

St James' CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102764
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	322787
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Kekshan Salaria HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	307
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Ellen Kemp
Headteacher	Mrs Nina Panayis
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2007
School address	Tower Hamlets Road Forest Gate London E7 9DA
Telephone number	020 8534 4030
Fax number	020 8555 3721

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St James' is a larger than average sized junior school serving an inner city area. The majority of pupils transfer from the neighbouring infant school at the beginning of Year 3. Attainment on entry to the school is variable but is generally in line with national expectations. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages and those who have English as an additional language is very high. The number of pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties, and behavioural and emotional difficulties is below the national average. When St James' CofE Junior School was inspected in February 2007, it was judged to require special measures.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures.

St James is an improving school that provides a satisfactory quality of education. In February 2007, when St James was inspected, standards had been exceptionally low for some years and pupils were not making enough progress. This is no longer the case; pupils' achievement has improved this year and is now satisfactory overall. As a result, pupils are now attaining standards that, although below average, are no longer exceptionally low.

The headteacher provides a very clear direction. She has established high expectations and, along with the deputy headteacher, has worked tirelessly and to good effect to improve this school. There is now a shared and challenging culture of accountability. The headteacher has used the challenge and support provided by the local authority to help to create a leadership team which demonstrates significant influence and has a positive impact in all areas of school life. Consequently, progress in the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection has been rapid in the last few months. In addition, the governing body has been through a period of change and is developing a more rigorous approach towards the key task of keeping the school under review. Governors are beginning to challenge and hold the senior leaders to account.

All senior leaders closely monitor teaching and learning and achievement is improving as a result. However, the role of the middle managers is at an early stage of development. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory; the proportion of teaching that is good is increasing under the close supervision and support provided by senior managers and local authority consultants. During this inspection, pupils made good progress in the majority of lessons. Teachers' awareness and diagnoses of pupils' learning needs is improving; this combined with practical and interactive tasks is having a beneficial effect on pupils' progress. The role of teaching assistants in supporting this progress has also improved although there remain missed opportunities to support pupils at the beginning of lessons.

The school has rightly placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils get the time they need to make progress in core skills. The introduction of phonics teaching has benefited lower attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4. The progress in reading and writing over recent months for these pupils has, from low baselines, accelerated considerably.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour is generally good. Pupils feel safe at school, have a good understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, and their improving literacy and numeracy skills are preparing them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education. The school improvement plan sets out a clear way forward for the school. Together with the many recent improvements, this demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching, by matching work more effectively to pupils' needs, so that more lessons are good or better.

- Extend the role of middle managers so that they develop a secure oversight of their areas, undertake thorough analysis of all available data and are held fully accountable for their responsibilities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. When pupils join Year 3, their attainment is in line with that normally expected. In recent years the progress made by pupils over time has been significantly below the national average. Standards attained by Year 6 leavers have been well below average.

Since September 2007, improvements have been seen in the progress that pupils are making. As a result of the strategies to improve teaching and learning, pupils' progress has been particularly rapid over the past six months. During this inspection, the progress made by the majority of pupils was good in many lessons and satisfactory in few. Evidence including school data, lesson observations and pupils' workbooks lends confidence to the schools assertion that standards will improve significantly in 2008. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and make progress in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The leadership team has firmly focused on raising achievement and this is evident in the use of the newly implemented tracking system. Planning is taking more account of pupils' needs in terms of ensuring that there are a range of practical and collaborative activities. This was seen in an outstanding lesson where pupils were highly engaged in speaking and listening activities as part of their task in interpreting play scripts. As a result, pupils say that they enjoy lessons. They are also proud of their responsibilities as peer mediators, playground squad, junior road safety officers and as school council members. Inspectors observed peer mediators effectively resolving problems during lunchtimes. Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles and report that they feel safe. For instance, in Year 6, pupils reported that the recent talks on the dangers of drugs was very helpful and gave them an awareness of how to stay safe. Pupils have opportunities to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, for example, in a Year 6 class pupils produced computer presentations about the causes of climate change. Opportunities for speaking and listening and teamwork also enable pupils to rehearse and present their ideas. This helps them to prepare satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils' behaviour and enjoyment of lessons is good. This is because teachers have positive relationships with their pupils and high expectations of behaviour. Some teaching assistants provide effective support, which

helps pupils tackle a wider range of tasks. However, this varies and in a few classes, teaching assistants are not deployed effectively at the start of the lesson, thus limiting pupils' progress. Good questioning linked to the learning objectives and a practical and interactive approach set a good learning pace in the better lessons. In the less successful, but nonetheless satisfactory lessons, teachers talk for too long, subject knowledge is weak and some tasks are too challenging for the pupils. As a result, the pace of learning slows. Marking is consistent and supportive, although not all teachers provide pupils with sufficient details of the next steps for improvement. Senior leaders are aware of the need to provide consistency in this area. Additionally, not enough time is planned to enable pupils to respond to marking. Therefore, pupils do not benefit fully. Teachers ensure that classrooms are calm and industrious places to work. These are language rich, well organised and have high quality work on display.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is rightly placing a strong emphasis on basic skills to raise standards. Tracking data is used well to target support for specific groups of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are acquiring English. A good example of this is the reading group support led by teaching assistants. There are extended opportunities for writing across the curriculum. This is particularly evident in this term's planning and in pupils' work. As a result, pupils are writing in a range of styles in relevant and meaningful ways in other subjects. Additionally, the emphasis on speaking and listening and problem solving in mathematics is having a positive effect on pupils' progress. The school's recently implemented tracking system is used to hold termly discussions between senior leaders and individual staff about pupils' progress. This is resulting in a greater awareness of pupils' needs. Staff are not always secure in assessing pupils' attainment. As a result, work is, at times, not matched well enough to pupils' abilities and they do not make the progress they could. Pupils are learning about healthy lifestyles through their science work and they have opportunities to engage in growing vegetables and herbs in their allotment area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is a happy, safe place where staff take pride in caring for the pupils. Child protection procedures are fully in place. Safety checks and risk assessments are routinely carried out and safeguarding procedures are robust. Consequently, all pupils regardless of ability, ethnicity and mother tongue are successfully supported, enabling them to access the learning opportunities the school provides. Pupils have targets for improving their work. However, these vary in quality, and discussions with pupils suggest that they are not always clear enough about what they need to do to make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, leadership and management are now satisfactory. The headteacher provides very good leadership. She leads the school with enthusiasm, dedication and a clear commitment to improvement, especially in relation to the progress pupils make. The senior leadership team has grown in its authority over the past few months. Senior leaders play a key role in ensuring that recent initiatives to improve teaching, assessment and learning are implemented and

effectively evaluated. The success of the headteacher in developing the leadership skills of senior staff has been marked. There is a strong sense of teamwork.

The school is developing the role of the middle managers' contribution to school improvement but this is still at an early stage. Governors demonstrate high levels of commitment and support for the school. The school improvement plan has initiated effective strategies to raise standards and this has resulted in some rapid improvement.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
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.

Annex A

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

07 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St James' CofE Junior School, London, E7 9DA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and helping us during the inspection this week. As you know, I have visited your school several times and have always enjoyed talking to you. I shall not be returning to your school because of all the improvements the school has made.

My colleague and I enjoyed this visit in particular and thought you would like to know what we liked about your school and how we thought it could be even better.

- The school is now working hard to make sure you all make better progress.
- You are always polite and welcome visitors warmly into your school. You are very proud of your school.
- You like the adults who work with you and it is clear all the adults in school work very hard to care for you; and everyone is valued.
- Your school is a safe place and you know that if you have a problem, there is always an adult to talk to.
- Your headteacher runs the school really well. She wants to keep on improving it and she and the teachers know just how to do that.

We have asked your school to improve some things to make it even better. In particular, the school will help you to make better progress in English, mathematics and science by making sure all of you have work that is matched to your needs. The teachers in charge of subjects have their part to play also by making sure you are all learning well.

We know that you will play your part in helping your teachers to keep improving the school and hope that you continue to enjoy coming to school, work hard and do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria Her Majesty's Inspector