

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103466
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376912
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	David Shears

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Allan
Headteacher	Maureen O'Leary
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by 8 different teachers, and held meetings with representative members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at policies, planning documentation, assessment data and pupils' work. They analysed the questionnaires returned by 115 parents and carers, 16 members of staff and 115 pupils.

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

- Inspectors evaluated the quality of teaching and learning and whether it consistently helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress, especially boys in writing.
- They considered the development of core skills within the curriculum, particularly in writing.
- Inspectors assessed the effectiveness of the leaders and managers in bringing about improvements to ensure better progress.
- They explored the quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly for outdoor learning.

Information about the school

St Alban's is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are White British, with a few from other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average; their needs are mainly moderate learning difficulties with a few with specific learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average, and few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of those known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The headteacher took up her post in September 2011 and there is currently an acting deputy headteacher. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Alban's is a good school. This is because pupils make good progress in their learning, enabling them to reach high standards so that their achievement is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their high levels of attendance, with very few pupils being persistently absent.

The school reviews the progress that pupils make and identifies either groups of pupils or individuals who are at risk of underachievement, intervening with extra support to ensure that they improve. For example, through accurate self-evaluation, the school found that boys were not achieving as highly as girls in writing. A number of initiatives were introduced with the aim of encouraging boys to write and, as a result, the attainment of boys in writing has significantly improved. Similarly, a group of girls has recently been identified as needing support in mathematics and there is a clear plan of action for the current year to address this. As a result, the school's attainment has improved since the last inspection, demonstrating a good capacity to improve further.

The quality of teaching is good because pupils have excellent attitudes towards their work and they behave exceptionally well. The quality of care, guidance and support that they receive is outstanding, so that they all feel totally safe and secure within a nurturing environment that is strongly based on a set of values, beliefs and principles. As a result, their spiritual and moral development, in particular, is outstanding. While lessons enable most pupils to make good progress, assessments are not consistently used to plan work that is tailored to their needs, sometimes limiting the progress that they could make. While pupils feel happy that they are progressing well, they do not always know for themselves how they could improve.

The wider curriculum ensures that pupils practise their basic skills and they continue to make good progress, although there are not enough planned links between subjects to help pupils make links in their learning, provide greater creativity and to inspire them to find out more.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and are accurate in their assessment of what needs to improve. They monitor the school's provision by looking at pupils' books and observing learning in the classroom, giving feedback to staff. However, the challenge to improve sometimes lacks enough rigour to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. While targets are set to ensure that pupils make expected progress, and most make

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good progress, targets are not consistently high enough to ensure that all pupils make at least good progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning and thereby raise the progress of pupils to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - assessment is consistently used to plan work that is carefully matched to pupils' capabilities and learning needs and is aimed at developing pupils' skills
 - all pupils have a clear understanding of the next steps in their learning.
- Increase the effectiveness of the curriculum by closely linking subjects together to enthuse and inspire pupils more fully in their learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that:
 - overall targets set are consistently challenging so that all pupils make at least good and, increasingly, outstanding progress
 - the monitoring of the effectiveness of learning, including that of curriculum leaders, rigorously challenges teachers to improve further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' skills and development on entry to the school is generally above that which is expected nationally in most areas with the exception of communication, language and literacy, where it is broadly in line with those typical for children of this age. Throughout their time at the school, most pupils make good progress. Consequently, they leave with attainment that is high. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported by teaching assistants who encourage them to give of their best. For example, in one lesson seen, pupils were exploring how to group a small number of cubes together to make rectangles to support them in their early understanding of multiplication. In some lessons, pupils apply their knowledge in real-life situations. For example, in another lesson seen, pupils were exploring bank statements, performing calculations using both positive and negative numbers.

Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and the curriculum supports them in learning about the dangers of smoking and taking drugs. As a result, the school has achieved Healthy Schools status. Pupils make a positive contribution to school life, taking on responsibilities such as being play leaders during breaks and giving their views through the school council. They have a good impact on the local area, including picking up litter, planting bulbs in the local parkland and singing to and cooking for the local elderly. A link with another school locally with a different ethnic mix is helping pupils to gain a growing understanding of other cultures. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by their high attainment and excellent attendance, but their economic well-being is not

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outstanding because pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of the steps they need to take to improve further.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Positive relationships are the hallmark of every classroom, where a 'can do' attitude encourages pupils to try their best in all their work. Lessons begin with a clear explanation of what pupils are going to learn, and they are told how they will know when they have been successful in their learning. Pupils work extremely well together, either with a learning partner or in groups, and support each other well in their learning. At the end of lessons, teachers ask pupils to record whether they feel they have understood the learning. In the better lessons, pupils are involved in practical activities that relate their learning to real life so that they understand why their learning is important. While staff use interactive whiteboards as a teaching aid, these are not used to their full potential.

Pupils have opportunities to practise their core skills in the wider curriculum, especially in English and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics. There are many enrichment activities to make learning relevant for pupils such as going on visits that relate to their current topic and having special visitors in school. Particular weeks are set aside to focus on specific areas such as Black History week. There are both sporting and artistic opportunities for pupils who are gifted and talented, and all pupils learn to play a musical instrument. Links between information and communication technology and other subjects have been made so that it can be

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

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used to support pupils’ learning. There are some extra-curricular activities provided by the school, which pupils enjoy and the school also refers pupils to activities that are provided by other organisations.

The support offered to all pupils is outstanding. In particular, support given to pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable is excellent. The school works closely with outside agencies to help meet the needs of these pupils. A family support worker has been employed to offer help to parents and carers. Where there is a particular need, the school, along with the local cluster of schools, is proactive in addressing it. For example, the cluster is employing a speech therapist to give expert advice and support for pupils with speech and language difficulties. The transition arrangements for children beginning school, moving from class to class and transferring to secondary school are very effective. For example, as well as the usual visits to their next secondary school, pupils also have the opportunity to experience after-school activities there and practise using the bus.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The pastoral support for pupils, parents and carers and staff is a key strength of leadership and management that leads to a school where all are encouraged and supported. The school celebrates its strengths and knows where it needs to improve, and a clear school development plan outlines how improvements are to be made. The governing body is very supportive and also has a good knowledge of the school. Its role in challenging the school is developing well, and it is given much information to help it to do this, although data is not always rigorously interrogated. The governing body has fostered excellent relationships with parents and carers and are often seen supporting at school meetings and events. Some of the subject leaders are new to their posts and have not had sufficient time or experience to both support and challenge staff in their areas.

The engagement with parents and carers is outstanding. They speak highly of the school and value the opportunities to take an active part. Opportunities for them to see how the school teaches particular skills are given through workshops, such as in mathematics. These are offered to parents and carers of all pupils and they are well supported. Parents and carers are also invited to assemblies, and to celebrate mass with the school. The number of parents and carers who volunteer to come and help in school is increasing. There are good partnerships with other agencies and schools.

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These include those relating to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to make good progress.

The school works well to minimise any discrimination and promote equal opportunities. This is because they rigorously monitor the performance of different groups and implement strategies to reduce any variations. Safeguarding is a priority and the school works well in making sure that all pupils are kept safe, whether in school or out on a trip. This is clearly recognised and appreciated by both parents and pupils. In particular, there are daily risk assessments to ensure the safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school promotes community cohesion well. In particular, the school’s own community is an excellent example of people working and playing well together, and where differences are celebrated. This extends into the local area, pupils having a good understanding of what it means to live in the community. There are good links with schools in Rwanda and Romania as well as support for a number of charities, including ‘Operation Christmas Child’, to give pupils a growing knowledge of the international community. The school has plans to develop a link nationally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a positive start to their education at St Alban’s. This is because there are clear and supportive induction arrangements which help children to feel happy and secure in their new environment from the moment they arrive. Links with parents and carers are strong. Arrangements to ensure the safety of children are rigorously applied, including daily risk assessments. Assessments are used to ensure that children build on their knowledge and understanding and, consequently, they

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make good progress in all areas of learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well and the leader has a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development, although these are not sufficiently recorded to share with others. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. While the indoor environment looks bright and inviting and has opportunities for children to learn in all six areas of learning, this is not reflected in the outdoor environment, limiting its effectiveness.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive in their views about the school. They agreed that their children enjoyed school, were kept safe and had their needs met. Almost all agreed that their children make enough progress because of the good teaching and that they are kept informed of this. A few parents and carers were unsure about whether their child was well prepared for the future. Inspectors found that there are effective arrangements to support pupils in settling well into new classes and moving to secondary school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Alban's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	93	81	21	18	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	102	89	12	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	66	57	47	41	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	61	41	36	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	81	70	31	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	73	63	37	32	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	56	46	40	3	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)	66	57	40	35	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	73	63	38	33	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	79	69	30	26	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	51	50	43	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	78	68	32	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	86	75	26	23	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



14 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B14 5AL

Thank you for the welcome that we received when we visited your school recently. It was lovely to meet you all and find out about your good school.

You told us that you feel very safe at school and your parents and carers agree. This is because your school takes very good care of you. We found that you look after each other very well too and we were very impressed with your behaviour and good manners. Well done.

Although you make good progress in your learning, we are sure that you could make even better progress. To help you to do this, we have asked the school leaders to give you more challenging targets and your teachers to make sure that all your work is tailored to your particular needs. We have asked the school leaders to check that you are making as much progress as you can. You can help by telling your teacher if you are finding the work too easy or too hard.

We have also asked that you have a more exciting curriculum that helps you to see the links between all the different subjects and encourages you to find out even more for yourselves.

Thank you again for a lovely two days. We wish you all the very best in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

David Shears
Lead inspector

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