

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125239
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	359864
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Natalia Power

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ben O'Connor
Headteacher	Martin Brannigan
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons, taught by seven different teachers and talked to parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked in particular at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered the responses in 123 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's measures to raise pupils' attainment in mathematics.
- The quality of the teaching, and whether it meets the needs of all pupils.
- How well the school promotes pupils' understanding of community cohesion.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than usual. Three out of four pupils are from White British backgrounds, and the others come from a wide range of heritages, mainly from other White backgrounds. Currently around one in ten pupils speak English as an additional language, but very few are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little lower than average. Following the retirement of his predecessor, a new headteacher took up his post in January 2011.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school where the pupils are happy and well cared for. Parents and carers value its strong Catholic ethos, shared by staff and pupils alike. In this safe and secure environment, pupils develop good personal qualities and behave well. One parent commented, 'We particularly like the way pupils are taught the values of kindness and consideration towards one another.' This is representative of several comments recognising the good care and support for pupils.

Pupils develop good spiritual, moral and social skills. They know right from wrong and have a strong shared sense of belonging to the school community. One parent summed this up in the comment, 'I value the nurturing ethos and the way the older children look after the younger ones.' However, pupils are not always made sufficiently aware of the faiths and cultures of people from different parts of the world and different backgrounds.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year and make good progress in their learning. Pupils' progress from Years 1 to 5 is uneven, and this reflects the inconsistent quality of teaching. Strong teaching in Year 6 enables pupils to attain results which, in broad terms, are a little higher than average in English and average in mathematics.

One reason for this lower attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 2 is that teachers do not consistently make use of the school's assessment systems to ensure that pupils are given tasks in mathematics that are accurately tailored to their needs. Another reason is that teachers provide less guidance on how pupils can improve their work when marking mathematics books than when marking English.

The new headteacher is promoting a 'can do' spirit in the school. In the few weeks since taking office, he has analysed the reasons why the school has remained satisfactory since the previous inspection. The school now has a satisfactory view of its strengths and weaknesses and is using this to draw up ambitious plans for change. Classroom monitoring is now more rigorous, but there has not been time for the recent improvements to make a sufficient impact on how well pupils are doing. Progress in meeting the recommendations from the previous inspection has been uneven. One recommendation, to improve pupils' writing, has been well addressed, and the writing of pupils currently in the school is of good quality. However, teaching is still not consistently good. Overall the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning to at least good overall in order to raise attainment by:
 - raising the level of challenge for all pupils ♦
 - improving the pace of learning in lessons, with more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning
 - accelerating the programme of classroom monitoring with a sharp focus on how well pupils are learning.
- ensuring that pupils' attainment in mathematics is raised by:
 - ensuring that the school's tracking of pupils' progress is used more effectively in the classroom to enable all pupils to receive appropriate support and work which is tailored more accurately to their needs
 - improving the consistency and quality of marking in mathematics, to ensure that all pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Extend pupils' wider understanding of different faiths, cultures and customs, in order to help them understand better their place in the wider world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils report that they enjoy school and like their teachers. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. All groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress in line with others, because their needs are identified early and met through targeted and effective support. A scrutiny of pupils' work throughout the school shows that pupils generally do best in reading and writing, but are challenged less in mathematics. Where lessons engage pupils and provide them with responsibility for their own learning, they make faster progress than in others where they are passive learners. For example, in one lively English lesson, Year 6 pupils worked in groups to analyse the language and imagery in poems carefully selected to match their capabilities. This lesson provided exciting opportunities for pupils to do their own research and discuss their findings with others. Some lessons, however, do not fully exploit the pupils' natural curiosity, and in these cases they make slower progress.

Pupils are friendly, confident and polite to visitors. They are proud of their school and value its special qualities. For example, they report that they enjoy writing their thoughts and ideas in their prayer journals. They understand the importance of taking exercise and eating a healthy diet, and one commented, 'Yogurt with fruit is better for you than chocolate yogurt.' They feel safe in school and know the adults will support them if they have any concerns. Pupils have some opportunities to take responsibility within the school, and plans are in hand to strengthen the school council and provide it with a budget so that pupils can feel their voice is heard. However, pupils currently have too few opportunities to contribute to the wider community. The satisfactory grounding pupils acquire in the basic skills and their average attendance prepare them adequately for the next stage of schooling.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons, and there are warm relationships in the classroom. In the best lessons, teachers set a brisk pace and use challenging tasks to stimulate pupils to think for themselves. For example, in one brisk Year 4 English lesson, pupils enjoyed thinking up exciting words and ideas to deepen their understanding of a Chinese tale. While they worked, the teacher created an authentic atmosphere through the use of background Chinese music. The pupils' learning was rapid, because they were all engaged in discovering ideas for themselves, rather than being told. The work was carefully organised, ensuring that all groups of pupils, whatever their capabilities, were given a good level of challenge. However, this is not the case in every lesson. Teachers do not always use the assessment information about pupils' current attainment accurately enough to provide them with tasks with the level of challenge that best fits their needs, and this shortcoming slows their progress in mathematics. Marking is inconsistent. In English, marking is thorough and helps pupils understand how to improve, but marking in mathematics offers less clear guidance. In some lessons, too little is expected of the pupils and in these cases they make slower progress. Sometimes pupils spend too long passively sitting on the carpet listening to the teacher and in these cases, the helpful teaching assistants are not able to make a full contribution and pupils sometimes become restless and fidgety.

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The curriculum has a satisfactory focus on the basic skills and, when pupils are given opportunities, they use information and communication technology well to undertake research and to produce school videos. However, in some year groups, pupils are given tasks with too little challenge. For example, some worksheets set give pupils limited scope to undertake their own research. Pupils report that they enjoy the wide range of trips and visits to places of interest, and particularly appreciate their sports clubs.

Pupils are cared for well and given good support. A representative comment from one parent was, 'My children have made lovely relationships with the staff who understand their individual needs.' Children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are given very good support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are looked after well and in many cases catch up with their classmates. Transition arrangements into the Reception Year are good and, through good links with a range of secondary schools, Year 6 pupils are well prepared for their move to their next school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

'We are encouraged by the plans and enthusiasm of the new headteacher.' This and other comments from parents and carers reflect the new headteacher's strong commitment to improvement. For example, he has set up a rigorous programme of classroom visits with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning. At present in monitoring, there is insufficient emphasis given to checking how well pupils are progressing. The governing body shares his ambition, and has set up a committee specifically designed to move the school from satisfactory to good. However, it is too soon for the recent changes to have made a sufficient impact on pupils' achievement and, as a result, the ambition and drive for improvement of leaders and managers are judged to be satisfactory rather than good. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination adequately, ensuring that all pupils make satisfactory progress. The headteacher and governing body ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust and that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures and all adults are thoroughly checked and vetted before working in the school.

Leaders and managers make time to be available for parents and carers, and keep them well informed about their children's progress. They make good links with organisations such as sports partnerships to promote the pupils' well-being. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory overall. Pupils have a strong sense of the school's importance in the local community and get on well with one another. However, leaders do not sufficiently develop links with schools and communities, both in this country and

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overseas, to ensure that pupils have a full understanding of other people's ways of life and systems of belief.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was higher than usual. All those who returned questionnaires, or who spoke to inspectors, agreed that the school keeps their children safe, and nearly all agreed that their children enjoy school. The findings of the inspection are that safeguarding is a good feature of the school and that pupils are happy and enjoy school. A few parents and carers felt that the school does not help them sufficiently to support their children's learning and that it does not take sufficient account of their views and concerns. Inspectors, however, found that the school keeps parents and carers well informed and engages well with them. A few expressed other concerns about the school, but there was no specific trend or pattern to these issues. However, each issue was investigated, including discussion with the headteacher. Overall, most parents and carers were happy with their children's experience at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	66	40	33	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	83	67	40	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	45	37	73	59	3	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	37	68	55	9	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	44	60	49	4	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	38	60	49	12	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	41	65	53	4	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	42	34	59	48	9	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	35	71	58	7	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	34	67	54	9	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	37	64	52	7	6	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	45	37	63	51	6	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	57	47	38	5	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



7 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, East Molesey KT8 2PG

Do you remember when three visitors came to your school recently to watch you learn and play? Thank you for making us so welcome, and telling us your views. Here are some of the things we found.

- Your school gives you a satisfactory quality of education, which means that it does some things well but some things need to be improved.
- Your school keeps you safe and healthy. You behave well and pay close attention in lessons. You are polite and respectful to visitors.
- Everyone takes good care of you. In turn you enjoy taking on responsibilities at school, such as older pupils looking after the younger children.
- You make satisfactory progress and leave school with results which are very much like those of pupils in the country as a whole. We want you to do even better, especially in mathematics. We have therefore asked the adults to give all of you more chances to take charge of your own learning and do more for yourselves. We have asked them to make sure that you are always given tasks that suit your individual needs and challenge you to do your best. You should soon begin to find that the pace of lessons becomes brisker. You should also soon find that marking in your mathematics books is as helpful as it is in your English books.
- You gain a great deal from the supportive Catholic ethos of the school. Now we want the adults to tell you even more about the many different ways in which people live and worship in this country and abroad.

All the adults are working very hard to make your school better and better. You can play your part by working hard, too, and always asking if there is anything you do not understand.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Natalia Power
Lead inspector

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