

St James C of E (VC) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124260
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340526
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert McNeil
Headteacher	Michelle Slymn
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
School address	Brook End Longdon Rugeley
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were visited and four teachers were observed. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. School documentation, including the school improvement plan, monitoring and evaluation reports, assessment records, pupils' work, safeguarding documentation and the recent reports of the School Improvement Partner were scrutinised. In total, 45 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed. The team also analysed 31 responses to the Key Stage 2 pupil survey, and 6 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

- the evenness of pupils' progress throughout the school
- how well pupils are involved in knowing how to improve their work
- the thoroughness of leadership including governance in identifying next steps for improvement and in taking action
- the developments needed to move the Early Years Foundation Stage to outstanding.

Information about the school

In this much smaller than average primary school, almost all pupils are White British. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. All classes, apart from the Reception class are made up of pupils from two year groups. There has been unavoidable disruption to staffing over the last two years, and a new headteacher was appointed in July 2009. The school has attained a number of awards including Sportsmark and the Financial Management Standard in Schools award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of St James Church of England Primary School is satisfactory. Strengths within its pastoral work ensure pupils develop positive attitudes to school. They have a secure understanding of right and wrong, and this contributes to their outstanding behaviour. Pupil survey returns confirm how much they enjoy learning, and how adults will always help them. They are extremely polite and welcome visitors into their school. They have a good sense of their local community and of the wider world and have a good awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and keep safe. Parents also think their children are safe within school. They value the work of the new headteacher and as one parent wrote, 'The new headteacher is making many positive changes to the school.'

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory although progress is inconsistent. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) is good and children get a good start to school life in this key stage. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, attainment is broadly average and current assessment information indicates that attainment will rise this year in English. In reading, mathematics and science progress is satisfactory, and sometimes good. Writing assessment information shows a varied picture and too few pupils attain the higher level in writing, in comparison with reading. This is because more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by their writing activities. Teaching is stronger in some classes than in others, but there is good practice evident throughout. Even so, there are lessons where activities are not well matched to pupils' needs, or are as challenging as they should be to engage more able pupils throughout all parts of the lesson. Pupils' work is marked regularly, and often there are supportive comments made. However, this is not consistent, and marking does not show pupils how to improve their work. Pupils say they are not always clear about how well they are learning.

The headteacher is aware of the unevenness of progress, and self-evaluation is accurate. There is a good understanding of strengths, and in response to weaknesses, the leadership has implemented a variety of actions. These include the introduction of pupil progress meetings, pupils knowing the expected learning of the lesson, and more rigorous tracking and target setting systems. These actions clearly focus on improving the quality of teaching and resulting pupil progress. There have been improvements, but there has been insufficient time to see the impact in all year groups. Also monitoring and evaluation activities, by all those with leadership responsibility, are not carried out as often as they should be, in order to provide an accurate picture of which actions are working well and which are not being adopted consistently by all staff. The school improvement plan, although satisfactory, is not a sharp enough tool to drive forward

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school improvement. The governing body has supported the new leadership well. It is now better informed about the quality of provision, although the responsibility of holding the school to account is only just developing. Taking all the positive factors together, the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of all pupils in writing, especially that of more able pupils by ensuring:
 - assessment information is used rigorously to plan activities that meet the needs of all pupils so that more able pupils receive challenging activities in lessons
 - pupils are provided with clear guidance about how to succeed in a lesson, and how to improve their work through oral and written feedback
 - teachers provide guided writing sessions for all ability groups within each class
 - half-termly meetings are held to check pupils' progress, then swiftly taking any necessary action and holding staff accountable for the progress of the pupils.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - agreeing a school improvement plan which provides clear guidance about key priorities, how and when actions will take place alongside rigorous evaluation of the impact of actions taken
 - ensuring regular monitoring and evaluation activities take place to check agreed practices are implemented
 - developing the governing body's role of challenging leadership at all levels about school improvement.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Above average attendance, confirm pupils enjoy learning. Pupils interviewed speak enthusiastically about their helpful teachers, good friends and the interesting work they are given. In lessons, pupils' outstanding behaviour supports a positive classroom ethos. Pupils listen carefully to ideas, answering questions enthusiastically. During the inspection, this was seen in all year groups. For example, in a good Year 5 and 6 religious education lesson, that linked well to literacy, pupils carefully considered the types of questions that could be answered with evidence, and those answered by a point of view. All were eager to contribute. Answers such as, 'Does heaven have a boundary?' or, 'Are there gates on entry to heaven?' showed how carefully pupils thought about questions not supported by evidence. In this lesson, pupils made good progress. Pupils' good understanding of safety ensures they know how to avoid unsafe situations, such as those that could arise when using new technologies. The importance

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of exercise is appreciated, and many pupils take part in a wide variety of sporting activities. The Sportsmark award is a measure of the school's commitment to this aspect of pupils' development. Pupils welcome opportunities to support the school community, as they take part in decision-making through the school council or by being 'buddies' to the younger ones. They are actively involved with communities different from their own within the United Kingdom and the wider world through for example, the links with a multicultural school in Walsall, and the Thailand project.

Pupils' good personal skills, such as their willingness to work effectively together, have a positive impact on learning. Achievement is satisfactory. Although progress is inconsistent, it is improving. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, which improves to good when they receive specific targeted support. Pupils' secure basic skills and good social skills prepare them satisfactorily for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good lessons were observed during the inspection but there are inconsistencies in the

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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quality of teaching which leads to the unevenness of pupils' progress. A specific programme to support the development of teaching has been introduced by the headteacher, which is beginning to have a positive effect. The intended learning is shared with pupils but as yet how pupils are able to achieve this is not always made clear. Assessment is not used rigorously enough to ensure pupils are given the right activities to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable. Teaching assistants support less able pupils well, so they are able to access all parts of the lesson. Although improvement has been made, especially in involving pupils in their own assessment, through the use of 'WALT' (What am I learning today?) and 'WILF' (What am I looking for?), practices are quite new, and the help that pupils gain from teachers' marking is too variable.

The school has worked hard to provide an interesting and imaginative curriculum. In this, there has been success as pupils appreciate the theme weeks, the visits they make and the many visitors to the school. A good selection of after-school clubs enriches pupils' learning and adds to their enjoyment. However, as yet the curriculum does not ensure that pupils' academic needs are fully met. Teachers do not rigorously ensure that pupils transfer their literacy skills of grammar and punctuation for example, when writing in other subject areas. Provision for personal and social development ensures that pupils are able to make properly informed choices about their well-being and relationships by the end of Year 6.

Almost all parents agree that the school takes good care of their children. Pupils who maybe vulnerable, and at times families are supported well by staff members who are sensitive to their particular needs. Arrangements for the induction and transfer of pupils to the high school work well and the school works effectively with other agencies to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is determined to drive forward school improvement. This determination has been communicated to staff and governors and almost all share her drive and welcome the changes she is making. Accurate self-evaluation is providing the school with a good understanding of its strengths and areas that need development. Staff are particularly appreciative of the opportunities for professional development. The governing body is wholly committed to school

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improvement and all statutory responsibilities are fulfilled, including measures to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded. It provides good support through its involvement in the school's work, but has not yet fully developed its role of challenge.

Partnerships with other schools, external providers and other organisations, contribute effectively to the well-being and experiences of all pupils. For example, links with the local high school enables pupils to have access to sporting activities, which would not usually be available in such a small school. The school strives to provide all pupils with the support and opportunities they need to achieve, but inconsistency in the quality of teaching is a limiting factor, particularly for some more able pupils. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school has thought out its role carefully and the resulting action plan is helping pupils to gain a clearer view of the way communities work together. There are good links with local schools and with those, which differ in character to St James within the United Kingdom. There are strengthening links with schools in Thailand and China.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The vast majority of children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are above those expected for their age, although this varies considerably with small cohorts. Good liaison with parents and carers, alongside a welcoming and stimulating environment, ensure that children settle quickly and enjoy their learning. Behaviour is outstanding. They make good progress especially in their personal social and emotional development. By the end of Reception, they are working securely within the early

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learning goals. Children quickly become confident to take part in discussions and stay on task well. This was seen as one child persistently tried to walk with a basket balanced on her head, inspired by the book 'Hanna's Surprise'. Another group of children patiently painted 'Hanna's hut' although one commented, 'This will take ages with such a small brush!' There is a good balance between teacher-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. The outdoor environment is used effectively to extend learning experiences. However, planning for teacher-led activities is much sharper than that for independent activities. It is not always clear what the intended learning is for independent activities and therefore adult interactions with children sometimes lack focus. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are catered for well, with adults making sure they are included in all activities. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides clear direction and has a good understanding of the improvements needed to move provision to outstanding. For example, she knows that at present children do not have sufficient input into planning their own learning.

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

An unusually high response to the inspection questionnaire was received showing the vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school's work. Almost all who returned the questionnaire said their children enjoy school and are kept safe. In addition, the school helps children to lead healthy life styles. The inspection findings support these positive views. However, the inspection findings also support the very small minority of negative responses regarding pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, both of which could be better. A few parents and carers felt they would like more information about how to help their children's learning and inspectors agree this could be improved. Taking account of suggestions and concerns was another area a few parents identified as an area requiring improvement. Discussion with the headteacher suggests the school does much to involve parents, but the headteacher states she will try to do more. Also, a few parents and carers expressed some concerns, regarding the management of behaviour. Inspectors evaluated that staff managed the very small amount of challenging behaviour satisfactorily.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James CofE (VC) 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 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	40	25	56	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	24	53	20	44	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	16	33	73	4	9	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	24	26	58	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	38	23	51	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	27	25	56	6	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	38	27	60	0	0	1	2
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)	10	22	24	53	4	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	36	23	51	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	29	22	49	5	11	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	29	23	51	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	33	26	58	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	36	23	51	4	9	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



18 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James CofE (VC) Primary School, Rugeley, WS15 4PL

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We were interested to learn about all the things you do. Thank you also for completing your questionnaires; these were very helpful. We judged your school as satisfactory with a number of good things happening.

We thought your behaviour during the inspection was outstanding. You are all eager to learn and try very hard in lessons. We were very impressed with the way you work so well together, listening to each other's ideas and sharing resources. You say you feel safe in school and your parents and carers agree with this. You also told us that adults take good care of you and will always help if you are worried or upset. You know the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and it is good to know many of you take part in regular exercise. Those of you in the Reception class make good progress and are very happy enthusiastic learners. Some of you told us how much you enjoy helping others, either by being a school council member or by being a 'buddy' to a younger pupil.

Despite going to a school in a small village, you know lots about different communities within the United Kingdom and the wider world.

However, although St James is a satisfactory school, we know that it wants to be better. School's leaders agreed with us on what they should do next to improve further. This includes making sure all of you make the best possible progress year-on-year, especially in writing. Those of you who are more able should make faster progress. You all can help with this by telling your teachers if you are finding your work too easy or too hard. Also, you can remind them to tell you how you can make your work better. We have also suggested that school leaders check very regularly that you are all learning as well as you can.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at school and wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness

Lead inspector

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