

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111359
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	378287
Inspection dates	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Mark Williams HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edward Young
Headteacher	Elaine Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Four teachers were observed teaching seven lessons. Two of these lesson observations were carried out jointly with the deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with all 10 Year 6 pupils, with three members of the governing body, and with a representative from the local authority. Meetings were also held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, and the subject leaders for English and mathematics.

The inspector observed the school's work, including looking at pupils' writing in Years 2 and 6. He also scrutinised a range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Seven pupils were listened to as they read. Owing to too few responses being recorded, the inspector was unable to take account of Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. He did, though, take account of the responses to the 22 questionnaires from parents and carers that were returned along with the 51 from pupils and the nine from staff.

Information about the school

This is a small school compared with others of the same type nationally. The school has been subject to some turbulence in staffing. At the time of the inspection the class comprising pupils in Years 1 and 2 was being taught for three days a week by a teacher who commenced her duties just three days earlier and for the remaining two days by a teacher who had previously been with the class full-time. The headteacher, formerly the deputy headteacher, has been in post since April 2010. A new deputy headteacher took up post in January 2012. A National Leader in Education was appointed in the spring term 2012 to work with the school.

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is three times the national average. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is twice the national average. The current floor standard has not been met; this is the minimum standard expected for primary schools. In November 2011, the local authority issued the school with a warning notice relating to its performance.

The school is in the process of submitting evidence with the aim of achieving the Artsmark.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key Findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- This is not a satisfactory school because achievement is too low and is not improving. Over time weaknesses in teaching lead to pupils making less than expected progress and school leaders and managers have not been rigorous in tackling the areas for improvement.
- School leaders and the governing body have been honest in their self-evaluation. However, until recently, they have not had a strategic overview of the school's effectiveness and the governing body has only recently begun to hold the school to account. The checks on how well the school is performing, including records of the impact of actions taken or areas that require further improvement, lack rigour and are weak, as is the leadership of teaching. While there are signs of some improvement, in the work of the newly appointed deputy headteacher and the leaders for English and mathematics, for example, the impact of actions on pupils' progress is not evident.
- The lack of strategic direction and holding staff to account has resulted in the actions to bring about improvements not being followed through systematically. This has led to the achievement of pupils, over time, being inadequate. As a consequence, pupils in Year 6 have left the school year-on-year with low attainment in English and mathematics. As a result of inaccuracy in the current assessments of pupils' writing, the school is not demonstrating that it has the capacity to stop the decline in standards.
- Teaching over time is inadequate. Good teaching does exist in the school, and particularly in Key Stage 2. However, the picture is mixed and inconsistent across the school and at best leads to pupils making only satisfactory progress. This is not strong enough to eradicate previous underachievement to bring about at least average attainment. There have been recent improvements made to the outdoor area in the

Early Years Foundation Stage. However, opportunities for pupils to make good use of this new environment are not being fully taken.

- Pupils behave well and they are kept safe. Parents, carers and pupils are very positive about the care provided by the school. However, in common with other records at the school, there is a lack of rigour in the way in which the few minor incidents are documented.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national average levels by:
 - improving rapidly the progress all pupils make in their learning
 - ensuring the assessments of what pupils can do are secure, particularly so in writing
 - improving the quality of teaching so it is consistently good across the school
 - ensuring suggestions made to pupils for improving their work, in marking for example, are followed through with rigour and consistency
 - revising the register of pupils with special educational needs so that pupils are placed at the most appropriate stage to best support their learning and development.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and strengthen the school's capacity so that both are at least good by:
 - ensuring all actions identified in improvement plans are followed through systematically and with rigour and that leaders report clearly the impact of these actions on pupils' learning
 - providing training for all subject leaders and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader so they are confident in reporting the quality of achievement and teaching in their areas and that their judgements are based on secure evidence
 - ensuring records of concern about individual pupils are refined so that they provide a systematic overview of any actions taken and the resultant impact.
- Ensure that all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from the recently developed learning environment, particularly the outdoor area, so that their overall development is enhanced.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The inspection evidence and the school's own evaluation shows achievement to be inadequate. This does not support the positive views of parents and carers, and nearly all pupils who considered that good progress was being made in learning. The standards pupils attain in both Key Stages 1 and 2 since the previous inspection have been low. This is because the progress pupils have made from their varied starting points has been inadequate. The school has not met the current floor standard for the last two years and, primarily, because of inaccuracies in the quality of assessments in writing, is unlikely to meet it again this year.

Pupils' current work indicates great inconsistency in progress ranging from inadequate to good. At its current rate, the progress being made by pupils is not strong enough to make up for previous underachievement that has existed for some time. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage currently make satisfactory progress in their learning and development. It is no better because opportunities to enhance learning in the outdoor area, for example, are not routinely taken. Across the school, while fluency in reading is being developed well through guided reading books which capture the imagination of pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6, there is inconsistency in the way pupils sound out the letters which make up words. Standards in reading by the end of Years 2 and 6 are broadly average. However, the books pupils choose independently are not always as challenging in terms of content and vocabulary as those used with them by adults. The quality of pupils' writing remains inconsistent and includes repeated errors in spellings and in the use of punctuation and tenses. Progress in mathematics is also variable, and some misconceptions are not identified early enough, which contributes to pupils' lack of confidence in applying mathematics. Where progress is best, well focused teaching addresses any misconceptions and mistakes and builds on previous learning well. Pupils with special educational needs make no better progress than their peers and not all of these pupils are appropriately placed on the special educational needs register.

Quality of teaching

Teaching overall is inadequate, despite the perception of parents and carers and nearly all pupils. Teaching is not consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils make better than satisfactory progress. For some pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 1, teaching leads to inadequate progress, overall. Where teaching is weaker, teachers' explanations are unclear and learning activities are not fully understood by pupils. In addition, misunderstandings in pupils' learning are not identified quickly enough. In these lessons, learning is slow and progress and enjoyment are limited. In a few cases, it is the work of the teaching assistant that is having the best impact. Marking in Year 1 and Year 2 often fails to secure improvements.

The enjoyment, engagement and attentiveness of pupils in lessons where teaching is better, in Key Stage 2, for example, present a stark contrast to that which is weaker. In these better lessons, teachers make effective use of questions, prompts and discussion to assess how well pupils are learning, for example, about possessive apostrophes and proportion. They use this information to re-shape lessons and present activities that not only draw on previous learning, but present challenge too. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, which ensures pupils are kept on task. Such lessons contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and this shows in their good behaviour and ability to work in teams. Over time, too much has been expected of the Year 6 teacher to ensure pupils catch up. This has led this year to leaders narrowing the curriculum in Year 6 in order to provide a greater focus on English and mathematics and to assist the school in its efforts to accelerate the progress of these pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents and carers are confident the school keeps their children safe. The large majority of pupils agree. Similar responses were received in relation to behaviour at the school. Typically, pupils behave well. They are polite individuals and get on well together. Exclusions are very rare. Pupils have a good knowledge of different types of bullying, are confident it is infrequent and that if any should occur it will be dealt with quickly. As a result

of the strong pastoral commitment of the staff and particularly the headteacher, pupils and families are known well and there is confidence that the school will deal with any issues that arise. Nevertheless, this aspect of the school's work is judged to be satisfactory but not better, because, in common with other records at the school, procedures for documenting the few incidents of concern lack rigour. This has led to instances where actions designed to improve the behaviour of a few pupils have not been followed through.

The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily overall. The Christian ethos of the school shines through with pupils participating thoughtfully in prayers. They take great delight in supporting one another too, for example, applauding enthusiastically the efforts each had made to dress up as fictional characters as part of the school's celebrations for World Book Day. They also enjoy taking on responsibilities, for example, the school council's work with the school and an external partner to make the playground a safer place. Pupils' understanding of their own Christian faith is strong. Their understanding of religions and cultures that are different to their own is less well developed. Attendance levels are average and have improved from last year.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management, as evaluated honestly by the school, is inadequate. The progress pupils make in their learning is not good enough and standards of attainment are too low. Improvements have not been brought about quickly enough because actions have not been followed through with sufficient rigour. For example, in 2011, the predicted Year 6 results were lower than expected demonstrating the fragility of the school's use of assessment data. Such inaccuracy remains. The school's positive actions to address weaknesses have been too recent to show any impact. In addition, there has been too little challenge to school leaders from the governing body in the face of continued weaknesses, and this demonstrates an inadequate capacity to improve.

Nevertheless, school leaders and the governing body have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. Good relations exist with parents and carers as demonstrated by the positive returns to the inspection questionnaires, strong turnout at parents' evening and the involvement of a small group of parents and carers in school as part of the World Book Day celebrations.

The weaknesses in pupils' learning result from ineffective teaching and leadership. However, the curriculum is satisfactory. It meets requirements and helps to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily. There are some weaknesses in the curriculum, for example, Year 6 the curriculum is restricted in order to focus on English and mathematics. While the school is endeavouring to promote equality of opportunity, for example, to improve the achievement of girls, because the quality of teaching is so variable, it is failing to do so. This inadequacy is the result of leadership which, over time, has not been rigorous in checking the quality of teaching and its impact on how well all pupils are learning. There are signs of improvement, though. The deputy headteacher in observations with the inspector was accurate about quality and what needed to be improved. In addition, the subject leaders for English and mathematics have begun to build up evidence which is more secure than in the past. However, they have not yet had the opportunity to evaluate what the evidence is telling them about the quality of teaching in their subjects and the impact on pupils' progress.

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2JJ

I am writing to thank you for the welcome you gave me when I inspected your school recently. I am grateful to you all for speaking with me, and particularly so to Year 6 for giving up one of their break times to tell me about their experiences. Thank you also for completing the inspection questionnaire. From the information you gave me, I could see you are very positive about your school. You are happy there, and you appreciate the way you are looked after. I particularly enjoyed watching your World Book Day Parade. What super costumes you had ranging from Mrs Trunchball to Oliver! I could see you thoroughly enjoyed the celebrations. I also enjoyed listening to a few of you read. I thought you did so fluently.

However, not all the things about your school are as good as they could be. As a result of this inspection, I have decided that your school requires special measures. This means it will receive additional help and inspectors will visit regularly to see how the school is getting on.

Your school needs special measures to help you make better progress in your learning so that you can reach higher standards in English and mathematics by the time you leave. This has come as no surprise to your headteacher who told me that this improvement was needed. To help you reach higher standards, I have also asked the school's leaders and the governing body to make sure that their plans to improve your school are carried out and that checks are made to find out how successful they have been helping you. As well as this, the adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been asked to carefully record all minor incidents and make better use of the new learning environment, particularly the outdoor area.

I am confident you will all want to help your school in making these improvements and wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

