

# St James' Church of England Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118610
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313014
<b>Inspection date</b>	9 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	272
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Pomeroy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Chandler
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 May 2005
<b>School address</b>	Sandrock Road Tunbridge Wells TN2 3PR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 523006
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 519355

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<b>Age group</b>	7-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated the progress pupils make and the impact of measures taken to boost standards in science. The inspector met with pupils, and some of the staff and governors. Parts of some lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires and a sample of pupils' work were examined and school information, including self-evaluation, was scrutinised. The inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized school. Many of the pupils are able and join the school with above average infant test scores. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is average; most have mild learning difficulties.

## Key for inspection grades

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. Its very supportive parents describe it as 'fantastic'. One summed up the views of many in saying, 'I am very impressed with all aspects of the school.' Another described how her daughter 'enjoys every single day, has made lots of friends and is learning new and exciting things'. Although many parents praise the accessibility of staff, some would like to see communications improved further.

St James' caters especially well for its many very able pupils. As a result, scores are very high in the Year 6 national tests. Pupils' attainment is the equivalent of a year ahead of the national figures. Even taking account of the pupils' above average starting points, this represents outstanding achievement. In the words of a parent, this gives pupils 'the head start needed for secondary school'. Standards in science, though high, do not stand out quite so much as those in English and mathematics. This is because pupils have not in the past had enough opportunities to learn through practical investigations and develop their scientific enquiry skills. This has been recognised by school leaders, who have revised the science curriculum to address the issue. The main limitation now on practical work is one of physical space. In an otherwise very well resourced school, classrooms are quite cramped, which inhibits practical activities. School leaders are very alert to this problem. They are currently working with the school's very active governing body to develop plans for building an extra classroom solely for use for practical teaching of science, art and design and technology.

This is not a school where success in the national tests is achieved at the expense of other subjects. The school has won Activemark Gold and Artsmark Gold awards, and pupils are especially enthusiastic about the rich curriculum to which these awards attest. Pupils like the fact that they 'learn lots of exciting things' across a wide range of different subjects. Inspired by the support of an artist-in-residence, pupils produce artwork of a high standard. They have also earned strong reputations for the quality of music and sports, with a high proportion of the pupils taking part in these outside the ordinary school day. Because it helps to motivate pupils, the school's excellent curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' outstanding personal development. Many parents comment on how their children have 'grown in confidence and self-esteem'. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and they describe St James' as being a school where they feel very safe and where any problems will be dealt with. They benefit from excellent care, guidance and support. Not only are they very well looked after, but they also enjoy clear guidance on how to improve their work which contributes to their very strong academic success. Marking, for example, gives pupils practical pointers on what they need to do to make their work even better. Pupils with mild learning difficulties make very good progress because they benefit from very good support.

Relationships throughout the school are very good. Behaviour is exemplary and attendance rates are high. Pupils get on very well with each other and they are polite and friendly. They are proud of the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities, for example as school councillors, and in fundraising for national and international charities, including some selected by the pupils themselves. Pupils are very attentive in lessons and they are keen to volunteer answers to teachers' questions. Their enthusiasm contributes to their rapid rates of progress, even on those occasions when teaching is not quite as effective as it could be. Teaching and learning are good. Much of the teaching is of a very high standard, with lessons carefully planned to cater for pupils' different abilities. Lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers' explanations and introductions are clear, so pupils know exactly what is expected of them.

School leaders have identified, however, that lesson introductions are sometimes too long, leaving pupils less time and opportunity to work individually or in small groups. Similarly, school leaders' monitoring shows that occasionally lessons run out of time before the teacher can reinforce what has been learnt by summing things up at the end.

The school's impressive track record of success is down to its outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher, leadership team and governors have a crystal-clear picture of the school's many strengths and of those areas which they believe could be even better. School leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning, for example, is thorough and carefully focused on driving improvements by identifying points for development even in lessons where pupils' progress is excellent. This lack of complacency has contributed to the continued rise since the last inspection in what were already high standards. It also shows the school's outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Provide more opportunities in lessons for individual and group work, and ensure that sufficient time is allowed to sum up and reinforce what has been learnt.
- Develop the plans formulated for providing a discrete teaching area for science investigations and other practical activities.

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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?	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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well 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 the 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Church of England Junior School, Tunbridge Wells TN2 3PR

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school. You and your parents told me that St James' is a great school. You are right. The school is outstanding.

St James' is exceptionally well run and it gives you an outstanding education, so that you make excellent progress and achieve high standards. It is good to see that this is not just in the Year 6 tests but also in other subjects in your exciting curriculum, including art, music and sports. You do well in science but not quite so well as you do in English and mathematics. The school has already made some changes so that you learn more through investigations, but the cramped classroom space is limiting the practical work that you can do. I was pleased to learn that the governors have some exciting plans to build a new classroom for science and practical work in other subjects. I have asked them to develop these plans to give you the space you need.

One of the reasons you make such very good progress is your exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. You listen very attentively to your teachers and you concentrate and work hard. I was exceedingly impressed with your behaviour and how very well you get on with each other. Teaching is good, and there is much that is even better. I have asked the school to keep the lesson introductions short enough to make sure you have plenty of time for individual and group work, and for sessions at the end where you can sum up what you have learnt.

Staff look after you well and I was pleased to see that, when they mark your books, teachers give you helpful guidance on how to make your work even better. You can help too by taking careful note of your teachers' comments and continuing to work hard and do your very best.

Best wishes Selwyn Ward Lead inspector