

St Albert's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104467
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	377085
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Kevin Johnson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris O'Connor
Associate Headteacher	Lorraine McEvoy
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson
Maria McGarry

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers, talked to pupils and reviewed some of their work. Meetings were held with some parents and carers, staff and members of the governing body). Also taken into account were 69 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and those completed by pupils and members of staff. There were no comments received via the online questionnaire (Parent View) to aid in planning the inspection. Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation which included that relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, national assessment data and the school's assessments.

Information about the school

The large majority of pupils attending this smaller than average-sized primary school are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is increasing. The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is above average. Almost half of the pupils in the school are known to be eligible for free school meals.

The school has worked closely in federation with a nearby Roman Catholic primary school since 2009, when a joint governing body was appointed. The associate headteacher was seconded to support the temporary executive headteacher (substantive headteacher of St Brigid's) to run St Albert's.

Among the school's most recent achievements are the Basic Skills Award, Healthy School status and the Eco Silver award. The school is also the local area 'Climate Champion' for its work on energy conservation. The school exceeds the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Before- and after-school care is provided by the school on site during term time.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Effective leadership since the previous inspection has ensured that standards and quality of provision have been maintained and that pupils continue to achieve well. The school is not judged outstanding because levels of attainment are not significantly above average and teaching is good overall.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress throughout the school. Attainment over the past three years has never been less than broadly average and was significantly above average in 2009 at the end of Year 6. This reflects good achievement.
- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well and assess their attainment accurately. They use this information well to build on what pupils already know and can do. Occasionally, the more able groups are not sufficiently challenged in lessons and more could be expected with regard to pupils' handwriting and use of spelling.
- Throughout the school and in lessons pupils behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They feel safe in school and enjoy very trusting and respectful relationships with the adults who care for them.
- Leaders and managers have successfully consolidated the school's good capacity for improvement and established a very strong sense of community. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly loyal to the school. Teachers' professional development and the quality of their work are managed well, improving their overall teaching performance. The governing body is supportive but its expertise in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance is not used to the full.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the effectiveness of teaching further by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are always sufficiently challenged in lessons
 - improving the quality of pupils' handwriting and the accuracy of their spelling.
- Ensure that the governing body uses its expertise to the full when monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and helping to set the next targets.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most children join the Nursery with skills that are well-below those expected for their age. This is particularly so in their development of language and numeracy and in their social skills. The school provides well for their varying needs and they make good progress because of the well balanced curriculum which helps them to develop their confidence and independence, although attainment is generally still below expectations when they move into Year 1.

Good progress continues in Years 1 to 6 and by the time pupils leave the school they achieve well to reach at least average levels in English and mathematics. Parents and carers recognise this and are pleased with their children's progress. Pupils learn well in lessons because they are attentive and engaged well in imaginatively planned activities. In one lesson, for example, pupils' mathematical skills improved particularly well as they found the coordinates for the pirate's hidden treasure. In another, an appealing letter from a lonely 'Gruffalo' made Year 1 pupils think about friendship, contributing to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as their literacy skills. Pupils have good opportunities, throughout the engaging curriculum, to test their ideas on others in order to be clear about their own learning. Teachers' marking keeps them well informed about their progress and what they should do to improve, and pupils work hard to achieve those targets.

All groups of pupils achieve well. School assessments show that most pupils who speak English as an additional language are meeting challenging targets and some perform better in English than others in their classes as well as the group nationally. There is a similar picture among pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, many of whom match their peers in school in reading, writing and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are provided for well. Their needs are identified early and support is quickly arranged to speed up their progress. Some parents and carers comment specifically on the good level of care provided for pupils considered to be potentially the most vulnerable due to their circumstances. The gap in previous years between the attainment of girls and boys at the end of Year 2 is closing well because of strong intervention in the form of a well tailored curriculum which includes effective additional support for reading.

Standards in reading at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with expectations for pupils' ages. Year 2 pupils read accurately and use their knowledge of letters and sounds well to help them read unfamiliar words. They are keen readers and regularly take books to

practise at home. By year 6 pupils have appropriate knowledge of different kinds of literature. They talk about their preferences and say that they use the public library regularly. They can name their favourite contemporary authors and some of the characters from past classical works, though they are less confident in that area. They read fluently and with good understanding.

Quality of teaching

Teachers value the contribution that pupils make to lessons and so they feel confident and are always willing to 'have a go' when questioned. Teachers model good relationships by the way they listen to pupils and help them. This has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are always good opportunities for pupils to work harmoniously with partners or in groups. Lessons are planned well so that learning builds effectively on what has gone on before. Lessons take account of pupils' differing abilities but, occasionally, the more able are not challenged as far as they might be. Teachers' use of resources, particularly technology, enlivens activities. Even the youngest pupils confidently step up to the interactive whiteboard and select favourite programmes without adult help. Where teaching is most effective, there is a relentless focus on learning and a very brisk pace. Teachers continually have pupils check their progress and are quick to step in when there is any hint of misunderstanding. Those were some characteristics of an outstanding English lesson, for example, where pupils applied all they had learned about persuasive language to their purposeful writing about why parents and carers should allow them to take part in extreme sports.

The curriculum takes account of pupils' views and engages their interest well. It provides opportunities for imaginative teaching and learning through topics such as one which deals with important global issues. Pupils say that lessons are fun, teachers enjoy the scope that the curriculum gives and parents and carers unanimously agree that their children are taught well.

Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and their expectations with regard to learning and progress are generally high, though more could be expected of pupils over the quality of presentation of their work and their accurate use of spelling rules. Teaching assistants are a valued part of the teaching team and use their skill and training well when dealing sensitively with pupils' particular learning or emotional needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are typically polite and courteous. Their good behaviour in lessons is an important factor in their good achievement. They strongly adhere to their school's 'golden values' which set out expectations for behaviour and relationships and help them to uphold the school's very strong Christian ethos. Pupils say that there is no bullying of any kind and occasional name-calling is usually linked to disputed decisions during football games which are quickly resolved. As a consequence, pupils feel safe in school. They form trusting friendships with peers and respectful relationships with teachers and other adults. Pupils know how to keep safe outside of school. They have good awareness of potential dangers surrounding the internet and cyber-bullying as well as unsafe places to play. Pupils have sensible views about the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils contribute well to the life of the school. Their attendance is above average and punctuality is improving, due in some way to the excellent work of designated staff

members who help to maintain the strong links with parents and carers. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities via the school council, eco-work or caring for younger ones as well as day-to-day routines around the school. Pupils and their parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that behaviour is good and that they are safe and well cared for in school. They appreciate especially the before- and after-school care provided.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are fully committed to school improvement. They work as a strong team and build well on the good work seen at the previous inspection. Well focused and supportive professional development for staff has improved their leadership skills and consolidated good and outstanding teaching throughout the school. The impact seen in the improved academic results and pupils' personal development amply demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

The governing body is ambitious for the school's continued success and, to that end, supports the associate headteacher and staff well. It deals efficiently with all statutory requirements, including safeguarding measures, which are monitored closely and reviewed regularly. However, the governing body currently does not work to its potential with regard to evaluating information from the school and helping to plan next targets for improvement.

A well-balanced curriculum, adjusted to the needs and interests of pupils, helps them to achieve well, not just in literacy and numeracy but also in sports, music and Spanish, for example. Pupils gain good cultural awareness through their classroom studies and pen-pal activity with children in a Nigerian school. The curriculum is further enriched by a good selection of activities which increase pupils' spirituality and social skills by bringing wonder and excitement to their learning. The most popular of these are their residential visits.

The school is strongly opposed to all forms of discrimination and the fact that attainment gaps between groups of pupils are seen to be closing confirms leaders' commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Albert's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L28 8AJ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. It was a pleasure to talk to you and share your views about school because you are so polite and well mannered. You told us how much you like your school and how good your lessons are and we agree with you. We also noticed that your attendance is above average which is very important for your learning.

St Albert's is a good school because you make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics as well as in other subjects. Your good behaviour and the way you respect one another are valuable qualities to have and you have shown us both. The grown-ups in school take good care of you and help you to feel safe. Your teachers work very hard to make your lessons fun and teach you well.

Everyone connected with your school is very proud of what St Albert's achieves and would like it to be even better. We have asked your school leaders to help that process by doing two things. First, they should make sure that those of you who are capable of harder work are always fully challenged in lessons and that all of you improve your handwriting and spelling. Second, we have also asked the governing body to check more closely how well the school is doing and help to set next targets for its improvement.

You can continue to help your school improve by keeping up your attendance and by letting adults know when the work you have been given is too easy for you. Thank you once again for helping us. It was a great pleasure to meet and talk with some of you. I wish all of you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson
Lead inspector

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