

St James' Church of England Junior School

Sandrock Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 3PR

Inspection dates 12–13 June 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, staff and governors have ensured that pupils reach above average levels in national tests, despite a number of changes in staffing and routines since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics and reading is particularly strong and the school also fosters pupils' good achievement in the arts and sports. Pupils are articulate speakers and use their writing skills well within other subjects.
- Teaching continues to be led with skill by senior leaders, so that it is has remained typically good throughout the school, although there is some variation between classes.
- Pupils say that they enjoy their learning, particularly in those activities which are practical such as science, physical education or music.
- Pupils' behaviour is good over time, something which is recognised by pupils, along with parents. Most parents say that the school cares for their children well so they feel safe.
- Those pupils who may be disabled and those with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium funding benefit from specific activities which are increasingly effective in helping them to achieve as well as others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While pupils generally enjoy writing, some are not as confident in using punctuation and grammar accurately to ensure their writing is of the highest quality.
- Teachers do not always make it clear to pupils how their skills can be applied in day-to-day 'real-life' situations. Pupils capable of harder work often start at the same level as
- The limited amount of resources for information and communication technology (ICT) means that pupils or staff cannot readily use it in day-to-day lessons and activities.
- Subject leaders are not yet as confident at influencing improvements in the quality of teaching.

others, and sometimes complete work that is too easy for them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 10 teachers, of which four were joint observations conducted with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read in Year 6, observed playtimes and lunchtime routines. They observed two assemblies and met with a small number of parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors held a meeting with a representative group of pupils, met with the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and held meetings with subject leaders. Meetings were held with those responsible for the work relating to those who may be disabled or who have special educational needs. The inspector had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 49 responses from the online Parent View survey and three written responses from parents. They analysed questionnaires completed by 16 members of staff.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Maureen Coleman	Additional Inspector
Kate Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly bigger than average and is increasing in size. It serves pupils from a wide area. Building work to add three new classrooms is due to commence in the summer to accommodate the rising number of pupils due to attend.
- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staff changes, including two changes of headteacher. The present headteacher started just over a year ago.
- The majority of pupils are White British. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages.
- A below average proportion is eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support pupils known to be entitled to free school meals, from service families or who are in the care of the local authority); the proportion of pupils identified who may be disabled or who have special educational needs is also below average. This includes those supported at school action plus, and those who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress in national tests.
- The school has a number of awards reflecting its commitment to promoting the arts and sports.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' learning and achievement to the highest levels by:
 - developing the skills of pupils in using punctuation accurately in their writing
 - ensuring that pupils know how to apply their skills, particularly in mathematics, to everyday 'real-life' situations
 - increase the opportunities for pupils to use a wide range of ICT resources to enhance their learning across all subjects.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring investigational activities are more open ended so that higher ability pupils start at more challenging levels earlier in the lesson
 - making sure that teachers' explanations and discussions are succinct and sharply presented so that pupils can begin their tasks more quickly
 - developing the expertise of subject coordinators so they can influence the quality of teaching further within their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are higher than expected. Pupils generally achieve well, particularly so in mathematics, reading and in their speaking and listening. By the time they leave, they reach above and increasingly well above average levels in national tests. A growing proportion now takes tests at levels much higher than normally expected. Last year, a number were successful at achieving two levels higher than expected for their age.
- There are some variations in the progress made by pupils between classes, often linked to the quality of teaching. For example, pupils generally enjoy their writing and use it to enliven their topic work in writing stories or accounts of visits. The confidence of some pupils to use punctuation accurately varies, so that not all writing is of the highest quality.
- In mathematics, pupils are quick and accurate in solving simple calculation problems, recognising patterns in numbers and in solving problems in their regular investigative work. Their knowledge of how to use some of these skills in everyday 'real-life' situations is not as well developed as this is not always pointed out to them by teachers.
- Pupils communicate confidently both in discussions with classmates, to visitors and with their teachers. They listen carefully and complete work quickly. Occasionally, those capable of harder work say that some work is too easy as they start activities at the same pace as everybody else. Pupils read confidently and widely, with pupils being able to use their knowledge of letter sounds and combinations (often known as phonics) to work out difficult words. They know a wide range of authors and have their particular favourite style of story.
- Pupils also achieve well across different subjects, such as in developing their musical abilities, artistic appreciation, such as studying the work of well-known artists, or in showcasing their sporting talents in class-based activities and in after-school clubs and competitions.
- Some well-organised activities, aimed accurately at pupils' level of understanding, help disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, along with any at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, to achieve well. Those pupils eligible for the pupil premium keep pace with other pupils and any gaps in their learning and rate of progress between these and other pupils, more noticeable last year, are reducing quickly. Special booster groups, one-to-one support and additional resources ensure these pupils keep pace with others.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is typically good through the school, although there are some variations in quality and not all is at the very highest level. The new headteacher is 'raising the bar' so that lessons which require improvement are very rare.
- Activities usually have practical elements to them, which pupils say they like, although on occasions teachers' explanations or discussions are overly long, reducing the time for pupils to start and complete their work.
- In those classrooms where they are available, teachers make good use of audio-visual whiteboards to help illustrate learning points, list activities or provide information. However, the range of ICT available generally is comparatively limited, so pupils do not always have day-to-day opportunities to use this technology to widen and broaden their understanding of its use and application. Not all classes have audio-visual whiteboards to help staff aid pupils' learning.
- In an outstandingly taught mathematics lesson on coordinates in Year 6, an extremely fast pace of learning, combined with a range of challenges for all abilities, with pupils constantly assessed to reshape activities ensured they learnt exceptionally well.
- In contrast, some less effective teaching relies on teachers giving long explanations or presentations, and setting predictable activities, where all pupils, regardless of ability, start at the same point. This means some pupils of higher ability complete work which is relatively easy for them.

- Visitors are used effectively to broaden pupils' abilities and understanding. For example, a visitor talked to classes about their religion and beliefs and pupils enjoyed tasting sweets which were typical of the culture. In another lesson, visitors helped pupils gain a greater understanding of their natural environment, while some individual children enjoyed violin, oboe and saxophone lessons taught by a visiting music teacher.
- Teachers generally assess their pupils regularly and effectively, so they have a clear understanding of how pupils progress in their class, and of those who may be falling behind, and provide targets to guide their learning, particularly in English.
- Teaching is usually effective for those pupils who may be disabled or who have special educational needs, often provided by teaching assistants both in the classroom and in adjacent spaces. These staff support pupils effectively to keep pace with others in the class in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Despite comparatively high numbers of pupils within classrooms and playtimes, pupils play well together in confined spaces; they behave well and make sensible use of the space available.
- Pupils say that incidences of bullying, in any form, are relatively rare, although some do admit that they have to help others with their behaviour at times when it falls short of the school's high expectations. Parents largely agree that pupils' behaviour and care shown by the school are a strength. Not surprisingly, pupils enjoy attending.
- Pupils move around the school quietly when entering assemblies and classrooms, and lunchtimes are quiet social occasions where they can have good discussions with friends while eating lunch.
- Knowing how to keep safe when using the internet is something which pupils say they are very familiar with and they are enthusiastic to say that staff are quick to help them resolve any problems should they occur.
- The range of responsibilities that pupils have, such as mentors to others or as members of the school council, help to develop their sense of responsibility and to shape improvements. They recognise that some ambitious plans to improve the playground had to be put aside in the light of plans to build extra classrooms.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, supported by senior staff and the local authority, has succeeded in developing good day-to-day routines, setting higher expectations and identifying areas which need improvement such as provision of extra ICT equipment and raising the quality of teaching still further. Building plans to accommodate rising pupil numbers are well underway.
- The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, regularly observes the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. This identifies where pupils' learning can be increased further, and initiatives to develop and agree whole-school approaches to top-quality learning are starting to take shape. Subject leaders are not yet as confident in observing lessons and in influencing improvements in the quality of teaching. The school makes clear links between pupils' achievement, which is generally above average across a wide range of subjects, teachers' performance, distribution of responsibilities, which are being reviewed in the light of monitoring, and salary levels.
- The school checks on pupils' progress regularly so that any pupils in danger of falling behind are pinpointed quickly. Class teachers use this information confidently to assess where pupils' learning needs to be improved still further.
- Senior leaders are acutely aware of how funding for those pupils eligible for the pupil premium is reducing any gaps in their learning with other pupils and have ensured that extra tuition, booster classes and one-to-one support are effectively reducing any gaps quickly.

- The curriculum gives pupils a wide variety of opportunities to develop their particular skills and talents beyond those which are academic, such as those which are sporting, artistic or musical. This contributes effectively to their spiritual, social and cultural awareness. Basic skills are catered for very well in most cases, although opportunities to develop pupils' ICT skills to the highest levels are hampered by a narrow range of resources available for both staff and pupils to use in their everyday learning and work. Sometimes pupils' learning slows where the lessons are not geared to showing pupils how their skills can be useful to everyday 'real-life' situations.
- The local authority gives effective support to the school, not least in initiating a review of the school's work shortly after the new headteacher arrived, in order to provide insights into the school's strengths and to indicate where improvements might be needed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors support the school well, particular in this time of expansion and in the proposed provision of extra classrooms to accommodate a rising number of pupils attending. Governors attend and benefit from a number of courses ranging from finance, inspection preparation to child protection. They have a working knowledge of how teachers' performance is managed, informed by their regular visits to check on the quality of teaching, and how this links to salary levels and progression. It also gives them clear insight into how extra funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is used and in particular how it is increasing rates of progress, and how the school's performance compares to other schools locally and nationally. Governors ensure good levels of safeguarding, health and safety and vetting procedures for new staff. They ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to achieve well and that discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

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	118610
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	412119

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Francis
Headteacher	John Tutt
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2008
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