

St James' RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108723
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	356418
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sharon Grewcock
Headteacher	Mr Martin Clephane
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Nineteen lessons were observed and all of the teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and representatives from the local authority and diocese. Inspectors observed the school's work including visiting an assembly, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documents, plans, policies and procedures. Questionnaires were analysed from 68 parents, 15 staff and 101 pupils.

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

- The behaviour of pupils, particularly at play-time.
- The effectiveness of the procedures used by the school to ensure pupils are kept safe.
- The progress different groups of pupils make in lessons, particularly when learning to write and use mathematics.
- Whether the significant changes to leadership are having a positive impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is a slightly smaller than average urban primary school which takes pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. Almost all pupils are from White British heritage. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A greater than average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of one Reception class. At the time of the previous inspection the school was given a notice to improve. There were significant changes to the leadership of the school last year. At the time of this inspection the temporary arrangement whereby an executive headteacher and acting headteacher led the school was about to be replaced by the appointment of a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher.

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

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer needs significant improvement.

The school has improved in many ways since the previous inspection. Governors now meet all their statutory duties and the arrangements to safeguard pupils are good. Senior leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Although achievement and the quality of teaching and learning remain satisfactory, inspectors saw compelling evidence that many aspects of the school's work are improving rapidly. In the best lessons, teachers' assessment of pupils' work was being used well to set challenging targets for pupils of differing abilities, and work was personalised to meet the needs and interests of different groups. However, these principles are not applied consistently in all lessons and teachers have limited opportunities to share this and other good practices.

Teachers have developed some good techniques to test pupils' understanding using small whiteboards; however, this approach can sometimes dominate the lesson and take up too much time. As a result, pupils are not given enough time to work independently. Marking is of a satisfactory standard, although there are inconsistencies in the way teachers mark work across subjects. For example, errors in writing and poor presentation in mathematics and science books are sometimes ignored. Pupils are not always given clear guidance on how they can practise and improve their skills at home.

The results of the school's Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics in 2010 were disappointing and the gradual declining trend continued. In particular, boys did not reach their full potential given their starting points. However, observation of lessons and school tracking evidence shows that learning and progress has accelerated and learning is at least satisfactory in lessons. Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved and are now good. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1.

Pupils' behaviour is now good at all times, much improved from that seen at the last monitoring visit, and in some lessons it is outstanding. Pupils reported that they feel happier and safer in school and that bullying is now very rare. Pupils and staff felt that these improvements had been brought about by the new more effective process introduced to deal with any incidents of misbehaviour. The vast majority of parents were very pleased with the quality of education and care the school offered and several commented that recent changes had brought about improvement.

The curriculum is broad and balanced; extra-curricular activities are much enjoyed by pupils. Great emphasis is placed upon pupils' moral and spiritual development and this is reflected in the thoughtful way they treat each other and their polite and friendly attitudes to visitors. Pastoral care is given a high priority and teaching assistants work effectively

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with individuals and small groups to ensure they are well supported. Pupils say they feel safe and well supported. On rare occasions, although done with the best of intentions, support can restrict pupils' access to challenging academic work.

The school has worked very effectively in partnership with the local authority, the diocese and the local community to improve the resources made available to teachers and pupils. Leaders have introduced an effective programme of lesson observations that accurately identify the strengths and areas for improvement. However, observation records over-emphasise judgements of the teaching techniques used in lessons rather than focus on the quality of learning and progress. The impact of the work of teaching assistants is rarely recorded. The school's track record balanced against the very positive impact of most of the recent actions taken by school leaders demonstrates it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the improvements seen in progress and learning in lessons are reflected in better test results at the end of 2011 by:
 - - ensuring assessment information is used more consistently to challenge all groups of pupils, particularly boys
 - - ensuring marking is effective in all subjects and gives pupils clear guidance on how they can practise and improve their skills both in school and at home
 - - giving pupils more opportunities to learn independently.
- Build on improvements to the management of teaching and learning by:
 - - ensuring observers focus more keenly on what different groups of pupils learn and the progress they make rather than teaching technique
 - - developing teachers' confidence and skills by giving them more opportunities to share good practice and observe each other's work
 - - ensuring that the work of teaching assistants is quality assured more effectively and that they are guided by teachers to improve the impact of their work on pupils' academic progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy learning. They are very well behaved and keen to learn. Over the last three years their academic attainment, as reflected by test results, has been broadly average, although there has been a decline. Recently, the pace of learning in lessons has improved because of better teaching. It is too early to evaluate the longer term impact on standards but the signs are good. Most pupils who join Reception have levels of skills, social and emotional development that are lower than typically expected. They make good progress, and this is sustained throughout Key Stage 1, where generally they reach average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, although in 2010, most boys did not make the progress of which they were capable. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same rate of progress as their

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peers. Pupils know how to lead healthy lives and are keen to do so. They make a positive contribution to the school and church community, although their understanding of Britain as a multicultural society is limited. Levels of attendance are average and pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved but remains satisfactory overall. The proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing and inspectors saw nothing that was inadequate. Recently, training and support for teachers have enabled them to acquire new techniques to test pupils' understanding. Lessons are usually interesting and enjoyable and as a result, behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding. On occasions pupils spend too much time talking about activities rather than getting on and doing them. Improvements have been made to the way teachers assess pupils' current ability levels but on a few occasions this information is not used well enough to ensure all pupils are challenged by their work.

The curriculum is broadened through a wide range of activities. Pupils speak enthusiastically of their participation in the South Tyneside Music Festival and have thoroughly enjoyed working with a visiting theatre group and Sunderland Football Club. Displays around the school are very well presented and illustrate the breadth and high quality of some pupils' work. The school is developing its information and communication

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technology (ICT) resources and this will increase its capacity to encourage more independent work by pupils. Occasionally, some teachers do not make sufficient links between subjects to encourage and strengthen pupils' writing and use of mathematics.

Staff know their pupils well and care about their individual and personal needs. The school responds well to vulnerable groups and/or those with disabilities. There are good links with external agencies to support them and attendance rates have improved. Supervision at playtime is much improved. Firm supportive leadership provides pupils with clear boundaries of behaviour and high expectations. Pupils have responded well to this new approach. Teaching assistants and other staff work well to support individuals' pastoral needs, although more could be done to ensure the gaps in attainment of particular groups close more rapidly.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

If the rate of recent improvement is maintained then leaders have every right to be as optimistic as they are about the future. They have set ambitious goals which are well grounded in a realistic assessment of the school's current position. They recognise that a lot of work remains to be done. The monitoring of teaching has improved but still needs to be refined to focus more precisely on learning and progress. The school gives a high priority to equality, diversity and fairness and this is reflected in its mission and the attitudes of pupils. However, it does not always measure the outcomes of its actions effectively to focus upon the achievement of different groups such as boys or those who are more able. The school has analysed its impact on community cohesion and has adequate plans in place to build upon some of its successful activities, such as those which promote family learning. Governors are very supportive of the school and are developing their skills and understanding of their role. All appropriate policies and procedures are now in place but it has been too early to assess the impact some are having. All safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Some reports and the plans governors receive are too complex and this means they are not always in a good position to set clear and simple targets for leaders or measure the overall performance of the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Children enter Reception with skills and abilities less developed than those typical of their ages. Their language skills are particularly weak. They make good progress and begin to catch up in most areas. They enjoy learning and behave well.

Staff know families well and maintain close communication with them and there are good induction arrangements that make sure most children settle in well. There is a good balance between adult-directed and independent play for children. The frequent use of singing and rhyme helps children develop their language skills well. There is a strong focus on early reading and writing which enables some children to catch up to the nationally expected levels. Assessment has improved and this means staff can provide appropriate activities for the more able.

Leaders recognise that more could be done to improve resources including the outdoor play and ICT facilities. Although this is planned, as yet, there has been no time to bring about the required changes. Staff work very well as a team. Displays value and celebrate the work of children, although more could be done to improve the variety and diversity of some of the children's work. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

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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	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the school. Almost all commented on its warm and welcoming ethos. Many commented on how happy they were with recent improvements. A handful of parents and carers expressed particular concerns about individual children. Some felt that communication had not been as effective as it should be. The inspection team believe that generally communication between home and school is now good and this has improved considerably.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James' RC Voluntary Aided 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	62	25	37	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	66	23	34	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	44	36	53	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	44	34	50	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	53	27	40	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	49	30	44	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	50	30	44	2	3	1	1
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)	21	31	35	51	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	50	32	47	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	44	33	49	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	41	34	50	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	37	54	26	38	2	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	56	27	40	2	3	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



17 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hebburn, NE31 2BP

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. I know you enjoy coming to school and learn a lot; so did we. Your parents and carers helped us by filling in the questionnaires and we would like you to thank them for us. The last time your school was inspected it was given a 'notice to improve' which means we thought we needed to come back and check it. This is what we found out this time.

Your school is getting better all the time. In the breakfast club some of you play snakes and ladders, at the moment your school is definitely on a ladder!

Overall, we think your school has improved and is satisfactory because by the time you leave most of you develop skills in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects to the same level as in most other schools.

Some of the highlights of your school include your behaviour, which has improved a lot and is now good not only in lessons but also at playtime. The staff at your school work very hard and make sure you are kept safe. We liked the happy family atmosphere where everyone cares for each other. School leaders told us what they think needs to be done to improve and we agreed that they are on the right track. There are some things which we have suggested to help them improve.

- Make sure that all groups of pupils do as well in end of year tests in English and mathematics as they are currently doing in lessons.
- Help teachers make things even better, by giving them time to look at each other's work and share good ideas.
- Give you more advice on how to improve and more time to practise your skills in lessons and at home.

We know that everyone works as a team at St James' and you are keen to play your part. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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