

St James' RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108723
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	337131
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

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	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sharon Grewcock
Headteacher	Mr George O'Keeffe
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Solway Road Hebburn Tyne and Wear NE31 2BP
Telephone number	0191 4832672
Fax number	0191 4215151
Email address	info@st-james.s-tyneside.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2009
Inspection number	337131

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's activities, in particular the teaching and learning in classrooms. They analysed the school's documentation, progress data and the questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers, pupils and staff.

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

- standards in writing and science, and the achievement of boys and more-able pupils
- the quality of the curriculum, especially the school's plans to adopt a more creative approach to learning
- pupils' independence in learning and their life skills, including their awareness of the multicultural nature of the wider world
- the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation at all levels of management
- the promotion of all aspects of community cohesion.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized urban primary school which takes pupils from a 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 and the number is steadily rising. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises one Reception class.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the safeguarding of pupils and the statutory responsibilities of governors.

In many ways the school is much as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Its provision, through teaching and the curriculum, is satisfactory with some good elements, so pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory. Standards by Years 2 and 6 are mainly average, but standards in mathematics have recently been rising and are now above average by Year 6. This is because teachers provide more challenge to meet the needs of pupils, including the more able. Too often in other subjects, especially in English and science, the work is quite similar for all pupils. Teachers do not make enough use of their knowledge of pupils' prior progress and capabilities to set work that closely enough matches pupils' needs. The pace of learning in lessons tends to be steady, rather than swift. The school's plans to enrich the everyday curriculum are taking too long to influence learning. However, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well, particularly because they have a good level of adult support in group work.

Pupils benefit from the school's good promotion of a healthy lifestyle. They are increasingly active and appreciate the merits of a balanced diet. All other aspects of their personal development, though, are satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is mainly good in lessons but, at break times, some are not always mindful of other pupils' safety. Any over-exuberance is not skilfully managed by staff. Pupils certainly enjoy school and want to learn. They understand about 'citizenship' within school, but have a limited view of the diversity of the world beyond their own locality.

Senior leaders are aware of the strengths of the school, but do not take decisive enough action to remedy any shortcomings. Self-evaluation, including the monitoring of teaching, is too positive. Areas for development are identified and are mostly relevant, but there is too little understanding of underlying reasons for any weaknesses. In addition, leaders do not check the progress of their actions rigorously enough. This is apparent in their failure to fulfil all the necessary statutory requirements, including key policies for the safeguarding of pupils, as well as the promotion of community cohesion. Governors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities is unclear and so they do not hold the school sufficiently to account for its actions or, indeed, lack of actions.

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

Despite this, the headteacher and senior leaders have ensured sufficient momentum in recent years in the school's provision. There have been improvements, for example in mathematics, some new accommodation and the introduction of a school council and family learning activities. The staff are dedicated, hard-working and willing to improve the school. All in all, the school has sufficient capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the procedures to safeguard pupils by ensuring that:
 - all necessary policies are in place, specific to the school and ratified by the governing body
 - governors have a complete understanding of their legal responsibilities and fulfil all statutory requirements
 - the supervision of pupils at lunchtimes is more effective.
- Establish a clear plan of action to promote community cohesion and develop pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of the wider world.
- Raise standards, especially in English and science by:
 - using assessment of pupils' progress more effectively to plan work that is more challenging for all groups of pupils, especially the more able
 - ensuring that pupils work at a faster pace in lessons
 - introducing the existing plans for a more creative curriculum with a greater sense of urgency.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of self-evaluation by ensuring that:
 - judgements on the school's work, and teaching in particular, are suitably balanced with more detailed areas for development
 - senior staff and governors have a more systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring the progress of the school's development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy learning. They mostly have positive attitudes in lessons and readily join in activities. Their behaviour is usually good, although they sometimes lose focus when working on their own. Their academic achievement is satisfactory. The steady pace of learning and the moderate expectations by teachers do not enable pupils to make swifter progress overall. In some lessons, though, learning is good because of brisker and more purposeful teaching.

Standards are consistently average in most subjects throughout the school. This represents satisfactory achievement from pupils' starting points in Year 1. However, standards in mathematics have been improving year on year and are now above average by Year 6. Standards in English were above average in 2008, but have dipped again in 2009. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities tend to make good progress over time because of focused support in the main subjects. More-able

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

pupils achieve satisfactorily but not better, because their work is not consistently challenging enough.

The good behaviour in lessons is not always evident in the playground. Many pupils become excited outside at lunchtimes and this sometimes leads to minor accidents. Leaders do not act decisively enough to set clear boundaries for acceptable social behaviour. Pupils know right from wrong, but do not routinely put this awareness into practice. They lead increasingly healthy lives and, through the school council, have a voice in the school's development. They do not have much scope to learn about society at large and so are not sufficiently aware of the multicultural nature of modern Britain. All in all, pupils' preparation for the next phase of their education is satisfactory.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a positive atmosphere in all classrooms, because staff have a good rapport with pupils and encourage them to learn. Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn and set helpful individual targets to guide progress in English and mathematics. Lessons are suitably structured to allow for

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

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

different activities, but do not allow enough for flexibility, notably in group work. In all subjects other than mathematics teachers tend to give very similar work to all pupils and do not make the best use of some good assessment data. There is little sense of urgency in most lessons which means that the pace of learning is no better than steady. This is helpful for less-able pupils, but limits the scope of more-able pupils who usually work at a faster pace.

The school has done well to broaden pupils' curricular experiences through a range of after-school clubs, visits, visitors and other activities. It has been less successful in diversifying the curriculum in lessons. There is a clear emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills, but teachers do not consistently enrich lessons to strengthen learning. For example, teachers do not maximise opportunities to use different subjects and contexts to improve the vocabulary and expression in pupils' writing. The good individual learning plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, supported by effective adult guidance, help these pupils to make good progress.

Staff care about the pupils and are well aware of their individual, personal needs. The school responds well to the more vulnerable pupils and/or those with disabilities. There are satisfactory links with external agencies to promote pupils' well-being, used when appropriate. The supervision at lunchtimes is not as firm and supportive as it should be. Furthermore, the statutory procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils are not fully in place. As a result, the overall quality of care for pupils is inadequate.

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	4

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a shared commitment in the leadership team to provide stability and improve the school's provision. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear focus on pupils' achievement and have strengthened some aspects of provision. They have some good ideas, but the pace of change is gentle, as noted in the development of the curriculum. School improvement has also been diluted by too superficial analyses of whole-school issues, which do not highlight enough the key reasons for any weaknesses. The monitoring of teaching lacks some objectiveness and rigour.

Even so, the school clearly wants the best for all pupils. It strives to treat all pupils equally and is reasonably successful, certainly in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and in the promotion of health education. However, it does not measure the outcomes of its actions enough, which explains why the

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

achievement of more-able pupils is no better than satisfactory. The school has successfully introduced activities to promote family learning, but it is too soon to assess the impact of parents' and carers' involvement on their children's learning.

Leaders have been remiss in not ensuring that all the school's statutory responsibilities are met. Governors do not know the full extent of their roles and, therefore, have not checked that all necessary documentation is in place and key procedures, such as risk assessment, have been carried out. Vital policies on, for example, child protection, are not fully in place; some policies lack detail, have not been written specifically for this school and have not been agreed by governors. Many policies are undated and there is no record of the review dates. Furthermore, the school has been too slow in introducing its plans for community cohesion.

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	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the Reception class is satisfactory. Children tend to enter school with skills and abilities typical for their age, although their language skills are comparatively weak. They make satisfactory progress and, by the end of the year, reach levels of attainment expected of five-year-olds. A strong focus on language enables them to make good progress in early reading and writing, and so catch up the other areas of learning. Children enjoy learning and their behaviour is mostly good. Their understanding about staying safe and healthy is satisfactory, supported by required procedures for keeping them safe. Staff know families well and maintain a close communication.

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

Teaching rightly centres on the development of basic skills but it is quite rigid and not enough is expected of all children. For example, in one lesson, children had to sound out simple words, like 'cat', which the more-able children could already handle comfortably. In the spacious learning areas, inside and out, there is good scope for independent learning. However, staff do not plan such activities with enough allowance for progression in learning, and so some children spend too long consolidating skills unnecessarily. Satisfactory leadership maintains the quality of the provision by regular monitoring but this monitoring is not incisive, nor are subsequent actions decisive enough to quicken the pace of any improvements.

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

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed their satisfaction with the school. They particularly appreciated its warm, welcoming ethos and the helpfulness and approachability of staff which result in their children being happy. The inspectors agree with these views. The inspectors also agreed with some parents and carers that the school could do more to support families in promoting learning. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the school's management of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors feel that this is usually satisfactory or better but there is room for improvement at lunchtimes.

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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	55	22	45	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	69	15	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	51	19	39	4	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	47	23	47	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	61	17	35	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	55	16	33	5	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	53	22	45	0	0	1	2
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	43	21	43	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	51	21	43	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	31	28	57	3	6	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	43	22	45	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	53	21	43	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	59	19	39	1	2	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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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 pupil's 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.



16 November 2009

Dear Pupils

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

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. Inspectors enjoyed their time at St James' and learned a lot from talking to you and seeing you at work and at play. I can now tell you what I found out.

Although most parts of your school are satisfactory, I have given the school what is called a notice to improve. This is because the school has not done enough to make sure you are safe at all times in school. The governors have not checked that all the systems are complete and up to date, and they do not know exactly what needed to be done. In addition, the school has not done enough to improve your knowledge of the world at large, in particular all the different cultures. I have asked the school to put all these things right without delay.

You make satisfactory progress in your work because teaching and the curriculum are also satisfactory. You reach average standards, especially in English and science, but you have done well to improve your work in mathematics by Year 6. I know that you enjoy learning and classrooms are happy places. I do feel, though, that teachers do not always expect enough from you all nor require you to work fast enough in class. I want teachers to provide you with more challenging work, especially for those of you who find work too easy, and also to make lessons more interesting. I am glad that you lead active lives and know how to eat healthily. You get on well together and behave well, but you do not always look out for one another at lunchtimes. I have asked the school to make sure that you do. You can all help by behaving as sensibly as possible at all times.

I feel that the school is steadily improving but it could do better. The teachers and governors know most of the things to make it better, but do not always choose the best actions and make sure that improvements happen fast enough. I have asked them to improve this. You can all play your part by working even harder and supporting the adults as much as possible.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Andrew Scott

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.