

# St Amand's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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Loca l Author ity	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380623
Inspection dates	5-6 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah McCarthy
Headteacher	Helen Clark
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 March 2009
School address	St Mary's Road
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 Age group
 4–11

 Inspection date(s)
 5–6 October 2011

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# Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors saw 13 lessons or parts of lessons and observed seven teachers. Meetings were held with senior leaders, representatives of the governing body, an officer of the local authority, pupils and members of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including monitoring, self-evaluation and assessment records, policy documents, the school improvement plan, teachers' planning, governing body minutes and samples of pupils' work. A range of documents and records were looked at in relation to the safeguarding of pupils, including case studies of pupils whose circumstances potentially make them vulnerable. Inspectors examined questionnaires returned by 61 parents and carers, 47 pupils and 10 members of staff.

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

- The consistency of attainment and achievement across the school, and whether or not they are improving, especially for more-able pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effectiveness of senior and middle managers, and governors, in monitoring teaching and learning and in driving improvement.
- The extent of the development of the school's curriculum, and how it motivates pupils and provides challenge and interest for them.

# Information about the school

St Amand's is a smaller than average primary school. The large majority of pupils come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, the largest group having moderate learning disabilities. Three classes have single year groups of pupils and two have mixed-age groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There are a steadily increasing number of pupils entering the school who belong to families in the Armed Forces. The headteacher was appointed in November 2010. There have been a number of staff changes in the last 12 months. There is a daily after-school club on site which is managed by school staff.

## **Inspection judgements**

### Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

#### The school's capacity for sustained improvement

## Main findings

St Amand's Catholic Primary provides a satisfactory education. The school has gone through a very uncertain period since the last inspection, due to staffing and leadership difficulties. However, since the arrival of the present headteacher almost a year ago, the school has gained a new momentum, and is showing significant improvement which is gathering pace in many areas of priority. The headteacher has led the school with decisiveness and determination while retaining universal respect for her care for the development and well-being of the pupils. Many parents commend her leadership of the school which has led to 'fantastic improvements', 'making the school a happy and secure place to be'. A willing and enthusiastic staff and team of senior leaders have enabled good improvements to be made in the dayto-day monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance, there is better communication with parents, especially about pupil behaviour, and improving consistency in the progress of pupils. There has also been good improvement in the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, who have a good start to their education. In addition, previous strengths of the school, such as pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning, good attendance, involvement in the local community and sheer enjoyment of school have been maintained. The care, guidance and support of pupils are all good, and parents, carers and pupils alike all have the utmost confidence in the school's provision of a high quality of care and safety. The school's relationships and engagement with parents and carers are very positive, and all feel fully involved in the education of their children. Additionally the headteacher and an improving governing body evaluate the performance of the school accurately, know its strengths and have a clear plan to take it forward. These factors and the school's recent track record indicate that it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' attainment has fluctuated in the last few years, but there is now more stability in progress, and attainment is improving, especially in mathematics. The priority for the school is for this improvement to be maintained and consolidated right through to the end of Year 6. The leadership knows that to do this, teachers should have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially within time limits, and encourage all pupils to develop urgency in their activities. Although pupils have detailed targets, they do not always assess their own work sufficiently, and so sometimes do not work to their full potential. Pupils are provided with a broad curriculum, but the school knows that it could be more stimulating and exciting, and cater more for the interests of the pupils. They also have too few opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum in order to help raise their attainment further.

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This is an inclusive and welcoming school with a strong Catholic ethos. This, together with many good partnerships, contributes positively to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils.

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.

#### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure a more diverse and creative curriculum by:
  - strengthening and broadening curriculum initiatives to take account of the specific needs and interests of pupils
  - extending the opportunities for the accurate use of English, particularly writing, across the curriculum in order to help raise attainment, and encourage greater creativity.
- Build upon recent improvements in attainment, achievement and progress by:
  - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and encourage more urgency for completion of activities
  - modelling and sharing existing good practice in the school to make all teaching good or better
  - encouraging pupils to take greater ownership of their own learning and achievement so that they know and reach their potential.

#### Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

The achievement of pupils in the last three years has been variable throughout the school, with attainment moving between above and below average. There is clear evidence that progress is now consistently at least satisfactory in all year groups, including those with mixed-age classes. After joining Year 1 with skills expected for their age, pupils are making increasingly better progress in Years 1 and 2 and this year their attainment was above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Progress is accelerating in Years 3 to 6, and at the end of Year 6 this year, pupils' attainment was above average in mathematics although still slightly below average in English, especially in writing. Evidence from pupils' work and progress data clearly indicates that there is now far more consistent achievement, which although satisfactory, shows an increasing number of pupils making good progress throughout the school. The previous pattern of underachievement of moreable pupils has been identified by the school and addressed effectively, and most of them are reaching the levels of which they are capable. Likewise, after a blip last year, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making satisfactory, and in some cases good, progress. Better progress is due to more consistent evaluation of teaching and learning, better use of good assessment information and

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pupils having more understanding of their learning goals and targets. Learning is best when teaching is stimulating and matched to pupils' interests, such as in a class with pupils from Years 5 and 6, when they linked their writing to different styles of news reporting about mosaic discoveries which they had been studying in art.

Learning is also enhanced by the good behaviour and attitudes of pupils, who are lively but remain polite, respectful and considerate of each other. As one said, 'Peer mentors sort things out; they reassure worried pupils about school.' Pupils feel safe in school, and talk enthusiastically about gaining Healthy Schools Status and Activemark. They are also proud, as a small school, of winning the county junior cricket final this year. They like to take responsibility and make good contributions to the school and local community, as well as raising money regularly for charities. Their enjoyment of school is especially marked in the weekly 'Celebration Assemblies' which are very popular with both pupils and their parents. Their consistently good attendance and punctuality also demonstrate their enthusiasm for school. Pupils are increasingly improving their basic skills and personal qualities in preparation for their future.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	
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 <sup>1</sup>	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

### How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and some teaching is good. The rising attainment in English, and especially mathematics throughout the school, points clearly to a rapidly improving picture of teaching. More systematic

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

well-focused support and guidance from school leaders, especially the headteacher, are enhancing the development of teaching skills. There is now consistency in planning, and good understanding and use of assessment data in order to identify the specific needs of all pupils. Teachers are careful to ensure that planning takes full account of the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. Teachers' marking is also more consistent and offers helpful guidance to pupils, although occasionally younger pupils are unable to read and understand the marking comments. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils, teach basic skills accurately and set realistic learning targets which most pupils know. There is a tendency to let pupils, especially older ones, work at their own pace, which sometimes lacks urgency. This is because some teachers are not yet sufficiently rigorous in setting time targets for completion of work, and sometimes do not make their expectations of the quality of learning demanded clear enough. Teachers also are not consistent enough in encouraging pupils to take personal responsibility for their own learning and improvement so that they reach their true potential. The support and intervention of teaching assistants contribute satisfactorily and sensitively to pupils' learning and progress, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

A broad curriculum is provided for pupils, although only occasionally does it really provide the interest and stimulation the school intends. The school recognises that pupils need to become more involved, for example, in nominating their areas of interest, so that more independent learning takes place. However, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs, especially sporting, for example crosscountry, tennis and badminton, which are well-attended by enthusiastic pupils. Some opportunities are provided for developing literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, but there is not always sufficient emphasis on these links, particularly for extended writing across all subjects. The curriculum strongly promotes an effective Catholic ethos, which contributes positively to the good provision and outcomes for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Provision for their cultural development is satisfactory.

The school provides a warm and welcoming environment for its pupils, where happy, smiling faces are to be seen everywhere. There are colourful displays of pupils' work in public areas, but much less is on display for pupils to celebrate in their classrooms. There are good arrangements for the care and support of pupils, particularly those in potentially vulnerable circumstances and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils benefit from a good range of links to outside support agencies, and good support from the local authority. The after-school club is well attended and popular. Pupils enjoy it because they say it is well organised, everyone behaves well and there are many interesting things to do in the 'Sunshine Room'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

#### How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is rapidly establishing a management team which shares her high ambition for the accelerating pursuit of improvement in the school. Already many improvements have been made. A significant number of parents and carers have commented on the impact of the headteacher's leadership in shaping improvement, especially in teaching and learning in the school. A parent typically commented, 'The school has an excellent headteacher whose leadership is very evident and is very inspiring.' Leaders are positive and enthusiastic about the expansion of their roles, recognising their responsibilities for ensuring continuous improvement in the achievement and attainment of all pupils. This has been particularly apparent in the rapid development of effective and well-implemented assessment strategies, which has contributed to the better progress made by many pupils in the last year. Staff throughout the school are responding positively to this purposeful and challenging leadership. The governing body has recognised the need to remedy past weaknesses in its evaluation of school performance, and is now involved closely in school evaluation and offering increased challenge to school leaders. Its procedures for safeguarding and reviewing policies reflect good practice, especially in ensuring that pupils feel safe.

The school is making satisfactory and improving progress in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination by resolving recent underachievement by, for example, more-able pupils. Leaders have worked hard to promote good engagement with parents and carers, who appreciate the warm welcome they always receive in school, and the greatly improved communication with them, especially about pupils' behaviour. The school has a good range of partnerships especially with other nearby schools, and the support services of the local authority. The school also works closely with service families addressing the particular needs of these pupils. The contribution to community cohesion is satisfactorily promoted within the school community and through extensive charity fund raising. Wider national and global links are more tenuous, and the school has already developed plans for giving pupils increased opportunities to learn about other communities and cultures further afield.

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**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

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	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

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with the skills typically found in this age group. Nearly all make good progress in improving their skills especially in their social and emotional development and their attitudes to learning. They have very good relationships with each other and with the adults responsible for their care and welfare. Children are happy and settled, feel safe and secure in their surroundings, and develop their curiosity, self-confidence and independence. Teaching is good and the teaching and learning support assistants remain calm and caring at all times. This was observed when children were involved in physical activities in the hall when, although very excited, they followed their instructions carefully and joined in the actions of their nursery songs, following their teacher with enthusiasm. The assessment of children's progress is especially detailed and accurate, with adults making continual observations in both the colourful and welcoming classroom and the outside environment. Adults are intending to improve children's ability to self-evaluate their own learning as some do not yet have an understanding of how they are doing.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, and like provision, have improved since the last inspection. The effective leader has benefited from good support and guidance from the local authority. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully in place, and transition to the main school is good, as children mix frequently with Year 1 in the next classroom. Relationships with parents and carers are good, and they are especially pleased with the information they receive about the progress being made by their children.

These are the grades for the Early	Years Found	ation Stage
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Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage 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

Almost 60% of all parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, a much higher proportion than the national average. They were overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school, being especially happy with their children's experiences of school. Parents and carers feel strongly that their children are kept safe, enjoy school, and that the leadership and management of the school, and teaching, are all good. A parent summed up the feelings of many when commenting, 'There is a seamless care in the school, and we feel that St Amand's could not have given our child a happier and more inspiring start to school life.' A small minority of comments expressed a concern about the supervision of children when the buses arrive at school, which the school has agreed to monitor closely.

#### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Amand'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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 104 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Stro agi	ngly ree	Ag	ree	Disa	gree		ngly gree
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	84	10	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	75	14	23	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	54	25	41	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	57	24	39	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	64	21	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	61	23	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	67	19	31	0	0	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)	29	48	26	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	51	29	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	46	29	48	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	51	26	43	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	67	19	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	75	15	25	0	0	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**

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgement in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.	
	<ul> <li>The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>The quality of teaching.</li> <li>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>	
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 October 2011

**Dear Pupils** 

# Inspection of St Amand's Catholic Primary School, East Hendred, Wantage OX12 8LF

Thank you all so much for making us welcome in your school recently. We were really pleased to see how much you enjoyed school, which you show by your good attendance, and how much you enjoy all your clubs, especially in sport. Your cricket team did fantastically well to win the Cup. I am glad to see how safe you are kept, and hear you say how well the entire staff take care of you. It was good to see you taking responsibilities, and looking after some of the younger children in the playground. You go to a satisfactory and improving school, and we hope you will help it to improve even more. You lead healthy lives and join in many activities with the church and the local community. By the time you leave school at the end of Year 6 your attainment is about what it should be for your age, although your mathematics is better than your English, especially your writing. The youngest children in Class 1 are getting a good start to their learning, especially in all their outside activities. We liked how friendly, cheerful and polite you are and were glad to hear how much you like your teachers, and particularly your headteacher who everyone thinks is doing a very good job. Your parents and carers like the school too, and say they have a lot of information from school about how you are doing.

We are suggesting ways in which the school can improve and hope that you can help. We would like your teachers to give you a more exciting curriculum which can be about things you are interested in, especially if you make suggestions to them. We would also like you to have more practice in writing in all subjects so that you improve more quickly. Another way we think you can improve your English and mathematics skills is for your teachers to make sure they tell you they want you to do your best, and to do it in the time they give you, because you do not always finish your work. We would also like you to think more about how you are doing and whether you are doing your best, especially when you are working without adults guiding you. If you do this we are confident that you will all continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite Lead inspector

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