

St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104820
Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	377132
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Marie Cordey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rodney Middleton
Headteacher	Linda Speed
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Marie Cordey
Alan Parkinson

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed six teachers and visited fourteen lessons, three of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition the inspectors made other more brief visits to lessons and also heard pupils reading. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation evidence, the school improvement plan, safeguarding documentation and records of internal and external monitoring of the school. The inspectors also analysed questionnaires completed by 36 parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff. The inspectors looked at the online questionnaire (Parent View) but insufficient responses were available to show results for this school.

Information about the school

St James' is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Two classes in Years 1-6 consist of mixed age groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school was removed from a category of 'special measures' at its last inspection. The school meets the government's current floor standard. The school has gained the Artsmark for its art provision.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It has improved significantly since its last inspection. Pupils' attainment has risen steadily over the past three years. Their behaviour is good; they are very welcoming, polite and thoughtful.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average and it is now above average at the end of Year 2. Successful school actions to improve standards have been focused on establishing at least good-quality teaching from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. In particular, pupils' reading skills in all classes are above average. Their writing skills are weaker, especially in handwriting, punctuation and spelling, but are improving consistently. The attainment of more-able pupils has risen to above average for the current Year 6.
- Pupils, including those who are disabled or with special educational needs, make good progress from their below average starting points. This is because the teaching is of good quality and is sometimes outstanding. Typically, teaching is inspirational, challenging and expects a lot from pupils who are highly motivated to achieve their best. Occasionally, work is not matched to the wide range of abilities in each class and progress for some pupils slows.
- Some pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, are not consistently aware of their individual targets or how to improve their work. They are not sure about how well they are doing in their subjects because the quality of assessment is inconsistent. This hampers the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance by school leaders.
- Children make a good start to their school life in the Reception class and thoroughly enjoy their learning. They make good progress because teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Children are happy, settled and inspired in this positive setting.
- Parents and carers are positive about their child's education and consider that behaviour is good.

- Senior leaders and the governing body are very knowledgeable about their school. This reflects the headteacher's uncompromising vision and determination to continually improve pupils' personal and academic development. The curriculum is very well planned to engage individual pupils and to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment, especially in Key Stage 2 and in writing by September 2012, by:
 - setting individual targets so that pupils know exactly how well they are doing in their work as well as precisely what they need to do in order to improve it
 - improving the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that all teaching is good or better by July 2013 by:
 - carefully matching work to the wide range of abilities of pupils in all classes
 - focusing more on improving pupils' handwriting, punctuation and spelling.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children settle down quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are well prepared for school life and made to feel very welcome by staff and older pupils. Children thrive because of the wide range of activities provided for them to play and learn. They are encouraged to read aloud and apply their emerging writing skills in a wide variety of ways. Consequently, they make particularly good progress in their reading and writing skills. Their parents and carers consider that they are doing well in the setting.

A long-standing emphasis on improving pupils' reading skills is successful in raising pupils' attainment in reading. Pupils relish opportunities to read aloud, research evidence and enjoy literature because they are taught the skills they need to become good readers. In a good lesson in Key Stage 1, for example, pupils successfully applied their knowledge to link sounds and letters when reading aloud. They predicted possible outcomes to a story and challenged each other to extend their vocabulary. Pupils enjoy and learn from the provision of a wide range of non-fiction, fiction and information and communication technology (ICT) resources. Their writing skills are improving but are weaker than their reading ability because handwriting, spelling and punctuation are not as assured. Pupils apply their mathematical skills well, especially when solving problems. They enjoy the challenges set by their teachers to think, discuss and work independently.

Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average overall and they make good progress from their mostly below-average starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Efficient identification of those pupils with special educational needs and those who are disabled is coupled with well-focused and individual support. This ensures that these pupils make good progress. Pupils' attainment in reading is above national averages by the

ages of seven and eleven. Children have made good progress in the Reception class in the last two years, which means that pupils' entry points in Year 1 are now average.

Quality of teaching

Good teaching in the Reception class develops children's enthusiasm for learning. A very attractive learning space provides inspiration and information for children to develop their knowledge. Children relish outdoor learning, whatever the weather, because they enjoy the many opportunities to develop their physical skills and their independence. This is limited at times because it is not quite as well resourced as the indoor provision. A programme to extend the outdoor space is well under way.

Parents and carers believe that the quality of teaching is good and inspection evidence supports this view. The school's focus on improving the quality of teaching is reflected in challenging, knowledgeable and well-planned lessons. In a Key Stage 2 lesson, for instance, pupils worked extremely hard to present accounts about convincing characters. This is because they were stimulated to use a wide range of vocabulary and to concentrate on writing well-constructed sentences. Pupils' reflection, analysis and discussion of literature, the world around them and of 'right and wrong' enhances their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Learning assistants are well deployed to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils are sensitively challenged to achieve their best in a nurturing environment, whether in the classroom or in small group and individual sessions. Occasionally, teaching is less challenging and does not take account of the wide range of abilities sufficiently. In these lessons some pupils are not taxed to achieve their best work and some are not sure exactly what is expected from them. The best assessment of pupils' work is regular, detailed and helpful for pupils in making improvements. This is not consistent, especially in Key Stage 2, because pupils are not aware of their individual targets or guided precisely enough about how best to improve the quality of their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers comment on pupils' good behaviour. The inspection found that behaviour is good and pupils are thoughtful and considerate. Assemblies are used as opportunities for pupils to come together in a spirit of reflection and celebration. These were extremely well received by pupils who were rapt when listening to uplifting accounts of overcoming adversity and helping others. Very good links with the parish and the study of different religious beliefs encourage pupils to understand and appreciate people from backgrounds other than their own. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and only occasionally become restless when teaching is not matched to their abilities. Their behaviour around school is very good and many pupils act as play leaders to encourage cooperation and sociability. They are proud to take on positions of responsibility such as on the school council and eco council and say that their views are taken into account by the school. Most pupils say that behaviour is good. They have a realistic appreciation of how to keep themselves safe and are confident that bullying, for example, will be dealt with quickly and effectively. There have been no records of racist incidents in the last three years. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn happily together and are kept safe.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders and the governing body have set a very clear vision of school improvement over the last three years which is shared by staff and pupils. High expectations of pupils'

achievement and their personal development are reflected in knowledgeable and accurate self-evaluation. Mostly rigorous monitoring and support helps to improve the quality of teaching and to raise pupils' attainment. This is securely embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. It is less consistent in Key Stage 2 because assessment does not inform pupils clearly enough about how well they are doing in their work or what they need to do in order to improve their attainment. Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because of effective teamwork and high expectations of both children's and staff performance.

The governing body has been motivated to undergo training to improve pupils' performance and is diligent in its role to safeguard pupils. Consequently, arrangements to keep pupils safe are thorough and effective. Governors are very supportive and involved in school life whilst challenging the school to sustain and improve its performance. All leaders and the governing body are prompted by a commitment to tackle discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity. The curriculum is well planned to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of people from different walks of life and gaps in performance are narrowing between subjects. The learning and progress of more-able pupils have improved significantly this year and this is reflected in the attainment of most of the more able pupils.

The curriculum is enjoyable and pupils appreciate opportunities to broaden their learning in 'Creative Mondays and Fridays'. They particularly enjoy art and the displays in classes and around the school are accomplished and attractive. The school's capacity to improve further is good. This is because leaders have successfully acted on areas for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection. As a result, pupils' attainment has risen, especially in reading and mathematics. Pupils' above-average attendance reflects the school's increased engagement with parents and carers who comment favourably about their involvement in school life. The school's contribution to cohesion in the community is welcomed in school and in the local area. In particular, links with the local parish involve a broad range of people in church and school activities.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School, St Helens, WA11 0NL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We would especially like to thank the pupils who met with an inspector and those who gave us such an interesting tour of the school. We enjoyed listening to you read so well. You were all very considerate and the school has helped you to be polite and thoughtful young people. Well done! You feel very safe in school and you are well-behaved. Your attendance is good because you enjoy coming to school. Children in the Reception class are welcomed into school and make good progress. They enjoy lots of exciting activities that help them to learn.

Yours is a good school and you make good progress in your work. You do your best work in reading and mathematics and we would like you to improve your standards in writing. We have asked your school to make your lessons even better. We want each one of you to be challenged to achieve the best you can and to know exactly how well you are doing in your work. We also want you all to know exactly what you can do to make it even better. You can play a part in improving your school by acting on your teacher's advice on how to improve your work and by continuing to enjoy your learning. We know how much you enjoy a challenge and like doing well in all your subjects.

We wish all of you the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marie Cordey
Lead Inspector

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