

St James's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102913
Local Authority	Richmond Upon Thames
Inspection number	286526
Inspection date	18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Rogers

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	637
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robin McKenzie
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica Heffernan
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002
School address	260 Stanley Road Twickenham TW2 5NP
Telephone number	020 8898 4670
Fax number	020 8893 3038

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas:

- progress made by pupils
- pupils' views of the school and the quality of their personal development and especially their spiritual social and cultural development
- the quality of teaching and the curriculum and improvements since the last inspection
- the quality and accuracy of assessment and target setting and analyses of these carried out by staff.

She gathered evidence from parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils and staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St James's is a very large primary school. The proportion of pupils who take up free school meals is low. Almost a third of the school population are from minority ethnic groups. This figure is higher than average, but the proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is similar to that found in most schools. The school is housed in a new building that was opened in 2006. It has a unit for children with autistic spectrum disorders - the George Tancred Centre. It has held Beacon Status and has received the School Achievement award. It is a graduate teacher-training programme training centre and a designated centre for school leadership in information and communication technology (SLICT). It also holds the Healthy Schools award, the Sports Mark, the Basic Skills charter mark and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Mark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St James's is an outstanding school that provides a very high quality education for its pupils. Pupils reach exceptionally high standards in their work and their personal development is outstanding because of excellent care and guidance. The vast majority of parents have nothing but praise for the school as one typically commented, 'We believe that our children attend an excellent primary school, led magnificently'. Parents are right, the school is exceptionally well led and managed.

Children enter the school with skills and knowledge that are better than those expected of three and four-year-olds. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. From then on pupils make excellent progress because of teaching that is consistently good and is often outstanding. Standards in Key Stage 1 have improved significantly over recent years. By the time pupils leave Year 2 they are achieving exceptionally high standards in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers work very hard to maintain this momentum and test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are exceptionally high and remain so. The school has a wealth of assessment information and uses it to track pupils' progress carefully. Intervention programmes are quickly put in place if any pupil drops behind. Teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties very effectively. In addition, there is good liaison with the staff of the George Tancred Centre and their expertise is harnessed to help train other staff and plan work, where this is appropriate. Consequently, all pupils in the school achieve equally well.

Pupils report that they enjoy school very much and can find little that they wish to improve. Attendance figures are above average. Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons and confirm the view of this inspection that they are challenged by well-planned, motivating work, underpinned by an excellent curriculum. For instance, pupils in Year 4 were seen enjoying using toy animals and video clips to help them improve their skills in learning to argue persuasively. The facilities in the new school building, including, for example, an art room, a drama room and music practice rooms, are utilised effectively to provide specialist teaching and space for group and individual tuition. There are a whole raft of exciting enrichment activities that support the development of music, the arts and sport. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in the new suite is good, but there are missed opportunities for pupils to practice their ICT skills in their classrooms at times.

The teaching is excellent and learners do exceptionally well because teachers are very knowledgeable and maintain a good pace in lessons so that they can cover an optimum amount of ground. They use questioning very well to consolidate learning. However, pupils reinforced the view that on occasion teachers do not include sufficient time for pupils to talk or explain their ideas, thus extending their thinking further. Marking has improved since the last inspection and is good. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work so they understand what they need to do next. They also have targets that are updated termly. The school recognises that there are still minor inconsistencies in the operation of marking and target systems. Nevertheless, pupils' academic guidance is very good. The teachers' detailed knowledge of each learner helps them explain exactly what is wanted in order for pupils to improve their work.

The pupils' social skills are already excellent, but the school is not complacent and is developing additional schemes to teach personal and social education. Pupils are impeccably behaved and are very polite and considerate. They say that they feel very safe and extremely well cared for

and that bullying is rare. The staff are excellent role models for their pupils in this caring community and measures to safeguard pupils are fully in place. Pupils experience a wealth of opportunities to develop their spirituality, including a range of different levels of prayer. Cultural education is excellent. For example, pupils were recently learning about life in India and Japan as well as studying all the major world religions. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Excellent social skills are also one of the reasons that pupils are able to make an outstanding contribution to the community. They are engaged in numerous charitable ventures. In addition, they learn to find a voice via membership of the school council. The members of the council are proud of their budget management skills and of the contribution they have made to organising games in the playground and in suggesting improvements to school meals. The Healthy School award and the Sportsmark testify to the schools' achievements in teaching pupils about healthy lifestyles. Their excellent progress and social skills also ensure that they are well prepared for the next stages in their education.

The headteacher focuses assiduously on maintaining very high standards in both work and personal development. The senior leadership team work effectively together and their monitoring of the school's work is very good. The governing body too, are excellent in the blend of support and challenge that they offer and are a real asset to the school. As a result, there has been continuing excellent improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained at an exceptionally high-level and have risen steadily at the end of Key Stage 1. The few minor issues flagged up in the last inspection have all been addressed. However, at times the school's judgements on its own performance are slightly over positive. This is because there is insufficient analysis of its own assessment information for the school to be able to compare progress between groups of pupils or between subjects. For instance, there are minor inconsistencies in progress from year to year in the Foundation Stage that are not clearly accounted for. Nevertheless, the school has an outstanding record of improvement and therefore has an excellent capacity to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in all areas of their learning in the Foundation Stage, because of good management, excellent care and high expectations. The environment is colourful and stimulating and the outside areas are very well equipped, with supervised access to gardens. As a result, children enjoy school and persevere at their tasks. They are very well behaved and cooperative and are keen to discuss their painting and writing. Detailed, carefully kept assessments of each child help staff to pitch work at the right level and talk to children about their learning. Planning for adult led teaching is thorough. However, at times, activities to be tackled independently by children are not planned in enough detail. As a result, children do not always have enough understanding of what they might learn. School assessments show that the children usually make good progress each year, although last year's assessments show that the progress in the Reception classes was slower, reflecting inconsistencies in the analysis of children's rates of progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils' progress is consistently excellent throughout the school by improving the analysis of school assessment information.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James's Roman Catholic Primary School, Twickenham, TW2 5NP

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. You were very polite, very helpful, and very happy to tell me how much you like school. I especially enjoyed talking to the school council and I am pleased that you are working so hard to improve your school.

I think that yours is an excellent school that gives you an exceptionally good education. I can understand why you are so keen to come. All of you, including those who need extra help, make excellent progress in your lessons. You do exceptionally well in your tests in Year 2 and Year 6. Your behaviour is excellent and I really liked the way that the staff look after you and you all look after each other. You learn a great deal about health and safety and your school council works hard to make sure you all help to improve your school. I agree with you that your headteachers and all the other staff are outstanding. Your teachers work very hard to provide you with interesting lessons and very good range of clubs and activities to do.

You do very well already, but I have asked your teachers to try to make sure that you continue to make excellent progress, right through the school, including the Foundation Stage. I think the teachers could do this by studying the results of the tests that they give you in more detail than they do at the moment.

With very best wishes

Sue Rogers

Lead Inspector