



St James Church of England Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115606
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290273
Inspection date 26 September 2006
Reporting inspector John Lilly

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Upton Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Gloucester
Age range of pupils	7-11		GL1 4JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01452 520714
Number on roll (school)	150	Fax number	01452 303384
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Pat Gifford
		Headteacher	Kathleen Maloney
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a slightly smaller than average junior school. It serves a multi-cultural, inner-city community with significant levels of economic and social deprivation. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is above average. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is average but increasing. The pupils come from many cultural backgrounds, including a small but significant number of Muslim children of Asian heritage. The school has an increasing number of pupils who are either refugees or immigrants to the United Kingdom. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is above average. The post of deputy headteacher was vacant at the time of the inspection. The school has a learning mentor who works with disaffected pupils and their families.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Standards have been much too low and have only recently started to improve. A warm and caring ethos is the school's major strength. One pupil said 'I love my school, my teachers and my friends.' The curriculum is broad and well supported by activities after school. The pupils benefit greatly from good levels of care and support. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all classes and attain average standards by Year 6. This was not the case until last year and so the recent improvement in standards and achievement is only the beginning of an upward and necessary journey. The pupils enjoy school, feel safe here, know about the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and behave well. Teaching is satisfactory but many pupils say they could be doing even better, and inspectors agree. Work that more able pupils are given does not always stretch them enough and pupils of average attainment sometimes need more time to practise what they have learned. Pupils are not involved enough in agreeing their targets and in how to achieve them. The school is well managed and orderly, but the leadership is not rigorous enough in setting high enough standards, or in delegating responsibility and ensuring accountability for bringing about improvements. The way the school is evaluating its effectiveness is improving but remains confused in some respects. Because of this, the school is not building upon the pupils' good personal development to bring about the high achievement parents and children want, and the teachers know they can achieve. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are inadequate and the school is not doing enough to bring about improvements. The strong governing body is completely behind the drive to further improve the school, and parents are very supportive. Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance in two respects is inadequate. Before the school's next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that is made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set precise and challenging targets for school improvement, delegate accountability and responsibility clearly and establish focused self-evaluation to raise standards further.
- Involve each pupil in agreeing his/her targets and how to achieve them.
- Implement clear strategies to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all pupils make good progress by providing them with work that is well matched to meet their needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards average. Pupils join Year 3 with broadly average attainment and leave Year 6 attaining average standards in English, mathematics and science. At the last inspection, standards were much too low and

this remained the case until recently. In 2006, results at the end of Year 6 improved and the improvement has been sustained with current Year 6 pupils. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities helps them make good progress. This is equally the case for pupils for whom English is an additional language. One parent said 'My son has not got problems with going to school because he now has simple words which he can use to talk.' Pupils of average ability make satisfactory progress. They feel rightly that they could make better progress if teachers made sure that they really understand what they have learned earlier, and they had more time to practise what they were learning now. By contrast, while higher ability pupils make steady progress, they could do more challenging work. A key weakness for many pupils is their speaking and listening. They find it difficult to express their ideas and thinking, and do not always understand what they hear.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good and are a key strength of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Pupils appreciate why faith and belief are important to their lives and have a good understanding of what is right and wrong, and why. They learn how to help the school and their community succeed and to value both their own cultures and those of others. They enjoy school and want to succeed. They feel safe and know how to remain safe. They want to be healthy and know what they need to do to be so. Pupils' views on the school are voiced through an active school council, for example, by expressing opinions about healthy choices at lunch times. The pupils understand the contribution they need to make and why their learning is important. A parent was right when he said 'The school's behaviour policy has a lasting impact on all the children.' Pupils willingly work in teams and show initiative. Even so, unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality are wasting the benefits of this good personal development. Most pupils behave well and are keen to make friends. However, a significant few find this difficult. A key area in which the school has improved is in meeting the personal needs of these pupils, for example, through the work of the learning mentor.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have the skills and knowledge to be very effective, and show this in their planning. For example, there are clear objectives for each lesson and children are told what their teacher will look for in their work. Marking shows clearly how and why children can improve their learning. Teachers manage lessons well. Learning is at its best when the teachers make clear what each pupil should achieve and what they need to do so. As a parent said, "My children are aware of the 'must, shoulds and could's', and this helps." In a very good lesson, the

teacher focused on developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills and, consequently, the pupils were able to grapple with the very challenging and exciting work that followed. When this happens, the learning lifts off because the pupils are excited and eager to tackle new things. The main factor constraining pupils' higher achievement is that teachers do not identify precise targets often enough, tailoring them to individual needs and agreeing with each child how to achieve them. As a result, teacher and child miss a learning target because they do not identify exactly what is needed before moving on. The school has much data on pupils' progress but this is not analysed rigorously enough to identify the reasons for underachievement and then to act quickly to address them. This also means that teaching is not always clearly focused on the next step in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The required areas are covered and given due attention, with good emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The wide experiences outside lessons raise pupils' aspirations as well as extending their learning. As one parent said, 'The school takes great pride, diligence and a conscientious approach to giving my children every opportunity.' The pupils find their learning interesting and understand why, for example, thinking about what they read is important. The curriculum has breadth, depth and balance but has scope for greater relevance, for example, by making certain that children understand why it is important to use what they have learned earlier to tackle new work. In their keenness to cover the curriculum, the teachers do not always make certain that all children consolidate their learning. This can serve to reduce the pupils' confidence and so hold them back. As several said, 'We move on before I am ready!'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care and support are good and are strengths of the school. Pupils value highly the school's warm and caring ethos. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported. Those who join the school both at the start of Year 3 and in other year groups feel welcomed and most settle quickly. One parent commented 'My child is new to the school and is very happy – she longs for each new week.' The school recognises and values the different cultural and religious backgrounds of the pupils, for example, Islam, and pupils feel their individual cultures are understood. The school maintains a healthy and safe environment, making these a high priority. Procedures for safeguarding children are secure. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have their needs clearly identified, and teaching assistants play a major role in guiding these children. The learning mentor is making a major contribution in helping the few pupils who feel 'against' rather than 'for' the school. Academic guidance is satisfactory but has some shortcomings. Pupils are not involved enough in agreeing their targets and how to achieve them. As a result, they are not always clear about what aspect of

their work they are trying to improve or why. The guidance parents and pupils receive on attendance and punctuality is confused. Pupils and parents are not held rigorously to account when absences are not explained or children are frequently late for school. Leadership does not ensure that everyone knows what is expected, for example, there are too few displays around the school that emphasise the importance of good attendance and punctuality and the attendance that pupils actually achieve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Good management enables the life and work of the school to proceed efficiently, creating an orderly, caring and calm environment. The headteacher maintains a school where children feel safe and cared for, behave well and want to learn. However, weaknesses in leadership mean that these good qualities are not used as a springboard for good learning. There is a lack of direction to overcome problems and achieve the best of which the school is capable. The two managers responsible for the upper and lower year groups have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and why, but have not received the direction and impetus necessary for them to follow this up. Consequently, they cannot provide the leadership of which they are capable.

More accurate self-evaluation has begun the process of improvement. However, self-evaluation is not sharp and clearly focused enough and sometimes fails to respond to the evidence. For example, the school evaluates teaching as good when alongside this evaluating the pupils' progress as inadequate. Although the school aims to 'make a difference', leadership too often accepts some problems as insoluble when this is not the case. One reason why problems may seem insoluble is that many initiatives work alongside each other rather than working together in a highly focused way. This in turn is because self-evaluation does not identify clearly what needs doing most and then where the effort should be made immediately. Despite this, the school has identified that standards need to improve and has begun to achieve success in this area. Successful strategies have been implemented to make improvements in, for example, teaching and behaviour management.

The governing body is strong and has a good understanding of the strengths of the school but also the things that are holding it back. Teachers and middle managers know what needs to be done and have the capacity to achieve improvements. These strengths have made a difference, as shown by the progress made over the last year. The school has sound capacity to improve but there is still much to achieve.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

St James Church of England Junior School, Upton Street, Gloucester, GL1 4JU

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome and making our visit so enjoyable. You helped us to do our job by giving us your time and speaking so honestly and clearly.

We think your school is providing you with much of what you need. Your learning is improving but needs to become even better. We agree with you that school is a good place to be. You feel safe and cared for and enjoy school. You are making satisfactory progress but we think you could do even better. You try hard, behave well and are eager to learn. The school council does an important job in the work of the school. Your representatives made it very clear that they wanted dinners to improve because you know what you need to remain healthy.

The pupils we spoke to were thoughtful, mature and keen to succeed and all of you were courteous and polite. Well done! You can be very proud of yourselves.

To help St James become an even better school, we have said it should:

- Make clear plans to help you all learn more quickly
- Work more closely with you when choosing your targets and deciding ways to achieve them
- Make more efforts to ensure that you all attend regularly and arrive on time
- Build upon your good attitudes to help you reach even higher standards.

As you can see – you have your part to play. Best of luck!