

St James' CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131673
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	341192
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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

The registered childcare provision, 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 of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jon Goodwin
Headteacher	Mr Paul Longden
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
School address	Wolverley Crescent Oldbury B69 1BG
Telephone number	0121 5525491
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Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2010
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent one third of their time looking at learning in 21 lessons. They analysed documentation including the school's development plan and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, analysed the responses to questionnaires from 61 parents, 50 pupils and 23 staff and looked at samples of pupils' work.

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

- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly children's attainment on entry and provision for the outdoor curriculum
- the quality and consistency of teaching across the school
- the accuracy and rigour of the school's assessment and tracking systems
- the quality of leadership and management across the school.

Information about the school

This school is larger than most primary schools. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Mobility of pupils is very high in some year groups and the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is twice the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a few pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. A new headteacher was appointed at the start of the school year. The school has achieved the Platinum Healthy School award, the Basic Skills Quality mark and is currently working towards the Arts Mark Gold standard.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to:

- attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- levels of attendance and punctuality
- opportunities for the outdoor curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the distribution of leadership for aspects of the school's work.

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. However, provision for the outdoor curriculum needs further development in order to better develop children's independent learning skills. In Years 1 to 6 there has been significant underachievement for a number of years in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment in the latest national tests was significantly below the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, under the dynamic leadership of the new headteacher, pupils' progress is beginning to show signs of improvement, although not yet quickly enough, as progress is hindered by historic gaps in pupils' learning. Clear priorities have been set for further improvement and leaders and managers are keen to improve. In the past senior leaders have been too generous in their evaluation of how well the school is doing from the monitoring they have undertaken. More recently, however, a more realistic view has been developed and leaders now have an accurate view of teaching and learning and of what the school needs to do to improve. Staff are responding well to the support and guidance they are receiving in English and mathematics. Parents are very supportive of the school. They like the positive family atmosphere and one parent commented: 'I think the school has improved tremendously recently; the new headteacher has very good plans for the school and I think it will continue to improve'. Staff clearly want the best for each child and strive hard to achieve this goal through working closely with families and external agencies.

Pupils' have a good understanding of how to keep safe and understand the need for healthy lifestyles. Parents say their children enjoy coming to school and pupils agree enthusiastically, as one pupil wrote: 'I think St. James' is a great school and I think the new headteacher has made some great changes'. However, levels of attendance remain below average due to a small but persistent minority of pupils whose attendance continues to give concern. A strong moral code is implicit within the school's ethos and this is reflected in pupils' good behaviour. This in turn has a positive effect on the

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progress pupils make in lessons. In most instances, they work hard and conscientiously, both independently and co-operatively, without the need for constant adult intervention. The curriculum ensures that pupils receive a satisfactory variety of interesting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. Pupils particularly enjoy the newly-introduced range of lunchtime clubs and the after-school activities and clubs, including physical activities. The school has well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils, which contributes to their well-being and supports their learning effectively. Data from the school's assessment and tracking system is now being used well to ensure that any pupil falling behind is identified quickly and support promptly provided. Teachers have a better understanding of pupils' progress due to a regular half-termly analysis of the data. The school has very good links with the local community and other organisations but realises more needs to be done to develop and strengthen ties with other groups at home and overseas. The school has a satisfactory understanding of how well it is doing and what needs to be done next and demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment, especially in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - improving attendance and punctuality
 - improving the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better throughout the school by ensuring all teachers make better use of accurate assessment and tracking data to plan work with the appropriate level of challenge for all pupils
 - improving planning, resources and regular, child-initiated access for the outdoor curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to further develop children's independent learning skills
 - strengthening leadership at all levels by reviewing responsibilities in order to secure improved outcomes for all pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, standards are well below those typically found. Children make satisfactory progress as they move through the Nursery and Reception classes. Although observations confirm that most pupils are now making satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6, this is a very recent improvement and overall attainment remains well below average. This is to some extent due to high levels of mobility and the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' attainment in spelling, grammar, punctuation, numeracy and presentation remains low. This reflects unsatisfactory progress in previous years. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the effective support provided by teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies. Observations during lessons and around the school confirm that pupils' behaviour is

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good and a credit to the school. Pupils show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. They have good attitudes to learning and develop considerate relationships with peers and adults. They understand the need for healthy lifestyles and exercise and say they feel very safe in school. Pupils have a satisfactory range of opportunities to contribute to school and local communities through the work of the school council and regular collections for a number of charities. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school but this is not yet reflected in their levels of attendance. Although the school now has good systems to monitor attendance and has implemented strategies to improve it, these have yet to be fully effective. With the current low levels of attainment and attendance pupils are not being prepared effectively for the future world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Whilst teaching has some strong features, these are not yet securely established across the school and teaching is not sufficiently consistent to ensure the rapid progress necessary in order to raise attainment. Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They ensure classroom routines are made clear and regularly reinforced so

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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that learning takes place in a well-structured environment in all pupils can contribute. Learning intentions are made clear at the beginning of each lesson and, as a result, pupils know precisely what it is that they are expected to do. However, the planning and delivery of lessons does not always take full account of assessment and tracking data to ensure that all ability groups are appropriately challenged. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting positive behaviour and teachers are skilled in doing this through giving consistent messages, using praise and highlighting good responses from pupils. Marking is up to date and encouraging but does not consistently point out what steps pupils should take to improve their work. The curriculum has been improved recently by a move towards a more thematic curriculum and pupils told inspectors that they liked their new lessons. Pupils are provided with a good range of enrichment opportunities to develop new skills and interests. These include lunchtime activities led by 'School Buddies' and well-attended after-school clubs, with sports activities taught by professional coaches. The school provides a safe haven for many of its pupils and helps them to manage their behaviour and feelings. When needed, a wide range of specialists and support agencies is called upon to support those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Clearly targeted support for these pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities results in beneficial progress.

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 successfully introduced a number of initiatives designed to arrest underachievement and establish a culture of accountability. Improvements include securing good behaviour in lessons and around the school, strengthening the rigour of systems for improving attendance and monitoring and supporting teaching so that it is now satisfactory or better across the school. The school is also improving the analysis and use of assessment and tracking data, and introducing a more child-friendly curriculum. Although there are some signs that progress is improving as a result, any measurable effect on attainment remains to be seen. The headteacher is currently reviewing the management structure across the school in order to develop a more distributed style of leadership with clear areas of responsibility for all staff. Subject leaders are starting to effect improvements in English and mathematics. The governing body now has a satisfactory overview of the school's work and future priorities and is fulfilling its role effectively. The school has good relationships with most parents and its

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good partnerships with outside agencies effectively support pupils' learning and well-being. The school promotes equality of opportunity and community cohesion satisfactorily. It has a good understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the school and local community but realises it needs to pay more attention to improving pupils' awareness of the national and global dimensions. The school has good safeguarding procedures. It identifies dangers, fosters a realistic understanding of risk and helps pupils to keep themselves safe. The recent improvements initiated by the new leadership arrangements have ensured that the school is now providing satisfactory value for money.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the youngest children is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery class with skills that are well below those typically found for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy skills and in personal and social development. Children clearly enjoy school and have settled into the routines well. They play happily together and are developing a sense of independence. In most cases children co-operate well when working with others. They delight in learning and seeing new things. Good relationships are being developed with parents and carers through daily contact. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements are effective. Consequently, children are safe, well cared for and aware of how to be healthy. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well-supported and are integrated well into all activities. However, although the Early Years Foundation Stage has a large secure outdoor area, directly accessible from

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the classrooms, it is not currently being used to its best advantage. There is only a very small covered area to allow the outdoor curriculum to continue in inclement weather. The current arrangements do not provide children with sufficient opportunities to select 'free-choice' activities for themselves, both indoors and outdoors and this hampers the development of their independent learning skills. Adults have a sound knowledge of the learning and development and welfare requirements and guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. They manage children and their behaviour appropriately. The Early Years Foundation Stage is about to adopt a new system of assessment and tracking of individual children with the intention of giving practitioners a clearer and more accurate view of both attainment on entry and progress of the youngest children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who replied to the questionnaire are extremely satisfied with the school, a response which reflects the school's good links with parents and carers. They all say they are happy with their child's experience at school. They believe that teaching is good and their children are safe and enjoy coming to school. In two areas, however, a small minority of parents have some concerns. They do not feel that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour or takes enough account of their suggestions and comments. Inspectors investigated these issues and considered that the school's approach to behaviour management has improved and the school is taking steps to listen more carefully to parents' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James' CofE 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 383 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	73	16	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	57	26	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	46	31	51	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	42	31	51	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	43	33	54	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	39	34	56	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	38	33	54	1	2	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)	20	33	36	64	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	39	34	56	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	28	35	57	6	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	34	31	51	6	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	44	32	52	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	54	26	43	0	0	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.



Wednesday 27 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' CofE Primary School, Oldbury, B69 1BG

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school and for talking to us about what you do there. It was good to see that you clearly enjoy school and that you know how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise. It is to your credit that you behave well and get on well with each other and with all the staff.

Those who lead your school do so satisfactorily. However, I am concerned that your progress, up until very recently, has not been as good as could be expected. I want the school to help you catch up rapidly on any learning you may have missed. In particular, I have asked the school to improve standards in reading, writing and maths by:

- making sure more of you attend school regularly and on time - this is one area where you can all really help your school to do better
- making sure that all teachers give you work that challenges you so that you always do your best
- improving opportunities for outdoor activities in the Nursery and Reception classes so that the youngest children become more confident in finding things out for themselves
- making sure that all people within the school with responsibilities work together to help you all achieve well.

Once again thank you for being so welcoming during our visit.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis

Lead inspector

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