

St James CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125163
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328301
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter McGregor

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	416
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	Mr Chris Chinn
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Workman
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grotto Road Weybridge KT13 8PL
Telephone number	01932 851 762
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St James is a larger than average primary school. An above average proportion of pupils join and leave the school at other than the usual times. About three quarters of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, mostly Other White, Mixed, and Asian or Asian British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is a little below average, and the same is true of those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An above average number have statements of special educational needs. Additional educational needs are mainly moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties, and physical disabilities. The school provides Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in the Reception classes. A privately run club is available to look after pupils after the end of the school day.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St James is a good school which has improved greatly since the last inspection. Pupils are making good progress in their work. Those with English as an additional language, learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or statements of special educational needs, do as well as their peers. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They have adopted extremely healthy lifestyles and appreciate the importance of their physical activities. Pupils know that they can express their views through the school council and that those views will be listened to and acted upon. They feel safe. Infrequent instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. The range of extra-curricular activities available is excellent. Nearly half the pupils are involved in sports clubs. Expectations of pupils' conduct are high, which results in good and sometimes outstanding behaviour. Staff model appropriate attitudes through the Christian values they promote and the excellent pastoral care they provide.

Pupils' standards on entry into Reception classes vary considerably from year to year, ranging from those typical of their age group to below what is expected. This characteristic, combined with the numbers joining and leaving at unusual times, has resulted in a marked fluctuation in the overall standards that pupils attain from year to year. The school is now fully subscribed and pupil mobility is reducing. The current cohort of children in Reception entered the school with levels of knowledge and skills in line with what is usually expected for their age group. They have made good progress and are expected to reach above the expected levels by the end of the year. Attainment is broadly average in Year 2, and below average in Year 6. Data on pupils' individual achievements, however, show clearly that the progress they make from their different starting points is good throughout the school.

Teaching is good, with a strong focus on good relationships, and clear learning intentions shared with the pupils. Pupils' progress is restricted on some occasions when teaching falls short of the normal practice in the school, particularly in the pace of lessons and expectations of what will be achieved. Pupils like the good curriculum, which is broad and relevant, and value the many visits and visitors. Grouping of pupils in classes, based on their prior knowledge and understanding, leads to good matching of work to their varying needs. Resources for the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) are limited, restricting the extent to which these important skills can be planned into the learning of a range of subjects. The pupil tracking system enables staff to check individuals' progress effectively.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads the school very effectively setting a clear direction, well supported by a complementary senior team. Subject leaders work closely and effectively together, responding very well to the drive to improve standards. The school works very closely with external agencies and local schools for the benefit of pupils. All pupils are valued, from whatever culture or creed, a point that parents are keen to make. Governors know and support the school well. Good improvements made over the past two years indicate that the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year. Currently, children are making good progress in relation to their starting points and are expected to exceed the expected levels in all areas of learning. They enjoy coming to school, and make particularly

good progress in personal development. Good leadership uses rigorous systems, especially for tracking progress, so that children's individual needs are met and they are well cared for. Teaching is good. Staff are aware of the need to accelerate learning in writing. It is evident that a focus on letters and sounds throughout Reception and Year 1 is having a good impact on all aspects of the children's language. A good balance between teacher-led and free-choice activities encourages children to learn and to engage with each other. Children greatly enjoyed having grandparents talk about their childhoods. Adults take good care to introduce children to the world of school in a way that keeps them safe, with more formal risk assessments for activities now being introduced. Children's use of the outdoor play area is more restricted than the school would wish. Although well equipped it is awkwardly shaped, so staff have to work hard to maintain supervision of all the children. Parents are kept well informed by staff, and speak highly of the provision for their children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve ICT resources and utilise these effectively to enhance pupils' skills in using computers to support their learning.
- Improve the consistency of teaching expectations to ensure that pupils make good or better progress in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' progress and achievement are good. Despite the school's efforts to maintain consistently good work, standards fluctuate from year to year and across classes, because of pupil mobility and pupils' differing capabilities. Some year groups, for example, have a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or statements of special educational needs. Standards are currently average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6, which nevertheless represents good progress in relation to these cohorts' starting points. Mathematics, reading and science standards are higher than those for writing. Reading has improved in all years through a strong focus on individual work, for example providing before-school sessions for pupils in need of support. Pupils' creative and technical writing skills have been improved by making work more relevant and interesting, and through raising expectations. This is proving successful for reluctant writers, often boys, who previously underachieved. A current focus on numeracy and problem-solving initiatives in mathematics is helping to raise standards, especially through effective use of starter activities in lessons. Science standards are also being lifted since an internal review of provision resulted in more practical investigative work. Sessions provided to teach parents how to help their children with their homework are having a good impact on pupils' achievement. The school has met its challenging targets, which vary greatly from year to year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their enjoyment of school stems from the very good relationships they have with staff, the interesting opportunities for learning given in lessons, and the many clubs they can join. Pupils show excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and appreciate the very good quality food provided, including fruit at break time for younger pupils. Many pupils enjoy the opportunity to represent their school in a wide range of sports fixtures. Pupils' attendance is good. Their conduct in assemblies is excellent and they generally behave well around the school and in class.

Occasionally, a few pupils misbehave, but timely use of school systems minimises the effect on others. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, for example by singing to older people and raising money for charities. Participation in a mathematics challenge linked with a local secondary school has had a positive impact on their numeracy development. They have very good understanding of world issues, such as the careful use of energy resources, which they support through logging school usage of energy and working to become an Eco-School. Pupils develop their understanding of world faiths and cultures through lessons by celebrating the backgrounds of their peers, from parents who talk about their faiths, and from visits to churches and other religious buildings. Pupils enthusiastically point out the wall in the entrance area devoted to pupils' messages, written in a wide range of languages. Pupils are proud of what they do through their school council, for example arguing for and getting better kit for physical education lessons. In that they are articulate, self-confident and good at number work, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Their ICT and writing skills, as the school is aware, are not yet of a similar standard.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress. A typical lesson is well structured, with a quick review of previous learning, planned development of new skills and knowledge, and a reflection on what has been learned. Teachers' good subject expertise is apparent in the way they respond knowledgeably to pupils' questions, which builds their confidence. Pupils behave well because they engage fully in lessons. Often, questioning is perceptive and focused and makes pupils think carefully before answering. For example in science, when testing the strength of wet paper towels the teacher asked, 'How can you make the test fair?'. Teachers devise group work appropriate for different abilities, so that all pupils have access to learning. In the setted classes in literacy and numeracy, where pupils are arranged according to their assessed prior knowledge, work is effectively matched to needs. Pupils told inspectors how much they appreciated these arrangements. When available, teaching assistants are often deployed well with clear directions as to their roles, but practice is not consistently good. The pace of lessons is not great enough when staff do not expect sufficient work from pupils, for example when they are asked to complete tasks without specified timescales. Most marking is regular with some very good examples of comments that guide pupils towards improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from a good, balanced curriculum with a strong focus on the development of values, so that attitudes to school and to learning are good. The school places high importance on raising standards through daily literacy and numeracy sessions, and appropriate allocations of time for all subject areas. Planning is good, promoting continuity in learning from year to year and making work relevant and interesting. Weekly computer classes enable pupils to develop skills such as the use of spreadsheets, word processing and presenting material using commercial software, but they have few opportunities to use these skills in a range of subjects. Many good opportunities to promote pupils' health, safety and well-being are provided. Two well-organised residential visits, in Years 4 and 6, enabled pupils to enjoy adventurous play and social interaction as well as develop their knowledge of the Romans and geography. Each class benefits from a visit or a visitor each term, for example travelling on a double-decker bus

to the transport museum in Year 2. An outstanding range of clubs, from Spanish and gardening to judo and hockey, are all popular and much appreciated by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high-quality pastoral care provided is seen in the strong concern of all staff for pupils' welfare and safety. Whenever they join the school and from whatever country or background they come, pupils are welcomed into St James and made to feel valued for the contribution each can make. Good arrangements for safeguarding all pupils are in place. Great importance is given to promoting values, rights and responsibilities, which are displayed prominently around the school and discussed in assemblies. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as others because of suitable additional support from teaching assistants and external experts, such as speech and language teachers. Pupils' good attendance reflects the effective measures taken to reduce absence. The promotion of healthy living is exemplified by the encouragement of walking or 'scooting' to school. The school links up with the local community and other local schools to extend learning opportunities, such as a visit to a special school for pupils in Year 4. The efficient pupil progress tracking system for literacy and numeracy enables the school to identify where achievements are not as expected and to provide good support and guidance. This system has not included science and ICT until recently, but individual targets in these areas are now being set and progress is being monitored against them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's success is due in no small measure to a positive ethos, where the success of both staff and pupils is celebrated and enjoyed. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the impact of the 'values curriculum' that encourages them to strive for personal and academic improvement. Personal, subject and whole-school targets have been reviewed to provide greater challenge and this is increasing the rate of progress. Development planning has recently been improved to include success criteria, responsibilities and timescales. The effective actions being taken, such as those promoting higher standards of writing, arise from accurate self-evaluation. Senior and middle leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in provision through their regular monitoring of planning, teaching and marking. Tackling the inconsistencies identified, for example in teachers' expectations, has not yet been entirely successful. Good local links, in particular with the church, have a good impact on pupils' understanding of the community beyond the school gates. Leaders ensure that international community is valued through pupils from other countries sharing celebration of their own cultures with their new friends. A successful link is being developed with a school in Uganda. Value for money is good, with staff and resources well deployed. Money has already been allocated to purchase additional computer facilities. Supportive governors are well informed about the life of the school. The chair of governors is developing the role of the governing body in offering challenge to the school on its outcomes. Parents support the school strongly, believing that its safe and stimulating atmosphere increases their children's progress.

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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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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?	2
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**

11 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James CofE Primary School, Weybridge, KT13 8PL

Thank you for your friendly welcome to St James. We enjoyed talking with you and appreciate how much you enjoy your life at school and how you get on very well together.

We agree with your headteacher that you are being provided with a good education and are making good progress in your work, all the way from Reception to Year 6. The standards you reach in English aren't quite as good as they are in mathematics and science. With your teachers' help you are working hard to improve, particularly in your writing. You all know how important it is to take part in lots of physical exercise and eat properly, in order to keep fit and healthy. You feel safe and almost always behave very well. The excellent range of clubs provided keeps many of you very busy, before and after school as well in the lunch break. You told us how much you enjoy these activities, the visits arranged for you, and the many visitors to the school.

You try hard and many of your lessons are interesting and challenging. We have asked the headteacher to help the staff make all your lessons as good as those. Teachers check your progress carefully and provide you with extra help if you are falling behind. The headteacher and governors are going to increase the number of computers available. Then you can all improve your ICT skills and use them to help you learn in other subjects.

Your headteacher is leading the school very well and is supported by the governors and all the staff. We wish you every success as you carry on trying hard to do even better.

Yours faithfully

Peter McGregor

Lead Inspector