

James Watt Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134102
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	316239
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	503
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	229
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Hadley
Headteacher	Helen James
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Boulton Road Soho Birmingham B21 0RE
Telephone number	01214 644736
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average size school serves a diverse and multi-ethnic community. The largest pupil groups are from Indian, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Black African families. There is a much higher than average number of pupils whose first language is not English. Many children speak little or no English on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS). The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average and pupils join and leave the school more frequently than usual. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average.

On-site childcare provision is available to the pupils as a breakfast and after-school club and is managed by an outside body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is very popular with both parents and pupils. One parent, reflecting the views of many, reported, 'I am very happy with the way the school has moved forward and the good progress of my child.' James Watt has continued to develop since it was last inspected as a result of the clear vision and drive provided by the headteacher, who is well supported by other senior staff. Pupils are happy and keen to learn and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures play and work together well.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Children join the Nursery class with skills and understanding levels that are much lower than normally expected. As a result of good, well-managed provision, children make good progress in the EYFS. This continues through the school so that by the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. Pupils joining the school at other times, often from other countries and with limited English, settle into school well and make good progress as a result of the school's good provision for them. One of the reasons for all pupils making good progress is that teaching and learning are good. Pupils work well together, enjoy their lessons and there are strong classroom relationships. The school has a wealth of information about pupils' progress and their attainment levels. This information is generally used well to ensure that pupils are given work that is related accurately to their needs. Occasionally, when teaching is less effective, not enough attention is paid to assessment information and pupils either find their work too easy or too hard.

The school's good curriculum and effective pastoral care contribute well to the pupils' personal development and well-being, which is good. Pupils' smiling happy faces in classrooms and as they take part in other activities are testament to their enjoyment of school. However, despite the school's best efforts, too many pupils miss time at school to take extended holidays. This does have a negative impact on the achievement of a very small minority of pupils.

The school is very caring and provides high levels of support for all groups of pupils. This is illustrated, for example, in the good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A number of parents of pupils with specific needs commented positively on how their children were well supported and made good progress. Despite the high levels of care, which ensure pupils feel safe and well looked after, academic guidance and target setting are less effective. Challenging and realistic targets are set by the school and this is reflected in the recent year-on-year improvement in standards. However, pupils do not fully understand their individual targets and do not receive sufficient guidance to help achieve them. Consequently, these targets are not effective enough in improving pupils' progress.

The vast majority of parents believe that the school is well led and managed, and they are correct. The headteacher is a very good leader whose ambitions for the school are shared by other senior staff. Recent improvements in standards particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and science at Key Stage 2, indicate that the school has a good capacity to get even better.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a flying start in the EYFS. They enter the Nursery with skills and capabilities well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in language and communication. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception so standards are at least average in most

areas of learning by the time they start Year 1. Evidence provided by the school indicates that the children's achievement and standards have been steadily improving over the last few years and demonstrates the good leadership and management of the provision. The quality of teaching has improved by ensuring teachers' planning is based upon accurate assessments of children's knowledge and skills. There has been a strong and successful focus on developing children's language skills on a daily basis. Support for children who are at the early stages of learning English is particularly effective. There is a good capacity within the EYFS to continue improving.

Children behave well and respond with enjoyment to the good learning environment that they are provided with. They are offered a variety of stimulating learning opportunities and a good balance between activities led by adults and those that the children choose for themselves. However, as the school is aware, the outdoor environment is limited, particularly for the Reception children. Children are friendly and cooperate well with adults and each other. Adults are sensitive to children's needs and support their personal development and welfare effectively. Staff work together well as a team. This is shown in their good communication with each other, which is used to share the results of accurate assessments in order to support children's achievement. Staff also work very well in partnership with parents, providing a smooth start to the beginning of school and good transition to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Produce individual targets for pupils that they understand, and provide good guidance to help achieve them.
- Ensure that teachers use the assessment information available to them so that all pupils are provided with work that is accurately matched to their individual needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

After leaving the EYFS, pupils continue to achieve well as they move up through the school, although the improved standards at the end of the EYFS have yet to filter through. Standards are average at the end of Year 2 and there has been year-on-year improvement in the number of pupils reaching the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has been particularly effective in improving standards in mathematics, which were considerably higher in 2008 than in the previous year.

High levels of mobility, new arrivals and extended holidays often have a detrimental effect on pupils' achievement and standards, particularly in Year 3 to Year 6. Pupils who remain at the school throughout achieve well overall. Standards in Year 6 are average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in science rose significantly in 2008 as a result of a successful school strategy to improve pupils' investigative skills. Throughout the school, pupils with specific needs are supported well so that they make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds work and play together in harmony, making newcomers welcome. They enthusiastically celebrate one another's cultures and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are aware of the need to adopt safe practices, particularly when working independently or using equipment. They are proud of their healthy lifestyles and have affected school policies in this area by ensuring that healthy snacks are provided at lunch and break

time. There is a high rate of participation in extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils are given good opportunities to contribute to the school community through questionnaire responses and the democratically elected school council. They develop a secure understanding of the importance of citizenship through initiatives such as the young people's parliament. All pupils relate well to each other and the adults in the school. They work well together and teamwork is a notable feature of the school. Pupils have been successful in the local business enterprise challenge and organise the annual 'fun day' to raise money for the school fund.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to exceed and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Lessons are generally well organised and pupils have a good understanding of what is expected of them. Pupils talk confidently and enthusiastically about their work and activities. Teachers know their pupils well and most, but not all, use assessment information effectively to plan challenging activities that meet individual needs. Adults use questions well to engage and challenge pupils and there is a good emphasis on language that is specifically related to subjects such as mathematics and science. In the large majority of lessons, pupils receive good support from teaching assistants, who contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and new arrivals. The quality of teachers' marking varies considerably. Although it often includes supportive comments and identifies whether pupils have achieved lesson intentions, advice on how to improve work or achieve individual targets is more limited.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved since the school was last inspected. Better emphasis has been placed on building the curriculum around the interests of the pupils and its relevance to the local community, for example through topics such as 'My Culture' and 'Black History.' Curriculum planning now builds on previous learning more effectively, although there are still occasions when pupils are not challenged enough in their work. Good emphasis is placed on the pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the coordinator for this area has ensured that the PSHE programme reflects local needs and offers pupils good advice, for example through the school nurse. The school has successfully introduced a new and successful initiative to improve the teaching of early reading skills, which has led to more rapid progress for the younger pupils. Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs and after-school activities, which are extremely popular. In addition, visits and visitors enliven the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'I never need to worry if my children are safe at school because all the staff are approachable and helpful,' is a typical comment from parents. The very good pastoral care provided for pupils contributes significantly to their enjoyment of school, to their feeling safe and secure and to the general racial harmony. Although attendance levels are below average, the school has worked successfully through the Family Link Worker to follow up absences and promote good attendance. This has led to recent improvements. The school works very effectively with outside agencies to support families and pupils with individual needs. Good quality support for pupils

newly arrived in the school and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that these pupils make good progress and are fully included in the life of the school. The setting of individual targets for pupils in English and mathematics and the guidance given to reach these targets are not having sufficient impact on improving pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and other senior managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Equally important, they have clear ideas on how to bring about further improvement. Recent improvements in standards in specific subjects and at the end of the EYFS are evidence of this. Other leaders such as subject coordinators vary quite significantly in their leadership and their self-evaluation of their areas of responsibility. There are appropriate plans in place to further develop their expertise and influence. Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and the school has introduced half-termly meetings with class teachers to review the progress of every pupil. Parents are strongly supportive of the school. They are given good opportunities to offer their opinions about the school, as are the pupils. The inclusion of all pupils from different backgrounds is successful and a notable feature of the school. Governors are very supportive of the school, but are not sufficiently involved in strategic planning.

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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?	2
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of James Watt Primary School, Birmingham, B21 0RE

We were very pleased to visit your school recently and thank you for the welcome you gave us. We really enjoyed your company, because you were so polite and friendly to us when we spoke to you about your work and other exciting things that you do at school.

Many of you were keen to tell us that you go to a good school and we would agree. You have good attitudes to your work, your behaviour is outstanding and you all work hard. We were pleased that you all get on with each other so well and respect each other's beliefs and religions. You make good progress because you are taught well. Teachers make lessons interesting, although there are times when a few of you find your work too easy or too hard. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to look at this and make sure that all of the information that the school has on how well you are doing is used to give you the right sort of work.

Your school is very caring so that you all feel safe and secure. Those who join the school during term time settle in very quickly and make good progress learning English. Those of you who need extra support with your school work are looked after well. Your individual targets in English and mathematics are not really helping you with your work in every class. We have asked the school to improve this and to make sure that you are all given help in reaching your targets.

There are many exciting activities for you to take part in during and after school. It was good to see all of the footballers and Mr Wilson doing their press-ups when we left last Wednesday. You go to a good school because it is well led and managed by the headteacher. She is well supported by other senior staff. All of the adults are keen that the school should get even better. You can help by continuing to work hard and behaving as well as you did when we visited. A few of you could also attend school more regularly. You miss a lot of important learning when you are not there. While you are not there, you cannot learn.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell Lead inspector