

St James Church of England School, Hanney

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123148
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327857
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2009
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	80
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	Reverend Anthony Hogg
Headteacher	Mrs Jayne Snewin
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Causeway East Hanney OX12 0JN
Telephone number	01235 868232
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves the rural parishes of East and West Hanney, Denchworth, Charney Bassett and Lyford near Abingdon. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds and are almost all of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly relating to moderate and specific learning difficulties, is broadly similar to that found nationally. A much higher proportion of pupils has a statement of special educational needs than is usually the case. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for pupils in the Foundation class. This is an Eco-School and has achieved the Activemark and Healthy School Status.

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 where pupils of all abilities are helped to grow in confidence, achieve well and attain above average standards. The overwhelming majority of parents agree. They had nothing but praise for the school and expressed views that were extremely positive. One summed up the opinions of a great many in saying, 'I am delighted with the atmosphere of St James. My son enjoys a secure learning environment supported by teachers and pupils alike. The sense of belonging is almost tangible and I could not wish for a better primary school.'

There is considerable year-on-year fluctuation in the attainment of year groups. This is a common feature of very small schools. However, a detailed and thorough examination of the school's accurate assessments, tracking information and test results, and time spent talking with pupils about their work confirm that progress and achievement are now good in all classes. This is an improvement on the last inspection. By the age of 11, pupils are attaining above average standards and the more able are attaining the higher levels. Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so they make equally good progress towards their individual targets.

Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school because the quality of teaching is consistently good. This, too, is an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Parents recognise this, one of whom wrote, 'We have been very happy with the academic progress made by our two children and have noticed a real improvement in teaching.' Progress is good during lessons because teachers have high expectations of how much pupils can achieve, and they plan work that is very well matched to individual needs. These important features underpin the good progress made in the mixed-age classes. On a very few occasions, however, teaching does not make the very best use of the pupils' very well-developed abilities in exploring ideas for themselves, and progress is not quite as rapid.

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils treat each other with great respect and very willingly respond to the many opportunities to accept responsibility. Their enjoyment of school stems from their very positive attitudes to each other and their learning, their determination to succeed and their very regular attendance. Care, guidance and support are also outstanding. The teachers are exceptionally good at tracking pupils' progress and using the information to plan challenging tasks and activities. A particularly good feature is the way in which pupils are being encouraged to assess their progress against their personal targets so that they are aware of the implications of what they must do to improve.

The curriculum is outstanding. Pupils appreciate the interesting and varied activities that are organised for them, which they find inspiring and motivating. They are particularly pleased that they now have even more opportunities to use laptop computers during lessons. Pupils also appreciate the very many opportunities to enjoy enrichment activities, school clubs and residential visits, given the very small size of the school.

The school is well run. The headteacher has dealt very effectively with the issues for improvement raised at the previous inspection. Her excellent leadership provides a clear direction to the work of the school and is a major factor in the school's recent improvements. This is also recognised by parents, one of whom wrote, 'We feel that Mrs Snewin makes an excellent headmistress. She plays an active role in all aspects of school life and her academic and pastoral care is of the highest standard.'

Self-evaluation involves staff at all levels and provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, reflecting monitoring and analysis that are searching and rigorous. Governors contribute strongly to the evaluation of the school's work by holding the leaders to account for their performance. The school is relentless in seeking ways to improve its performance so that it can become outstanding in every way. For example, the senior managers have correctly identified the need to develop the skills of curriculum leaders in influencing the quality of learning across the school to ensure consistently good or better progress in all classes. Detailed plans have been made to meet this challenge, but have yet to be implemented. It is this drive for continuous improvement, on top of such a strong track record of recent success, which demonstrates the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, because leadership and management are strong. When they begin school, children have skills and abilities that vary considerably from year to year but are broadly similar to those expected for their age group. They make good progress because teaching and learning are of a consistently good quality. The vast majority of children achieve, and a good number exceed, the levels expected by the start of Year 1. They behave exceptionally well, and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. As a result, they thoroughly enjoy the wide variety of learning opportunities organised for them. Adults ensure that there is a good balance between activities chosen by the children and those planned for them by the teacher. This includes a good range of structured opportunities to develop children's knowledge and skills. Very good use is made of the outdoor environment to increase opportunities for children to become independent, learn to take turns and share resources. The very good curriculum ensures that there are many opportunities for children to play and learn individually, as well as in groups of various sizes. There is a strong emphasis on developing children's speaking, listening, reading and writing. Adults are particularly skilful at helping children to develop and increase their new knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Relationships are excellent. The warm welcome that parents receive and the opportunities that they are given to share their children's learning files and homework books encourage them to be closely involved in their children's learning. Robust policies and procedures are consistently implemented to ensure that children's welfare is extremely well promoted. As a result, children are extremely well cared for and happy. Observations and assessments of the children as they work are very detailed and helpful, but do not always record clearly what the next steps in learning will be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the influence of curriculum leaders in monitoring the quality of learning, in order to sustain pupils' rapid progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. All groups of pupils in all classes, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making good progress against their starting points and are achieving well. The most recent data show that standards in Year 6 are above average overall. This represents good achievement and progress from their starting points in Year 3. Standards in Year 2 are also above average overall. This, too, represents good

progress and achievement for this cohort of pupils. Challenging targets are set and met. Pupils are helped to make good progress regardless of background or ability. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils, and more-able pupils attain the higher level as a result of good teaching and high expectations. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning were slowing the rate at which pupils made progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' great enjoyment and appreciation of the school is evident in their excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous to adults and to one another. Pupils unanimously agree that they feel very safe in school and know who to go to for help. They understand how to avoid risks, both in school and in the world outside, for example when using the internet. They are fully aware of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. Members of the Eco Council were quick to point out their successful campaign to improve the quality of packed lunches. They devised a system for awarding points for the nutritional content of lunch boxes, and those pupils reaching a target score were rewarded with a cooking session where they made healthy snacks. Pupils participate keenly in after-school physical activities such as hockey, tennis, basketball, rugby, speed and agility, dance, volleyball and extra swimming sessions. This is a considerable achievement given the small size of the school. Pupils contribute extremely well to their school and the wider community, for example, through the work of the Eco-Council, the organic gardening project, the sensory garden, and links with the owners of the community wood. They are very proud of the changes they have made and are very committed to maintaining a sustainable countryside. These successes have been recognised through the award of the Eco-Schools Green Flag for a second time, the Activemark and Healthy School Status. Attendance is excellent. Pupils not only acquire literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills that will equip them well for later life and learning, but also gain exceptionally well-developed abilities to work cooperatively and individually.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good achievement of pupils reflects the consistently good and sometimes excellent quality of teaching at the school. Teachers know their pupils very well and, as a result, work is very closely matched to the needs of individuals, so that they are able to make good progress. This is because teachers' expectations are high and they encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. This is a considerable achievement. At the time of the previous inspection there were weaknesses in the management of pupils, and expectations were not high enough. Pupils are now fully involved in assessing their own learning, and teachers give them very good written and verbal feedback on what they need to do to improve. Consequently, pupils of all abilities have excellent attitudes to learning and achieve well. Occasionally, teaching does not make the very best use of the pupils' very well-developed skills at exploring ideas for themselves to extend their reasoning and thinking skills. When this happens, progress is not quite as rapid.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum that motivates the pupils and promotes their enjoyment of learning. As a result, they are very confident and competent learners. There is excellent provision to meet the needs of its different groups of pupils, including those identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, the school is very good at adapting the curriculum to meet the specific needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Links between the different areas of learning are very well developed. Pupils use the skills learned in literacy, numeracy and ICT in a very wide range of different and meaningful contexts. There are also excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in and enjoy a range of enrichment activities and after-school clubs that is very wide, given the very small size of the school. Visitors from the community and outings to places of interest all add very much to the pupils' enjoyment of learning. Such experiences, together with learning in personal, social and health education, and the emphasis on staying safe and healthy teach skills that contribute extremely well to their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school gives its pupils outstanding care, guidance and support, a view endorsed by the overwhelming majority of parents. A close check is kept on pupils' well-being, and they are taught how to take care of themselves and how to make healthy and safe choices. Health and safety procedures and child protection procedures are very effective and are reviewed regularly. There are very detailed and effective methods for keeping track of pupils' progress. The meticulous analysis of tracking information ensures that staff can accurately plan the next steps in learning and set challenging targets for pupils to achieve. This is another improvement since the last inspection, when the use of performance data to support work and to set challenging targets was not sufficiently rigorous. Pupils particularly appreciate the opportunities they are now provided to assess their own progress. They find this extremely helpful, as it gives them 'something to aim for' and enables them to build a greater understanding of how well they are learning, and of what they need to do to improve. The teachers are particularly good at identifying any individual pupils who are not making as much progress as they should, so they can help them learn from their mistakes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and secure a good quality of education, which results in pupils' good achievement and their outstanding care and personal development. The very effective headteacher leads by example and is supported well by her teachers. All aspects of the school's work are regularly and thoroughly monitored and evaluated, and action is taken to bring about improvements. Senior managers are using challenging targets extremely well to raise standards and achievement. This is the result of regular and accurate self-evaluation of all that the school does. Although curriculum leaders are making an impact on improving pupils' learning, they are not yet as effective at influencing the quality of learning across the school so as to ensure consistently good or outstanding progress in all classes. Partnerships to promote pupils' well-being remain strong and effective. Governors bring a wide range of expertise to

their roles. They work very successfully with the school to continually improve the provision for the pupils, and have exciting plans to improve the accommodation. The school maintains the many strong features identified at the time of the last inspection, including its very positive partnership with parents. It continues to seek improvement and is well placed to achieve this.

Community cohesion is of good quality. The school has reached out well to the wider community in very many ways. Links with communities globally are developing well in order to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of international relationships. However, links with contrasting inner-city communities within the United Kingdom are less well developed.

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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?	1
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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	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	1
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?	2
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

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	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?	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	2
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**

03 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James Church of England School, Hanney, East Hanney, OX12 0JN

Thank you very much for making me so welcome and for being so friendly when I visited your school recently. I did enjoy my visit. I was very pleased to hear how very much you enjoyed school and to see how well you worked in lessons.

I judged that you go to a good school. This will not surprise you, as many of you think the same.

There are many things that are special about your school but I would like to single out your headteacher, teachers and helpers who are so very good at encouraging and supporting you in lessons, at breaks, and in the interesting clubs and visits. You agree and told me that the adults are always willing to listen if you have a problem. I especially like the way you are developing into responsible young people and attend very regularly. You told me that you particularly like the clubs and outings, and I was not surprised by this. Thank you again for inviting me to the opening of your new sensory garden which you designed and helped to construct.

Your headteacher and the other teachers are always finding ways to improve your school. You can all help by continuing to work hard and by listening to your teachers' advice. There is one thing I would like them to do next:

- I have asked the teachers who lead subjects to keep a closer check on how well you are learning during lessons. This will help them to make your work even better than it is.

I know that you will continue to work hard and I am sure that you will help your teachers in their quest to make your school outstanding in every way. I hope that you all have great success in the future.

Yours faithfully

John Earish

Lead Inspector