

St James CEVA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122035
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327626
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Timothy Bristow HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	370
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	Hilary Spenceley
Headteacher	Julie Barke
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Harleston Road Northampton NN5 7AG
Telephone number	01604 751475
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is above average in size. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is above average. This year the majority entered the Early Years Foundation Stage speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school has designated special provision for ten pupils with behaviour, social and emotional problems. Five places are for pupils from within the school and five from other local schools. The school benefits from pre-school provision on site that is managed privately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The dedicated headteacher, staff and governing body, supported by the local authority and the diocese, have successfully improved the provision and the outcomes for pupils so that the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The achievement of pupils is now satisfactory. Progress has accelerated and is now satisfactory because teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall. The rapid pace of development shows the school's capacity for improvement is good.

Results from assessments in 2008 show that standards attained overall were well below average. However, they are rising and in some years such as Year 6 they are now broadly average. School information shows that at Key Stages 1 and 2 the proportion of pupils attaining expected levels is now closer to the average. However, the achievement of more able pupils is not as good as that of others; the number attaining the higher levels is lower than it could be.

The personal development and well-being of pupils have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The behaviour and attitude of pupils are good. This is underpinned by good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Most pupils are considerate and caring towards each other. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning and cooperate well together. Most pupils have a responsible attitude to their health and are developing a healthy lifestyle well. The school provides a caring and nurturing environment in which most pupils are happy and feel safe. Attendance has until recently been below average. The school has worked with great determination to overcome this and the procedures are now so effective that the attendance rate has risen considerably and is now average. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, for example by mentoring and translating for pupils who speak English as an additional language and have recently arrived in school. Pupils have a satisfactory preparation for education in secondary school.

Teaching and learning have improved considerably because of the determination of the teachers and school leaders to improve provision. Consequently, a greater proportion of lessons are now good and some are outstanding. Teaching is satisfactory overall because the improvements that have been adopted are still insufficiently embedded in some lessons so that the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the school. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Pupils report that they appreciate a much wider range of enrichment activities and after school clubs that add enjoyment to their education. The good care, guidance and support are characterised by an excellent inclusion team that enables a large number of pupils from different backgrounds to settle happily into school, fostering their good personal development and well-being and improved achievement.

Leadership is now satisfactory. Leadership at all levels has strengthened and monitoring and evaluation procedures have ensured that the school is well aware of weaknesses in its work. However, the school development plan does not sufficiently enable school leaders to evaluate the success of initiatives through measuring the impact of changes to provision on the outcomes for pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the Reception class, the development of skills for the great majority of them is well below expectations in all areas of learning, and in communication, language and literacy it is exceptionally low. Consistently good teaching moves children's learning on at a good pace in most areas of learning. However, despite this rapid progress, by the time they leave the Reception classes the children have skills in communication, language, literacy and mathematical calculation that are well below what is typical for their age. Parents are delighted with the progress their children are making and appreciate the way staff involve them in their learning. For example, parents reported that the 'Stay and Read' sessions gave them confidence to support reading at home. 'This is a great way to start the day,' said one father during this valuable time.

Children move independently from one activity to another and they are happy to approach staff for assistance. The classroom environment inside and outside is stimulating and children explore, participate, share and have fun trying out all the well planned activities. The inspection found that the welfare of all children is good, as is children's personal, social and emotional development which is a high priority area for the school's learning programme. At the time of the inspection all staff fully embraced the values of keeping children happy, safe and secure. Leadership is strong and well supported by a very effective team. There is effective monitoring and reviewing and staff build successfully on the good practice to ensure every child can succeed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that a greater proportion of more able pupils attain higher standards.
- Ensure that the school's improvements to teaching, for example by matching work accurately to pupils' abilities, are consistently applied in all lessons.
- Sharpen up the school development plan so that the school leaders are clear about how they can measure the success of improvements and so that the headteacher can hold staff to account for their work.

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

In the past the school has not been able to capitalise on the good start children receive in the Reception classes. Progress was slow so that by the end of Year 2 standards were exceptionally low. Recently progress has accelerated. This year in reading and writing it has been good and in mathematics it has been satisfactory. In Years 3 and 4, progress has also accelerated and is now satisfactory. This means that standards no longer decline, but are maintained in mathematics. In reading and writing the gap between the school's standards and national expectations is beginning to close. Unvalidated results for 2008 show that standards at the end of Year 6 were well below average and that over the key stage progress was too slow. This year the progress of pupils in Years 5 and 6 has been good. School assessment information and the work in lessons show that standards have risen and they are now broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, in both Key Stages 1 and 2, few pupils are attaining the

higher levels which is depressing standards overall. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language is often faster than their peers because of the expertise demonstrated by the teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils who find English and mathematics lessons difficult make progress that is similar to other groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak enthusiastically about it. They respond very positively to opportunities for reflection and a keen sense of fairness means they enjoy helping those less fortunate than themselves, for example by organising charity fundraising events. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of right and wrong and show caring attitudes towards others and for the environment. School council representatives are democratically elected and take their responsibilities seriously. A small minority presents challenging behaviour, but these pupils are very well supported so they can be increasingly integrated into lessons without adversely affecting the learning of others. Pupils report that they feel safe. Bullying and racism are rare and dealt with quickly if they happen. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of healthy eating habits and understand the importance of regular exercise. Large numbers take part in extra-curricular sporting activities. Standards achieved in English, mathematics and information and communication technology provide an adequate grounding for the next stage of pupils' education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

All staff enjoy good relationships with the pupils, value their views and treat them fairly. This helps all the pupils to develop in self-confidence and be prepared to have a go at answering teachers' questions and tackle the tasks and activities given them. A good feature of the teaching, which helps pupils in their work, is the way teachers give pupils strategies for working to help them remember and to be successful. For example, in mathematics, the same five step method to solve word problems is used throughout the school, at different levels of difficulty. Pupils remember what to do and use this guidance to complete tasks. The teaching assistants provide good levels of support for individuals and groups of pupils inside and outside the classrooms.

Teachers' marking is now effective and the marking codes are consistently used across the school. Pupils reported that they found the marking helpful in letting them know how well they have worked and what they need to do next. Teaching is satisfactory rather than better because the many recent improvements are not sufficiently embedded in all lessons. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning across the school is inconsistent. In some lessons the pace of learning for some groups of pupils is too slow because work is not accurately pitched at the correct level for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum that is well enhanced with good enrichment through the numerous clubs that the school offers, the visits out of school, and the visitors that come into school. One parent wrote, 'The visit from the poet John Foster was fantastic...my

son came home reciting poetry and is now just as likely to choose to read a poetry book as he would a story or a nonfiction book.'

Teachers are taking the necessary steps to enhance the curriculum through the introduction of links between subjects. For example, in Year 6, pupils are studying the flooding of Northampton in 1998 in history. In English lessons, they produce reports of the flooding on the computer by analysing local newspapers. Good attention is paid to learning about the worldwide community, too. Art and physical education (PE) are strengths of the curriculum. The school uses PE well to raise pupils' self-esteem. There is an effective programme of personal, social and moral education in which pupils are taught how to stay safe and become responsible members of the community. The school is working hard to improve the curriculum for English and mathematics, but it does not yet ensure consistent progress of pupils of different abilities from year to year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very supportive and caring ethos is appreciated by pupils and parents. The school has a good understanding of the context in which it works. Vulnerable pupils are effectively identified and very well supported. Pupils appreciate the chance to express any concerns anonymously through 'worry boxes'. The work of the designated special provision is excellent. Pupils who present challenging behaviour thrive because of the expertise and compassion demonstrated by the team. The school benefits from strong links with external agencies to support the work of many different groups of pupils. It also benefits from the pre-school provision on site because the children who transfer into the Reception classes are already familiar with the school so are better prepared for learning than others. At the time of the inspection, procedures for safeguarding and health and safety met statutory requirements. Satisfactory tracking procedures allow the school to quickly identify any groups of pupils who are not making expected progress. An adequate range of intervention strategies and good support from teaching assistants are used to help these pupils progress. The school caters very well for those pupils who speak English as an additional language and, as a result, they settle quickly and have full access to the curriculum. The breakfast club is popular with the children, giving those who attend a very good start to the day by preparing them well for learning in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership team has strengthened considerably since the previous inspection. The senior leadership team and subject leaders demonstrate that they are now well equipped to drive forward the work of the school. Procedures for monitoring the work of the school have strengthened, leading to the many improvements in provision and the acceleration in pupils' progress. The headteacher is rightly aware that she needs to ensure that school leaders are held to account for their work. However, while the school development plan accurately identifies school priorities for improvement, it does not sufficiently enable her to evaluate the success of the work of others in relation to the outcomes of pupils. Community cohesion is at the heart of the work of the school. It works successfully to integrate parents and pupils from many backgrounds into the life of the school, promoting harmony in the local community, and ensuring pupils are well prepared for life in multicultural Britain. Governance has strengthened considerably since the last inspection and is now good. Strong leadership has ensured that

governors conscientiously carry out their responsibilities to hold the school to account for its work. A very large majority of parents support the work of the school which now offers satisfactory value for money.

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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	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?	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	3
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	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?	2

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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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**

12 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St James CEVA Primary School, Northampton NN5 7AG

Thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We felt very welcome. If you remember, we came to look at the work that you were doing and to talk to you and your teachers. We enjoyed meeting you and thought you were friendly and polite. Most of you are very well behaved. We were particularly impressed at how kind and considerate you are, particularly to the many children that regularly start school throughout the year. You try hard in lessons and you are doing much better in English and mathematics this year. You appreciate and enjoy taking part in the wide range of exciting and interesting activities that the school provides. We were very pleased to see that more of you are now coming to school every day. We think that you take your responsibilities to the school and to the wider community seriously and your contribution is valued.

Your headteacher, all of the staff and school governors are successfully working very hard to make your lessons better and to help you to learn more quickly. Considering everything, we decided that your school now provides you with a satisfactory education.

To make things even better, we have asked the school to do the following.

- Help those of you who find lessons easy to do even better than you are now.
- To make sure that all your lessons are good ones.
- To make sure that the school has a good plan to make your education even better and check on how it is improving.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard in lessons and by coming to school every day.

Yours faithfully

Tim Bristow Her Majesty's Inspector