

St James' CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112298
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357079
Inspection dates	9–10 September 2010
Reporting inspector	David Byrne

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev John Bannister
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Winzor
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2008
School address	Wellington Row Whitehaven Cumbria CA28 7HG
Telephone number	01946 852660
Fax number	01946 599926
Email address	admin@stjamesjun.cumbria.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed, taught by six teachers; meetings were held with groups of pupils, the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of the school's documentation, including documents relating to maintaining pupils' safety and child protection, samples of pupils' work and assessment data held by the school. The inspection team analysed 59 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and also those from staff and pupils.

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

- It looked at the rate of progress across the school for more-able groups of pupils.
- It considered whether teaching and the curriculum are sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of all pupils.
- It investigated the impact of the school's improvement planning on raising standards.
- It considered the effectiveness of the school in widening the pupils' horizons.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Nearly all the pupils are White British.

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 school where pupils benefit from outstanding quality of care and excellent levels of safeguarding. A calm and secure environment contributes to outstanding behaviour and encourages pupils to form lasting friendships. Good-quality teaching and an imaginative curriculum inspire learning. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and develop into mature, confident young people by the end of Year 6. The large majority of parents and carers are very happy with the school and feel their views are valued. Good and improving links with the local community and other schools benefit pupils' learning and enhance the development of staff.

Attainment by the end of Year 6 is typically above average and the large majority of pupils make good progress with good achievement and enjoyment. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from outstanding management of their learning which contributes to excellent progress towards individual targets. Pupils tend to do very well in reading and attainment in writing is better than average. There is scope, however, for some more-able pupils to attain better. Pupils enjoy considerable success in performing arts, most noticeably in music and singing.

Pupils are bright, articulate, generally independent and willing to take responsibility. They have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy and safe lives; most appear to be fit with lots of energy. Pupils are involved in their school and the local community but their understanding of, and contact with, people of different cultures is relatively limited. While pupils are involved in assessing their own work, the impact of this on raising attainment is reduced because they are not consistently given enough guidance through marking and feedback about how to improve.

An experienced and caring leadership team, supported effectively by a dedicated governing body, provides clear vision and educational direction. Together with a dedicated staff team, there is a clear focus on improving the school. The development of staff has a high priority and a culture is established where the need for constant change is seen as being positive. While the use of assessment by teachers is generally good, the tracking of more-able pupils is not consistently rigorous enough to ensure the best possible progress. The school has a mostly accurate view of its work. This, coupled with improvement since the last inspection, for example in the management of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, demonstrates a good capacity for sustained improvement in future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by:

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- ensuring that the more-able pupils are identified across the school and their progress carefully monitored and impact of interventions evaluated
- refining the use of assessment and marking so that a sharper direction is provided for pupils.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the richness and diversity of modern society by:
 - devising a clear action plan for promoting community cohesion
 - developing a system for evaluating the impact of the strategy on pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are lively and willing learners. They respond well to activities that are practical, well organised and are related to their own lives. For example, during a science lesson in the Year 5/6 class pupils showed much enthusiasm and cooperative skills in exploring the impact of exercise on heart rates. In numeracy pupils' determination to solve a problem was demonstrated when Year 3/4 pupils strove to solve a problem related to a popular television entertainment show. Pupils listen to others, respect their views and work well individually and in teams to consolidate and apply their skills and knowledge.

Pupils progress well overall from their above average starting points in Year 3, with progress accelerating in the upper part of the school. As a result, attainment is typically at least above average at the end of Year 6 and has been significantly above average overall in two out of the past three years. Results dipped to average in 2009 but unvalidated data for 2010 indicate that the previous trend of improving attainment has been restored. Relative strengths are evident in English where pupils are articulate and read and write well. The most able pupils do not always progress rapidly enough. This is because their progress is not always checked well enough and guidance through marking does not expect enough of them. The progress of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding and is a direct result of excellent management of the needs of these pupils and effective support by staff.

Pupils have an in-depth understanding of the value of eating healthily and the importance of exercise. They talk with great excitement about the Food for Life project which involves growing and consuming their own food. Spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils have a very astute understanding of right from wrong and respect and value the views of others. Pupils' knowledge of cultures in the wider world is, however, relatively narrow. The school council has a marked impact on aspects of school life, for example by contributing to the outdoor facilities in the playground. Year 6 pupils help younger ones on induction to school as buddies; regular contributions are made to the parish magazine and significant funds are raised for charities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

An innovative curriculum and imaginative teaching result in good learning. Lessons are generally well planned and pupils respond positively to activities which challenge, inspire and extend rather than merely consolidate their existing skills and knowledge. The views of pupils are valued and their opinions encouraged. Through initiatives such as Philosophy for Children their confidence to express their ideas and opinions is successfully promoted. Staff have good subject knowledge and, together with dedicated teaching assistants, are keen to support and guide pupils. Individual pupils are known very well and this knowledge is used to plan work that generally matches their needs. Marking occurs regularly but it does not always offer sufficient challenge and guidance, particularly for the more able pupils.

The curriculum has been overhauled and has some outstanding features. All subjects are given sufficient time although not enough emphasis is placed on extending the more able. The best learning emanates from using events or locations familiar to pupils, for example using Whitehaven as a focus for applying skills such as reading and writing to learn about its history and geography. Opportunities are often given to enable pupils to set up and follow their own lines of enquiry and pursue research; this approach motivates pupils to learn. A wide range of extra-curricular clubs enhances lessons, for example in science, cross stitch, music and gymnastics. Educational visits and visitors contribute to widening pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Outstanding levels of care and guidance ensure that all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are very well integrated into school. Close and very effective links with external agencies from the educational and health services

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provides essential support where possible to pupils needing specialist help. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are given effective support and guidance so that they can make well-informed and confident choices about their future.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Strong leadership and management has resulted in a shared vision among staff. Clear improvement planning systems direct the next steps for the school and help to improve outcomes by embracing the views of pupils, staff, parents and carers, and the governing body. Target setting is established although is not refined enough to give sufficient attention to the more able pupils. Good governance makes sure that all statutory requirements are met. Procedures for safeguarding are excellent. Very effective steps are taken to remove all reasonable risk and ensure that everyone is safe at all times. Parents and carers support the school and partnerships with them are good. The school values equality of opportunity highly and has effective processes in place to minimise discrimination. The school is committed to promoting community cohesion, and much is done to do this successfully within the school and the local community. There is a lack of a clear policy and strategy for promoting an understanding of the wider world. The school makes good use of its resources and gives good value for money.

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	1

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

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers returning the questionnaire are very supportive of the school stating that it is caring and safe, popular with their children and a place where learning is good. A few are concerned about behaviour and a few would like to receive more information about their children's progress. The inspectors found evidence to support the positive views of parents and carers. Behaviour of the vast majority of pupils was judged to be outstanding. This is very much due to the care and attention given by the school to the way behaviour is managed. Information for parents and carers is generally suitable although the school is not complacent and is actively considering the views of parents and carers so that their needs can be considered.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James' CofE 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	46	31	53	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	58	21	36	4	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	36	29	49	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	36	31	53	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	23	39	32	54	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	25	32	54	9	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	53	28	47	0	0	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)	26	44	28	47	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	31	35	59	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	20	31	53	7	12	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	19	31	53	6	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	32	32	54	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	56	23	39	3	5	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



13 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' C of E Junior School, Whitehaven, CA28 7HG

You had recently returned from your holiday when we visited your school. We were impressed by how quickly you had settled in and had already got into good ways of working. You attend a good school. You are taught well, given interesting lessons and encouraged to voice your own opinions. These things, coupled with outstanding levels of care, help the large majority of you to make good progress and attain levels above average. There is some scope, however, for those of you who find some aspects of English and mathematics easy to do even better. We have asked the school to find ways of doing this.

Your behaviour is excellent. This is in response to the way the school cares and supports you. Those of you who find learning difficult are helped very effectively so that everyone feels part of the school and confident to try hard. Most of you have a good understanding of the community of Whitehaven but the school could do more to help you understand the lives of others different from yourselves. Maybe your thoughts about how to do this would help your teachers.

You are polite, friendly and mostly very helpful. These qualities, coupled with good academic studies, give you a good preparation for your life.

We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

David Byrne

Lead Inspector

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