

St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Park Lane, Alderholt, Fordingbridge, Hants SP6 3AJ

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All groups of pupils achieve well but pupils' attainment and progress are not as good in mathematics as they are in reading and writing. Initiatives to raise attainment in writing have been particularly successful, resulting in pupils making rapid progress.
- Plans are in place to strengthen pupils' achievement in mathematics, and teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. The school's capacity for further improvement is very good.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is strong and as a result children make very good progress.
- Pupils enjoy the exciting learning opportunities the school offers so they work hard and behave very well at all times. They get on very well together not least because the school provides exceptionally well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This creates a very positive climate for learning.
- Following a period of turbulence in leadership, the last eighteen months have seen the new headteacher provide stability and a very determined vision for further improvement.
- Staff and governors are a strong and committed team resolved to strive for the school to be outstanding in all of its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement is not as good in mathematics as it is in reading and writing.
- Methods for dealing with mathematical calculation are not taught in the same way throughout the school.
- Teachers do not always show pupils sufficient examples of what they are expected to learn.
- Teachers' time is not always planned well enough to ensure that pupils build their skills successfully throughout the lesson.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited eight lessons and observed five teachers. She also talked to pupils about their work and heard pupils read, including individual pupils from Years 2, 3 and 4.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement, records of monitoring the quality of teaching and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and ages.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and groups of pupils. Individual pupils were spoken to in lessons and around the school. A telephone conversation took place with a school evaluation partner from the local authority.
- Questionnaires from 15 members of staff were analysed. The inspector took account of the views expressed by parents in 29 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, and of comments during informal meetings with parents before school.

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St James' is a small first school. Pupils attend mainly from the village. All pupils are taught in five single-age classes.
- There are currently no disabled pupils in the school.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed services) is average.
- There is a well-established breakfast club run by the school and also a new after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' levels of attainment and improve their progress in mathematics so that both are as good as they are in reading and writing by ensuring that all teachers follow a clear and coherent calculation policy.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers model sufficient examples in lessons of what pupils are expected to learn
 - organising lessons in small, manageable amounts of time so that pupils can build their skills incrementally as the lesson progresses
 - ensuring that all teachers develop professionally by observing the existing outstanding practice that already exists within the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- In some areas of learning the skills and knowledge children have when they join the school are similar to those expected for their age but a significant number do not have the skills expected in language and literacy and mathematics. However, once in Reception they make very good progress because of very well-planned, stimulating activities and outstanding teaching.
- When learning sounds and letters, children's interest is immediately captured by 'Fred the Frog' and the use of the interactive whiteboard. They make rapid progress as they use their 'magic fingers' to make letter shapes in the air while practising their sounds.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are grouped according to ability four times a week for a dedicated amount of time to learn letters, sounds and writing skills. This initiative is very successful, ensuring that pupils make good progress with their writing, spelling and reading. By Year 2, pupils' attainment is above average.
- The school has a strong reading culture and pupils enjoy a wide variety of books. They use the skills they have been taught very well to correct any errors they make and to sound out unfamiliar words. By Year 4 they are confidently tackling words such as 'persistent'. They read books appropriate to their ages with fluency and expression, discussing the plot and imagining what might happen next.
- Until recently there has not been the same well-planned progression in the teaching of mathematics as there is for writing and reading. Different ways of teaching calculation across the school have hampered pupils' understanding and prevented them from reaching a higher level of attainment in numeracy. However, the school recognises this and is taking appropriate measures to bring pupils' standards in numeracy up to same levels as those in writing and reading.
- Helping pupils to improve their written work was an issue at the last inspection but this has been successfully addressed. Teachers mark pupils' work very carefully, telling them what they need to do next, and in Years 3 and 4 pupils have realistic targets to aim for.
- Pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable and those who have special educational needs are all very well supported both by teachers and experienced teaching assistants. A small group of pupils was observed making rapid progress when learning a method for adding two-digit numbers because the teaching assistant supported them well by using practical equipment.
- Successful interventions especially help pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, some of whom also have special educational needs, to develop good social skills, improve their behaviour and make good progress in reading, writing and basic number skills. Their attainment is at least in line with that expected for these pupils and often higher, and their progress is at least the two levels expected between Years 2 and 4 and often better. As a result, from their starting points, these pupils make the same good progress as all other pupils. They make especially good progress in reading so that the gap between them and the achievement of other pupils is closing over time.
- The skills all pupils develop through the innovative home-learning projects prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Relationships between pupils and adults are strong, underpinned by the school's excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their lessons and learn in a very positive climate, which helps them to achieve well over time.
- In almost all lessons teachers make the intended outcomes very clear and give pupils ways to measure for themselves whether or not they have succeeded in their tasks. Teaching in

Reception is outstanding.

- Lessons are interesting, often involving engaging visits and visitors. Teachers question pupils carefully, asking them direct questions. This helps teachers to assess what pupils have learnt and how much they have understood.
- In the best lessons, teachers take a step-by-step approach so that pupils learn incrementally. A very good example of this was seen in a poetry lesson when pupils were taken through several stages as they learned to write a haiku. They were successful because the teacher built pupils' skills a little at a time, preparing them well by recapping on nouns and adjectives, practising counting syllables and finally exploring examples of what was required before they attempted to write their own poems.
- Occasionally lessons are not so well planned and teachers do not give pupils enough examples of what they are expected to learn. In these lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- In most lessons, tasks are suitably challenging and meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils' learning is enhanced significantly by pupils talking together, discussing their ideas with a partner and supporting each other as they work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- There has been one exclusion since the last inspection but incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. Racial harassment and bullying are unheard of. Records show that pupils' behaviour is very good over time, and parents, pupils and adults in the school support this view.
- Pupils respond exceptionally well to the school's 'Rights and Responsibilities' programme and 'Values' system, having a very clear understanding of the behaviour that is expected of them. They are very keen to celebrate each other's successes during worship time.
- Very good behaviour in lessons, around the school and towards one another on the playground makes a considerable contribution to the good progress pupils make in classes.
- Pupils have a very good idea about how to keep safe because they have been involved in writing the school's anti-bullying policy, and the school council is currently debating new rewards and sanctions for behaviour.
- An annual cyber-safety programme, which includes pupils making posters for the school building, ensures that pupils are well informed about internet safety.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They know that should they be worried about anything there is always someone to go to. They said, 'Our teachers always listen to us.'
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and there are rigorous procedures to deal with absence. Attendance is improving and is currently average.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection there has been significant turbulence in the leadership of the school and standards dipped for a short time. The new headteacher's very determined leadership and the full commitment of staff and governors are ensuring that pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are now rapidly improving. The school has a strong capacity for further improvement.
- The school monitors its work very closely. It knows exactly what has to be done to secure further improvement and there are correctly prioritised, detailed plans to support the necessary developments.
- Pupils' progress is tracked and discussed regularly and those not making sufficient progress are immediately targeted for further help. There is a concerted effort by all staff to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to make the best possible progress.
- No form of discrimination is tolerated. Vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs are particularly well nurtured and their learning is very well organised.

- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school and the youngest pupils make a very confident start.
- Teachers' performance is regularly monitored. High-quality training to improve the teaching of writing has been very successful but the school realises that better use could be made of the outstanding practice that exists in order to raise the quality of teaching further.
- The curriculum is good. Interesting topics are imaginatively organised and it is enriched by many visits, such as the Year 4 residential visit and learning about life in Victorian times at a local museum. Opportunities to practise important skills in different subjects, especially literacy and computing, are carefully planned across subjects.
- Learning is further enhanced by after-school activities such as chess, choir and football. The school has plans for a new venture linked with the local golf club but the new sports funding has not yet been received.
- Excellent partnerships with the church and village community, other local schools and external agencies add further important support to pupils' learning and development.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is exceptionally strong. Pupils are very keen to lead impromptu prayers in school worship time, attend Messy Church each month and raise money for various charities. They talked animatedly about the 'Multicultural Me' whole-school learning project.
- The governing body and the school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed very rigorously and that all requirements are fully met.
- The school has had a good level of support from the local authority over the last 18 months.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well because they carry out regular learning walks, are attached to classes and are fully involved in monitoring data on the school's performance. They are highly organised, having a member from each committee on the School Improvement Group they have set up and receiving regular reports which enable them to ask challenging questions. To develop their profile as governors and their communication with parents they have introduced a regular parent forum. Keen to improve, they have produced an action plan for themselves, undertaken a skills analysis and attended a wide variety of training. They are very supportive of the school and carry out their statutory duties diligently, especially with regard to safeguarding. They set rigorous performance objectives for the headteacher and are well informed about teachers' performance and salary progression and about the use of the pupil premium and its impact upon eligible pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113752
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	426845

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Sims
Headteacher	Andrew Poole
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 November 2010
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