high priority and improvements since the last inspection show that leaders have a good capacity to improve the school further. As the governors said, 'We want to make the improvements necessary to be an outstanding school.'

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children start school with skills that are broadly as expected. Their language and literacy skills are generally weaker than other areas. Good teaching helps them achieve well and attain above average standards at the end of the EYFS in all areas but their writing. Adults pay considerable attention to children's well-being and consequently children are extremely happy and confident. Although still relatively new in school, most work happily with others and respond very enthusiastically during class discussions. Excellent liaison with parents is evident in the way parents praise the school for helping their children settle so quickly, making comments such as, 'My child has just started and loves it.' Parents are very confident they can discuss any concerns with staff because 'everyone is so approachable'.

Children thoroughly enjoy the many imaginative activities that are organised extremely well. Staff make excellent use of all the spaces inside and out for children to explore freely. Independent tasks are balanced carefully with those that staff direct. Early assessments identify those children who need additional support and staff assess all children closely by watching and talking to them about their work. Good leadership is reflected in the way all staff are involved in planning and teaching. Developing children's language and literacy skills is a priority and children are sensitively guided to these activities even if they find them challenging. Occasionally, the more able children are not challenged enough.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching to make sure teachers match work accurately to the needs of pupils of all abilities.
- Set clear targets for pupils and ensure that they have the guidance they need to know what they have to do to achieve these targets and improve their work.

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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?	1
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?	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?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	1
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**

16 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St James Infant School, Daventry NN11 4AG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and this letter is to tell you some important things we found out while we were with you.

You go to a good school. We liked these things best.

- You make a good start in the Reception class because you have exciting and interesting things to do and lovely things to play with.
- You work hard and do well in your work.
- Your behaviour is good and you really care for each other and for people in other parts of the world.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy, and 'Little Jimmies' is brilliant for your keep fit activities.
- All adults in the school make sure you are well looked after.
- Your teachers listen carefully to what you have to say and prepare interesting lessons. In addition, teachers and all the other helpers support you well with your work.
- The curriculum, that is, all the things that your teachers plan for you to do, including lessons, after-school clubs, visitors, visits, special events and the 'sleep-overs', is good and encourages you to learn interesting things.
- Your headteacher and other people who help run your school do a good job in making sure you are well prepared for the future.
- The before-and after-school clubs that some of you go to are really good and we saw you doing a lot of interesting activities there and making good friends.

Every school, even one as good as yours, has things that could be better. We want your teachers to make sure they always give you work you need to achieve your best. In addition, we want your teachers to give you targets that you understand and mark your work so that you know what you have done well and what you need to do to improve your work.

With very best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison Lead inspector