

St James C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103401
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336075
Inspection dates	15-16 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayant Gunchala
Headteacher	Mark Lanyon
Date of previous school inspection	11-12 July 2007
School address	Sandwell Road Handsworth Birmingham B21 8NH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, including scrutinising pupils' work, looking at data on pupil progress, visiting break and lunchtimes, checking safeguarding procedures and reading 69 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the reasons for variations in the progress made by different pupils in writing and mathematics
- how well the school meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and Pakistani boys
- the impact of the rate of pupils' attendance on their achievement and future prospects.
- the effectiveness of school leaders in raising achievement for all pupils.

Information about the school

St James's is a large primary school with pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds and different ethnic groups. The largest minority is of Asian or Asian British origin with a small minority from Black or Black British backgrounds. The school is multi-faith and multi-cultural with no one faith or culture predominating. A significant minority of pupils do not speak English at home. Many pupils live in areas of high deprivation. The school has attained the Healthy Schools Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Leading Parent Partnership Award. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high and mobility is high. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St James's is a good school, with a bright and welcoming environment, where pupils thrive and grow into increasingly confident learners. Their enthusiasm for doing well and taking part is due to good teaching. Supported by thorough assessment and a well organised curriculum, it ensures that pupils make good progress through the school, especially in English, mathematics and science. Good progress starts in Reception where, from a low skills base on entry, the school helps pupils to build their learning systematically. As a result, attainment in most year groups is now close to average.

This has come about through a strong, effective drive by senior leaders to raise standards. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and has led to significant improvements, especially in the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and Pakistani boys. The school's capacity to improve is good because school leaders collect and share extensive data on pupil progress. This has led to a successful focus by all staff on raising achievement.

Pupils of all abilities and ethnic groups make equally good progress overall, including those with special educational needs. However, in several classes there remains some underachievement for a few low ability pupils in mathematics. The school has identified that these pupils struggle with mathematical language. In addition, the rate of progress in writing is markedly different between classes. The school has agreed that shortcomings in setting targets for pupils and a lack of consistency in the way writing lessons are planned, taught and marked, contribute to this.

Pupils feel very safe and know that occasional unkind or difficult behaviour will be dealt with effectively by staff. As one commented, 'There are lots of friendly people in this school.' The quality of care, guidance and support given to all pupils, especially those who have additional needs, is good. It ensures that pupils are kept safe and are able to develop well personally and academically, regardless of their personal circumstances or abilities. Despite this, attendance for a significant few is inadequate. The school has worked hard to improve attendance, with some individual successes. Nevertheless, too many parents take their children for extended leave of absence during term time, while some parents do not support their children in attending regularly. This means that the ability of these pupils to keep up and to prepare for their next school is more limited.

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The rich curriculum provides ample opportunity for pupils to develop personal skills, including a strong understanding of how to lead a healthy life. They are particularly keen on taking exercise and playing sport. Pupils also demonstrate an outstanding spiritual and cultural awareness, showing a deep understanding and respect for people who are different to themselves. Their appreciation of the daily wonders they learn about is fostered exceptionally well by staff. This is why pupils feel so positive about school, themselves and each other. Pupils contribute well to their community. For example, they take the lead in how school assemblies should run and are keen to identify and take part in regular fundraising. In addition, some attend the Young People's Parliament contributing views to local thinking.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Quicken the progress made by less able pupils in mathematics by increasing the focus within the next term on developing their mathematical language.
- Improve the consistency of progress made in writing between classes by:
 - strengthening the system used for setting targets for pupils and involving them more closely in reaching them
 - ensuring that the approach used in planning, teaching and marking pupils' writing tasks is consistent across the school.
- Raise levels of attendance by:
 - helping parents to understand more about the need to reduce extended term time leave of absence
 - finding ways to support a small group of pupils in their journey to school following more swiftly the systems laid down to improve attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning which takes place in an atmosphere of considerate and respectful behaviour. The standards that pupils reach by the end of Year 6 are broadly average, reflecting good achievement from their starting points, which were well below expectations for their age. This was evident in the lessons visited where learning was rapid throughout the school and pupils' improved their skills and knowledge in all subjects. This means that standards are rising. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology and science are equally well developed. Attainment on entry to Reception has risen recently though is still below that expected for the age. Progress has improved each year for the last three years although the amount of progress varies. It is most rapid in reading and slowest, for several classes, in writing. Pupils with special educational needs, the more able, and those from different ethnic groups make equally good progress. The school has quickly identified where there is underachievement in mathematics and writing, and has begun to develop strategies to address this.

Pupils have appropriate tasks to help them develop the skills required for working independently. They are competent in using computers to research information and

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prepare presentations. In addition, pupils are mature and responsible in the way they share their ideas with their peers and explore problems with their 'talk partners'. Pupils' good learning and skills are further developed through the enthusiastic part they play in contributing to the work of the school and community. For example, they act as play leaders and run the anti-bullying week each year. In this way they learn how to take responsibility and work in teams, developing many of the skills necessary for their futures. For those, whose attendance is poor, the attitudes and skills needed to support their future well-being are not as well developed. The spiritual and cultural awareness of pupils is fostered and developed so well that they approach learning and living with others in a spirit of enthusiasm and understanding which sets an excellent example to others.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching in all age groups provides interesting and varied activities to engage and enthuse pupils. Consequently, pupils want to do well. Children in Reception are helped to settle quickly and teachers get to know their skills in all the areas of learning quickly enough to begin moving them forward at an early stage. Pupils are keen to discuss the many subjects they enjoy such as mathematics and physical education. Teachers use rigorous assessment and accurate knowledge of pupils' attainment well to provide a clear basis from which to plan lessons and ensure that good progress is made. For several pupils their learning is enhanced by the skilled support provided. Pupils have individual targets which they generally find helpful.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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However, sometimes these are not specific enough to ensure that pupils are clear about what they need to do to progress in each lesson. This leads to variations between classes in the rate of progress being made for some groups, particularly in written work.

The strong and innovative curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their interests. These include art weeks, residential trips, numerous visitors, sport fixtures, productions and activities to understand budgeting. Curriculum provision is improving to engage a very small group of boys who do not always make as much progress as their peers. There is extensive, effective work undertaken to educate pupils about different cultures and beliefs. Work in many subjects, such as art, music, geography, religious education and history lead to displays celebrating the variety of different ethnic groups within school and around the world. The key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are embedded well in the planning of all subjects.

The school has worked strenuously to make sure that each pupil is valued and has the same opportunities as everyone else. Despite several initiatives, attendance is not improving enough to secure good learning for a small minority. Those with special educational needs receive well organised support, and their progress has increased since the school improved the way teachers and teaching assistants support learning in the classroom. The care and information provided is of high quality, involves all staff and good liaison with outside agencies and parents. This ensures that all pupils, regardless of the difficulties they may be experiencing, are supported well at school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have an ambitious vision for the school which is shared by all staff and has resulted in year on year improvements to the progress pupils make and rising standards. The targets set are challenging and have contributed to a rise, for example in boys' achievement, which is now good. In addition, effective self-assessment is used by school leaders, including governors, to set high expectations, improve teaching and learning and secure equal opportunities for pupils. There is no discrimination within the school because the success and well-being of all pupil groups is a core school value. School leaders also ensure that safeguarding

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procedures are effective.

The ability of subject leaders to secure consistency of approach and outcomes across the school is less well developed, but is improving. They recognise the need to encourage teachers to share and develop best practice in all classes, especially in writing.

School leaders have a particularly strong commitment to securing harmonious community relationships, not just within the school but in the wider community and further afield. This has resulted in the evident respect pupils show for each other's diverse cultures, backgrounds and beliefs and has reduced tensions that might possibly have arisen otherwise. Parents particularly appreciate this aspect of the school's work and the 'strong community ties.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter a warm and nurturing environment when they begin school. Close working with parents and pre-school providers secure a good start to the school year. Staff are very caring and establish positive relationships with children at an early stage. As a result, children settle quickly and clearly enjoyed coming to school after just two days. Staff are also effective in helping children to behave well, co-operate and be polite with one another. Good leadership and thorough assessment ensure that children make good progress from their starting points and recent improvements means that they now enter Year 1 with skills close to national average. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to keep expectations high and show considerable skill in encouraging language development. The

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curriculum is broad and engaging but Reception leaders recognise that the flow of learning between the classroom and outside is underdeveloped, and are working particularly to provide more opportunities for children to explore for themselves. The classrooms are bright and attractively organised so that children can already use many of the activities independently. They were particularly engrossed when using the computers, using different shapes to make a picture and preparing make believe food in the kitchen. Children were in awe as they toured the school getting to know where everything is, developing more confidence as they went.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents have a positive view of the school. They feel welcome at the school and typically think that, 'Anyone and everyone are very helpful.' Of those who felt able to comment the great majority were very positive. A very few expressed concerns on a wide range of issues. None expressed any significant concerns that could be supported by inspection findings. Parents particularly appreciate how much their children enjoy school and how they are kept safe. Almost all parents feel their child is making good progress. Parents commented upon the strong community ties and the support given to parents. They feel that, 'Children are encouraged to succeed.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James's Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 405 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	58%	29	41%	0	0%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	47	66%	23	32%	0	0%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	54%	29	41%	1	1%	1	1%
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	46%	35	49%	2	3%	1	1%
The teaching is good at this school	36	51%	32	45%	1	1%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	45%	35	49%	1	1%	1	1%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	38%	41	58%	1	1%	1	1%
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	32	45%	34	48%	0	0%	0	0%
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	46%	34	48%	2	3%	2	3%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	46%	32	45%	3	4%	0	0%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	41%	31	44%	2	3%	0	0%
The school is led and managed effectively	40	56%	27	38%	2	3%	0	0%
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	59%	24	34%	2	3%	0	0%

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James's Church of England Primary School, Birmingham, B21 8NH

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing your lessons. Your school is a good school with many interesting things going on, just as you described. Senior staff work hard to keep developing the school and, for this reason, your work is getting better each year. However, a few of you do not attend often enough and we have asked the school to look at ways of helping you to attend regularly.

Skilful teaching helps you to make good progress in your lessons. As a result, you do well particularly in reading. We like the way you really enjoy your lessons and always try to do your best. You told us that your teachers make lessons fun and interesting and we can see that they help you to do well. We have asked them, however, to make sure that the targets they set you are more detailed and change as soon as you need them to, so that you all make at least good progress in writing. We would also like writing taught in the same way in each class. We have also asked them to help more of you do well in mathematics by helping you understand mathematical words more easily. We are sure that you will discuss this with your teachers and help them by working hard and sharing your ideas.

The good range of lessons and activities provide many opportunities for you to contribute well to school life and the community. The responsibilities that you take on are heartening, for example, the way you look after each other, and act as play leaders in the playground. You were keen to tell us that the school keeps you very safe and looks after you very well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise and eating a healthy diet. Your behaviour is good, especially in the way you value learning. You show an outstanding understanding and respect for others, including those who have different beliefs and ways of living.

We think that this, alongside your mature attitudes to working with others, helps you to be suitably prepared for your next school and future lives.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Potheary
Lead inspector

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