

St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 100829 |
| Local Authority | Southwark |
| Inspection number | 323358 |
| Inspection dates | 30–31 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Barry Jones |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 5–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 207 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Simon Hughes MP |
| Headteacher | Ms Karen Willis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 November 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Old Jamaica Road Bermondsey SE16 4SU |
| Telephone number | 020 7237 3111 |
| Fax number | 020 7237 1942 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are higher than in most schools. The proportion who are eligible for free school meals is double the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average. The largest group is for pupils with speech and language difficulties. A pupil development centre (PDC) was opened in 2006 to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are more pupils who join or leave the school at unusual times than is normally found in a school of this size. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. There is also a breakfast club and after school and holiday club which are operated by the governors.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St James' is an outstanding school. Pupils make excellent progress in their work and their personal development. The outstanding headteacher has been the driving force that has seen the school transformed from being satisfactory in the previous inspection to the centre of excellence that it is today. She has been ably supported by a very effective governing body. The local authority is consequently using the school's expertise to support other schools. Parents are very appreciative of the school's efforts. As one parent wrote, 'Excellent school, my daughter has done so well here.'

Children enter school with below-average skills. Standards have risen markedly in end of Year 2 assessments and Year 6 tests in the last two years. Results in the Key Stage 2 tests are now above average. This reflects outstanding achievement by the pupils. Their progress in English and mathematics over the last two years has only been bettered in a very small percentage of schools nationally. A very significant contribution is made by the outstanding teaching. There is a vibrancy and vitality about the teaching which enthuses the pupils and contributes significantly to their great enjoyment of school. The school has very strong procedures to support teachers. This means that new or inexperienced teachers settle quickly and are very effective. Staff throughout the school know pupils extremely well, both their personal qualities and their academic achievements. The school has excellent procedures for tracking the progress of pupils' attainment. These data are used well to target extra support where dips in performance are identified. As a result, the rate of progress of these pupils is accelerated. The high quality of academic guidance contributes significantly to pupils' excellent progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding as a result of the excellent care and support that they receive. The school is very inclusive and the interests of each pupil is at the heart of everything that the school does. The Christian ethos permeates the work of the school. This is a racially harmonious community. Well-qualified and highly skilled teaching and support assistants are pivotal to ensuring that each pupil consistently receives high-quality care and support. For example, pupils with learning difficulties make exceptional progress. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils greatly enjoy their time in school. They appreciate the many opportunities to work practically and participate actively in lessons. There is a rich curriculum on offer. Pupils are consulted over themes that have particular appeal to them. The teachers then plan very well to devise activities that link together different subjects in a meaningful way. Pupils experience a wealth of rich experiences through trips and visitors to the school. Their attitudes are very positive. They are proud of their school and say that the teachers make lessons fun and interesting. An exception to this very positive picture are levels of attendance, although this is satisfactory. Despite strenuous efforts by the school, there is a higher proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees than in similar schools.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school has been effective in maintaining high levels of care and improving pupils' achievement so that it is now outstanding. The school is also outward-looking and makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion. Given its track record and the very strong senior management team and effective governing body, capacity to improve further is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills that are below those expected for their age and communication and literacy skills are particularly low. The outstanding levels of care start immediately. The school welcomes parents and gives them useful guidance and support to help them contribute to their children's learning. Children consequently make outstanding progress in their personal development and mix well with their peers. There is a good balance of teacher-led activities and activities that the children choose for themselves. There is a well-designed and resourced outside area that is stimulating and motivates the children to play and develop skills at the same time. Teaching is good and ensures that children make good progress. The school is arranging to provide additional support for Reception to accelerate progress even further and this is indicative of the good leadership and management. Most children attain the skills expected for their age. The assessments for the end of Reception in 2008 suggest that standards were higher than this. However, further assessments in Year 1 show that these assessments were too generous. There has been insufficient liaison between Reception and Year 1 to resolve this issue.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessments of children's skills in the Reception class are accurate and that there is closer liaison between Reception and Year 1.
- Work with parents to improve the poor attendance of pupils from a few families.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Trends at both key stages 1 and 2 are improving rapidly as a result of improved, excellent teaching and monitoring in the school. Standards at Key Stage 1 improved in 2008 to be average. At Key Stage 2 on average over 90% of the pupils have attained the expected level in each of English, mathematics and science for the last two years. The school exceeds its targets. Given the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, this reflects outstanding progress for this group of pupils. The school receives fewer pupils on entry with good skills. However, in 2008 the proportions attaining the highest levels in English, mathematics and science were average or better. The school has intensified its support for this group of pupils and the signs are that this initiative is being successful. Its monitoring indicates that the school is on track to significantly increase the proportion of pupils attaining the highest level in 2009. The school is inclusive. Consequently, there are no underachieving groups and no significant variation between different minority ethnic groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. These aspects are developed through thought-provoking assemblies, specific attention in lessons and through the excellent role models provided by adults. Relationships are excellent and pupils show respect for different cultures and beliefs. Pupils say there is no bullying and are confident that any occurrences would be dealt with very effectively. The range of rewards introduced three years ago has had a positive impact on behaviour; there have been no exclusions in this period, for example. Pupils feel very safe and know there is always an adult to whom they can turn if they

have a problem. They have an excellent understanding of healthy living issues. In a Year 1 lesson pupils showed an excellent grasp of recycling issues for their age. The school also grows its own herbs, fruit and vegetables. There is an active school council and its members say their views are valued. For example, their suggestion for a computer club for parents was accepted and it is now running. They have also helped to organise coffee mornings, raised funds for charities and participated in other activities for the community. Pupils make a very strong contribution to the community generally. They have good numeracy, literacy and computer skills and excellent teamwork skills. These skills are enhanced further by enterprise activities. Hence, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Much of the teaching is outstanding. For instance, in a Year 4 lesson the pupils were challenged to observe and then describe the characteristics of some tropical fruits. The teacher used real fruit, video clips and excellent questioning to draw out pupils' ideas. There was a buzz in the classroom. Pupils excelled in using their senses and the skilled teaching assistant helped them to formulate some perceptive and penetrating observations. Other teaching is consistently good. Teachers share learning objectives well so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. They use a wide range of strategies to increase pupils' motivation including practical and investigative work and role play. They make good use of 'talk partners', which helps pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills. What raises teaching and learning to be outstanding overall is the high quality of additional support available. Teachers make effective use of the assessment data to identify pupils for support. This underpins the very effective planning between teachers and teaching assistants. Support for targeted individuals and groups is very effective and helps them to make excellent progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school rightly attributes much of its success to its passion for providing a creative curriculum. Teachers plan topic work based on pupils' expressed interests and preferences. This makes learning more meaningful and relevant for them. For example, pupils in Year 5 chose 'fame' as a theme. The teacher then planned a series of activities, visits and inputs that met the National Curriculum requirements for different subjects. A strong feature of the curriculum is the opportunity for pupils to work practically, discover things for themselves and to discuss issues. For example, in a Year 3 science class pupils were absorbed in finding out the properties of magnets. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well in different subjects. Pupils are acquiring good ICT skills, but are also using ICT to develop other skills such as numeracy and literacy. There is excellent provision for personal, social and health education which supports their excellent personal development. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular visits, including being evacuated to Kent as part of their history project. This fired the imagination of pupils who described their experiences to an inspector. There are also excellent inputs for drama, music and physical education. The school is in the early stages of forming a band.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is a strength of the school and emanates from the high quality of care that individual staff give to each pupil. This proceeds under the watchful eye of the headteacher who knows every pupil really well. The school day is extended in order to provide care to meet pupils' needs. The school offers very good childcare from 07.45 until 17.45. The breakfast and after school clubs provide an excellent start and finish to the day. They are exceptionally well led and organised. There is a healthy breakfast with a range of appropriate learning activities in both sessions that pupils thoroughly enjoy. There is also a homework club that is attended well and appreciated by the pupils and their parents. The school is innovative. It has introduced the Pupil Development Centre and pupils are fulsome in their praise for the teacher in charge. An excellent session was seen where the specialist teacher helped three pupils to confront and deal with their feelings of anger. As one pupil said and others agreed, 'If I am feeling down, I go in there and then go back to the class feeling confident.' The school works exceptionally well with other agencies to ensure vulnerable children are supported. This is very effective for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has a robust approach to promoting good attendance. There are a few families, however, that do not cooperate fully with the school and they do not ensure that their children attend regularly. Academic guidance is excellent. Pupils have individual, challenging targets and know what they have to do to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is inspirational and where she leads, others follow. The effectiveness of senior managers is demonstrated by the high levels of care and the transformation in the standards and achievement of pupils. The excellent tracking system is a key factor. However, it is paper-based and more time-consuming than available computerised systems. In the last two years the school has invested considerably in training its middle managers. This is paying dividends. They are contributing effectively to developing subjects and continuously planning to provide an exciting, dynamic curriculum. The school goes to considerable lengths to involve hard-to-reach families in school life. This has been encouraged through participation in a project in conjunction with the Teacher Development Agency, a government body. As one parent wrote, 'The school is going out of its way to help parents who need the extra education, which therefore helps their children.' The school operates an open door policy and parents are welcomed into the school to help their children improve their reading, for example. There are excellent links with the local community. The school uses its expertise to help other schools; surveyors and bankers are among those who come to the school to assist with pupils' reading. The school has also forged very useful links with teacher training institutions that are of mutual benefit. The school supports trainee teachers and some choose to teach at the school when they qualify. The governing body has an excellent range of expertise and acts as a constructive, critical friend to the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| 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? | 1 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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

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

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|---|---|
| How good are 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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 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 |

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 |

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

22 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School, Bermondsey, SE16 4SU

Many thanks for your help and cooperation when we visited your school. You made us feel very welcome. You say that you greatly enjoy coming to school and that the teachers make it fun and exciting. There is always an adult that you feel that you can go to if you have a problem. Several of you were particularly appreciative of the warm reception you always receive in the pupil development centre. Your school council members say that their views are valued. For example, they say that it was their idea for a computer club for parents and this is now running.

You told us that St James' is a brilliant school and we agree. These are the things that we like particularly:

- children make a good start in Reception
- you make excellent progress in your work
- you all get along very well and look after new pupils to the school
- you have some excellent teachers and teaching assistants
- the adults in the school look after you very well
- there are exciting and interesting things for you to do
- the school is very well led by the headteacher and her team.

The school is always looking to make things better for you. We enjoyed listening to the pupils learning to play brass instruments. That is something the school started this year. There are two things that we are asking the school to do to make things even better for you. We would like the Reception and Year 1 teachers to meet to make sure they know exactly what you can do. The school is doing a lot to encourage you to come to school. However, a few pupils do not attend enough. They therefore miss some of the exciting things that the school offers. We would like the school and your parents to work together to make sure everyone attends regularly.

It was a privilege and a pleasure to visit your delightful school. You are rightly proud to be at St James'. Keep up the excellent work!

Yours faithfully

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector