

St James' Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115606
Local Authority	Gloucester
Inspection number	338619
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Gifford
Headteacher	Ian Williams
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They also talked to some parents who were present at the start and finish of the school day. They observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan, data on pupils' progress, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and a range of school policies. They also analysed questionnaires received from 61 parents and 113 pupils.

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

- pupils' attainment and the progress they make as they move up through the school
- how well the teaching takes account of the needs of groups and individuals
- how well teachers check the progress of different groups of pupils and inform them about what they need to do to improve their work
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in bringing about improvements in the outcomes for all pupils.

Information about the school

St James' is similar in size to other junior schools. Pupils come from a wide range of heritages. Just over a half of all pupils are of White British heritage and a large proportion are White and Black Caribbean or Asian. The proportion of pupils at the early stages of learning English is higher than is typically found. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning difficulties, is also above average. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is very high. Large numbers of pupils join or leave the school other than the usual times of the year. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008.

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

This is a good and rapidly improving school which serves its community well. One parent summed up the views of many by saying: 'The school now has a real pride in itself which the children also reflect.' Pupils achieve well, not just because teaching and learning are good and often excellent, but also because they are encouraged to see their potential and are given the self-confidence to work hard and aim high.

Consequently, pupils' personal development is outstanding. There is a corporate desire to provide the best for all pupils and a commitment to continue moving the school forward, building on a number of strengths. The key ones are:

- pupils' behaviour in class and around school is impeccable and they have a high regard for both their classmates and for the adults who work with them
- a very positive atmosphere permeates the school and relationships are exceptionally strong. This together with excellent care, guidance and support, results in happy learners
- all adults work together extremely well to ensure that all pupils, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, are able to take full advantage of all that the school has to offer
- pupils display an enviable generosity of spirit, support a range of charities and are always concerned to take care of the environment
- the exemplary pastoral care the school offers means that by the time pupils leave in Year 6 they are confident, well-rounded young people, ready to play their full part in the world beyond school.

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school in relation to their below average starting points, to reach standards that are at, and sometimes above, the national average. There is, however, some variability in attainment and progress in the core subjects. Standards are higher in mathematics and science than in English, where the rate of improvement has been slower. The school has worked tirelessly to improve the language skills of the high numbers of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Reading has improved considerably, but writing skills remain below average. Lessons are typified by enthusiasm, enjoyment, engagement and exemplary behaviour. Consequently, pupils are very well motivated, come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. Teachers mark books and set targets for improvement carefully and regularly. As a result, the advice teachers give to pupils as to how to improve their work is very effective and most pupils are clear as to the next steps in their learning. In a minority of lessons, learning is held back because teachers do not always ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to work independently and to talk about their findings nor do they always ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of

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what they have learnt in the lesson. Sometimes, tasks set in lessons do not provide maximum challenge for all pupils, particularly the high-flyers. The school has worked tirelessly to improve attendance which is now above average.

One reason for the school's success is the drive and ambition of the headteacher, which is shared by all staff and governors. He has brought a 'breath of fresh air' to the school, as one colleague commented, and has tackled the school's weaknesses with energy and passion. There is a strong sense of teamwork and pride in what has already been achieved, coupled with a total absence of complacency. School self-evaluation is accurate. Most importantly, the school knows exactly what to do further to sustain its journey of excellence and this, together with the successful action leaders have taken to ensure improvement since the last inspection, means the capacity to further improve is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress that pupils make in English in all years so that it matches that achieved in mathematics by:
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing and comprehension skills making sure that at the end of each English lesson, pupils have a clear idea of what they have learnt, whether they have fulfilled their personal objectives and what they need to do to improve them further.
- Build on current good practice to further improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better in the overwhelming majority of lessons in all year groups by:
 - making sure that there is a sharper match of work to pupils' different abilities
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The work seen by inspectors in lessons confirms the overall picture of good and improving progress, with pupils increasingly able to work at levels expected for their age as they move up the school. Progress was seen to be good for all groups of pupils, especially in mathematics and science, because teachers have high expectations and have rightly focused on developing pupils' curiosity and problem-solving skills. Progress is relatively slower in English because of the difficulty pupils have in explaining their ideas when they have read a text, which in turn inhibits their ability to write well. The school works very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who enter the school with particularly low levels of attainment. It also provides good support for those new to learning English. Detailed plans to support these groups, coupled with thoughtful deployment of learning assistants and timely interventions, ensure that they make similar progress to that of their classmates.

Pupils greatly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop very positive attitudes to

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learning. Relationships are happy and harmonious and support the calm and purposeful atmosphere observed by inspectors in all classes. They relish responsibility and this is shown through the mature attitude of the school council, the use of playground buddies and pupils' eager participation in imaginative and thought-provoking assemblies. A striking feature that the pupils displayed at all times was the caring way they look after each other. In discussions with pupils, the older ones made sure the younger ones had their chance to speak; the way pupils treat each other and speak to adults with such kindness and respect was a pleasure to witness. Pupils value the diversity of their community because there is a strong and pervasive emphasis on celebrating multicultural and cultural aspects in school and beyond. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is excellent. Pupils develop impressive social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. However, their average attainment in English and mathematics means that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stages of their lives.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

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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The quality of teaching and learning was seen to be good or better in the majority of lessons and none was inadequate. Typically, lessons are fast paced and fun. Teaching is lively, tasks and concepts are clearly explained, and activities are carefully designed to challenge the pupils to learn at a swift pace. Adults ask perceptive questions and these help pupils to think and use more varied vocabulary in their answers. In a particularly effective Year 6 numeracy lesson, where pupils were studying percentages, all groups of pupils made outstanding progress because of the teacher's imaginative methods; pupils were inspired to think of ways of disproving the teacher's way of converting a fraction to a percentage. Her very high expectations and her searching questions, spurred all to think and cooperate. Where teaching is less than effective, learning and progress are held back because:

'teachers do not plan adequately for the range of abilities in the class or build on pupils' prior knowledge, with the result that a minority of pupils are either not challenged enough or struggle to comprehend

'teachers sometimes talk too much which limits the time pupils are actively and independently learning, resulting in slower progress and less time for pupils to articulate and build upon what they have learnt by the end of the lesson.

The school has set up very thorough systems to check on pupils' progress and these are used very well to ensure that none is in danger of falling behind and to enable teachers to consistently set the next steps for each pupil's learning. They are also used well to identify strengths and areas for development in curriculum provision.

The curriculum contributes positively to pupils' good learning and outstanding personal development. Learning is meaningful because the school carefully plans themes with strong links between subjects. Visits and visitors significantly enhance pupils' understanding of the wider world. These, together with well supported, creative and educational activities outside the normal school day, make a valuable contribution to pupils' high levels of enjoyment.

Extremely close and watchful support for vulnerable pupils and highly effective partnerships with outside agencies ensure that the needs of these pupils are exceptionally well met. The school then ensures that exactly the right support is put in place to meet these different needs. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to support pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to learning English. There are very effective links with parents and access to a range of other local agencies, should the need arise. Attendance is above the national average due to the school's highly effective work to improve attendance and punctuality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>2</p>

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1
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How effective are leadership and management?

Since his appointment just over a year ago, the effective headteacher has embarked on a mission to take the school on a journey to excellence. He works tenaciously to improve pupils' educational opportunities and communicates his high expectations persuasively to staff. With strong support from his governing body and middle leaders, he has set a precise path for improvement based on accurate self-evaluation and embedding initiatives which have begun to make a positive difference to pupils' achievements. Leaders are quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils and are alert to situations where people need more advice and guidance. A climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. Consequently, teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress is accelerating. There is no hint of complacency and there is a determination from staff at all levels to sustain and build upon the many recent gains. In this way, the school promotes good equality for all pupils and makes sure there is no discrimination on any grounds.

The governing body fulfils all legal requirements and gives good attention to the welfare of pupils and staff with all safeguarding arrangements found to be very effective at the time of the inspection. It holds the school to account well for its work. Community cohesion is good. Leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that pupils are developing into caring citizens who respect and value the views of others and that a set of common, shared values is embedded in every child.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

The school and its headteacher clearly enjoy the confidence and support of those parents who returned the questionnaire. Almost all respondents felt that the school keeps pupils safe and helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. A number of individual comments reflected the improvement to the school since the appointment of the headteacher and the outstanding care, support and guidance given to pupils, particularly to those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to learning English. The inspectors totally agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James' Church of England Junior 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 144 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	67	20	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	72	17	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	48	30	49	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	46	29	48	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	59	23	38	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	43	31	51	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	34	36	59	1	2	0	0
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)	24	34	36	59	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	46	32	52	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	54	25	41	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	54	25	41	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	64	21	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	62	21	34	1	2	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 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

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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 pupil's 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.



20 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Church of England Junior School, Gloucester GL1 4JU

Thank you for the warm welcome and help you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to so many of you. We were really impressed with how polite and well behaved you are and how much you told us you enjoy school. It is clear that you go to a good school. Here are some of the things we found out that we thought you might like to share.

- Your personal development is outstanding. You behave impeccably around the school and in your classes and you look after each other so well. You relish working in groups and helping each other to learn and you readily help your classmates when they find things difficult.
- You make good progress as you move through the school and your achievement is getting better all the time. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach standards that are similar to those in most other schools. This is because your teachers teach you well and you also work very hard.
- Your teachers and other adults take excellent care of you. They make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of advice about how you can improve your work.
- Your excellent headteacher, the governors and all your other teachers know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to improve.

There are two things that I have asked the school to work on to help with this.

- It must make sure that far more of you make the same fast progress in English as you do in mathematics.
- Teachers must ensure that the work they plan for you is neither too easy nor too hard, and gives you opportunities to find things out for yourselves.

I am sure that you will help them by always working hard and aiming really high.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector

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