

St Austin's Catholic (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124361
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380873
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Sharona Semlali

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	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Neylon
Headteacher	Emily Keedwell
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 13 lessons, and seven teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, the school self-evaluation plan, school data, monitoring and evaluation documentation, planning and information relating to safeguarding. The inspectors received and analysed 65 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- Are girls making sufficient progress in all subjects throughout the school?
- Are teaching and the curriculum providing the right support to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make as much progress as possible?
- How effective has the school been in addressing the issues raised since the last inspection?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion with a statement for special educational needs mainly due to learning difficulties, is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are above average. A high number of pupils join or leave partway through their primary school education. The school holds the following awards: Anti-Bullying Pledge Plus, Healthy Schools status, Eco Schools Award, Full Dyslexia Friendly Status and the ActiveMark.

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 Austin's is a good school. It has improved considerably since the last inspection under the dynamic leadership of the headteacher, who is well supported by an able senior leadership team. The school provides a caring ethos for all pupils. It is a welcoming and nurturing place where they feel safe and secure. This is reflected in the above average attendance of pupils. A parent summed up the feeling of the community by saying that, 'The school creates a loving and caring environment for my children.' Pupils are polite, courteous and happy. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is demonstrated in the way they work and play together. Pupils are proud of their school and make a good contribution to it.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The transition into Year 1 is not as smooth as it should be. Nevertheless, the pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. They reach average attainment in mathematics and English by the end of Year 6. All groups of pupils achieve well.

A rich range of extra-curricular activities contribute to pupils' good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and develops their knowledge of the world around them. Teaching is good but pupils are not always given the opportunity to be independent. The use of assessment has improved and is now good which allows the teachers to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of all groups, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lessons move at a good pace but marking is not yet consistent in providing all pupils with a clear indication of their next steps for learning. In addition, pupils are not always given enough time to respond to the teacher's comments.

The senior leadership team, staff and governing body are all motivated and ambitious. They are all committed to bringing further improvement and raising pupils' achievement. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, and have compiled robust action plans to address weaknesses. All of these features underpin the school's good capacity to improve further. The senior leaders now monitor, evaluate and provide a clear direction for the school. However, although some middle leaders manage the subjects they lead effectively, others are relatively new to the role and are yet to take the lead in planning and implementing activities that will bring further rapid improvements to the outcomes for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Accelerate pupils' progress and ensure that it is consistently good or better, by:
 - strengthening transition ensuring that pupils are equipped and well prepared to go into the next year group from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to develop independence in lessons
 - ensuring that marking consistently sets out the next steps for learning, and that pupils are given enough time to respond to the teachers comments.
- Develop the role of the middle leaders so that all are able to provide effective leadership in their subject areas and contribute to bringing further rapid improvements to the outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils show enthusiasm and respond positively in lessons. They are eager to learn and are very inquisitive. In a science lesson, pupils' excitement and curiosity were stimulated when they had to predict what types of substances had been dissolved in solutions before and after seeing the residues. Pupils throughout the school relish the opportunity of challenge and competition. This was demonstrated in a mathematics lesson where they had to quickly rise to the challenge of competing to give the second part of the number bond after the first part came up on the interactive whiteboard in the form of dice.

Although girls did not do as well as boys in last year's national tests, at the end of Year 6, they make equally good progress in lessons. Pupils' work shows that there are no differences in the progress that girls and boys make in a range of subjects. The robust tracking system allows the teachers to identify the pupils who need additional support. As a result the teachers provide those pupils with special educational needs, those who arrive at the school during the course of the school year and those who are learning to speak English with good resources, interesting tasks and effective support.

Pupils have developed good strategies to keep safe. They take their responsibilities seriously. All pupils are class monitors and can join the school council, the 'Eco-Green gang' or the 'playground pals', where the older pupils encourage the younger ones to take part in the break or lunchtime activities. The school's Eco award reflects the pupils' good interest in looking after the environment. Pupils participate in a variety of fundraising, such as to help those suffering from cancer. The school council has recently sold recycled school uniform to raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils develop a good knowledge of the important factors that affect aspects of their health.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

2

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

Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attainment 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	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	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Key strengths are the consistent way in which teachers plan lessons with a clear structure that caters well for the needs of all groups of pupils. This is because the use of assessment is good. Teachers are able to closely target tasks to the needs of, for example, pupils who have recently arrived at the school. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and some pupils are not given enough time to respond to their teachers comments. Verbal feedback to those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly effective.

The brisk pace of lessons helps the pupils to concentrate. In most lessons teachers' good subject knowledge helps to extend the pupils' understanding. In an outstanding lesson, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge helped the pupils to understand how to write an account of the life of Martin Luther King successfully. In a few lessons the pupils are not active enough, are given too little opportunity to think for themselves or to find their own solutions to problems because their teachers make too much use of worksheets.

The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils well. It is particularly effective in meeting the needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, these pupils have individual educational plans which are reviewed and adjusted to meet their needs well. This is due to their progress being effectively tracked and the focused support given to them in the intervention groups by skilled teaching assistants. There is good parental involvement in reviewing the plans. Pupils' basic skills are developed well across the curriculum. For example during topic work pupils are encouraged to use their information communication and technology, literacy and numeracy skills when they designed a booklet for the local convent.

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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However, there are some missed opportunities for pupils to extend and develop these skills in a range of different contexts. Religious education and enrichment activities are key strengths of the curriculum. Pupils participate in a range of sporting activities such as dance, cross country, football, tag rugby and netball. Pupils have taken part in a pyjama day, helping to raise money for charity, and have visited local shops and restaurants as part of their topic work. The school proudly displays photographs of pupils taking part in these events throughout the school. Pupils say they enjoy the trips, enrichment and residential experience. They enjoy taking part in the cookery and gardening clubs. One pupil said, 'It is fun and you are still learning things. It helps us with our work.'

Care, guidance and support are good. Those pupils and families who are vulnerable are provided with effective support and which contributes well to their personal development and well-being. The school works effectively with a range of external agencies. The teaching assistants give pupils good targeted support, both in the classrooms and through intervention groups, enabling all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress. This happens in small groups on a daily basis focussing on the pupils' specific needs. Clear and effective strategies to reduce persistent absence have helped to significantly improve pupils' attendance.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The ambitious headteacher and senior team have been instrumental in promoting a range of exciting experiences in order to raise pupils' achievement. They inspire the staff, pupils and governing body to aspire for high achievement. The governing body knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is influential in shaping its direction. The governors are actively involved in school life and provide good support and challenge. Senior leaders use of a good range of monitoring to identify those aspects of teaching that are working well and where further improvements are needed. Some of the middle leaders are new to their role and are not yet as influential in their subject areas as those who have been in the role for some time. Senior leaders rigorously check that all pupils make the best progress possible, demonstrating that they are fully committed to equality of opportunity.

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that the pupils are safe and protected from harm. All aspects of safeguarding policies and procedures meet

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requirements, and all safeguarding training is up to date. The school's commitment to keeping as safe as possible is reflected in the anti-bullying award it has received.

The school has established good relationships with parents and carers. They are invited into school for celebrations every Friday and there is always a good attendance. Parents and carers took part in working with the pupils on the different activities to achieve the Healthy Schools status, and enjoyed working and learning alongside their children on a 'Learn with Your Child' day. Parental views are sought, using a variety of strategies. The style of reports to parents and carers has been changed in response to feedback from them. The school has a robust community cohesion plan which is reviewed annually. Topics and priorities change depending on the different findings. This has had a positive impact within the school and in the local community.

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	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	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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

From low starting points, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and go into Year 1. Although children make good progress, when they enter Year 1 their skills in early literacy and mathematics are still slightly below that expected for their age. Also transition into Year 1 is not effective enough. As a result the children take some time to settle and their progress slows. Daily routines are well established and the children develop a good understanding of the importance of personal hygiene. Colourful posters are displayed around the sinks, showing them how to wash their hands properly and at the same time developing their independent skills. The children have trusting relationships with the adults and feel safe with them and in their environment. Children's behaviour is exemplary. They play well together and share the resources. They are very inquisitive, as seen when they swarmed

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around the investigation table trying to pick up the ice cubes with a pair of tweezers.

The children enjoy learning. Adults' daily observations inform their thorough planning so that they constantly meet the children's interests and needs. An example of this was when children visited the local library and became excited and interested when they heard the story of 'Pants.' A range of activities developed from this visit. For example, the children enjoyed putting the small pants into the play washing machine, counting, labelling and putting them in numerical order on the washing line.

The environment, both inside and outside, is highly stimulating and well-resourced. Numbers and words are displayed around all areas and children use them for prompts in their learning. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Large canopies enable the children to be outside in all weather conditions. Staff know the children extremely well. Photographs of each key worker's groups are clearly displayed at child height on the doors so that the children can see them.

The manager has forged good partnerships with parents and carers and local nurseries, enabling the children to settle in to school quickly. Good-quality risk assessments reduce any risk of harm to the children. Staff work very closely together and meet daily in order to meet the changing interests of the children. However, the leader is new to the role and is still being mentored by a senior manager in order to aid a seamless transition.

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

In the questionnaires returned, almost all of the views expressed were positive and supportive of the school. A small number of parents and carers did not feel that the school dealt with inappropriate behaviour effectively. The inspection team found behaviour to be good and occasional instances of misbehaviour were dealt with effectively. A few parents and carers were concerned about the use of the wasteland. Inspectors found that the school has landscaping plans to improve this area. More typically, a parent summed up the school in the following comment: 'This is an excellent school. I could not wish any more for my child.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Austin's Catholic (VA) 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 179 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	68	20	31	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	69	17	26	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	46	30	46	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	35	34	52	4	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	40	32	49	5	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	48	28	43	4	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	43	31	48	3	5	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)	32	49	21	32	6	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	42	32	49	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	37	29	45	8	12	4	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	35	32	49	4	6	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	31	48	23	35	5	8	3	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	52	26	40	3	5	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 8 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.



16 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Austin's Catholic (VA) Primary School, Stafford ST17 4BT

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You were very polite, friendly and courteous. We spent time in lessons looking at how you learn, looking at your work and watching you at play. We also spoke to the staff, your parents and carers and members of the governing body. We enjoyed talking to you, especially when you showed us around the school and shared your views with us.

I am pleased to tell you that you go to a good school that is warm and welcoming. You told us you feel safe at school. You enjoy coming to school and look forward to taking part in the good range of activities provided for you. You said you particularly enjoy going on visits and residential stays, and you enjoy dressing up in your pyjamas to raise money for charity. We were impressed with the way you volunteer to become class monitors. We liked the way you treat each other and are very proud of your school, as shown in the colourful displays in your classrooms. All of this has helped you to make good progress.

Your headteacher, governing body and teachers are working together so that you get the best education. In order to make your school even better we have asked them to do two main things. First, to help you make consistently rapid progress in all year groups by allowing you more opportunities to explore and learn by yourselves and giving you more time to read and respond to the comments made by the teachers when they mark your work. You can all help by reading them carefully and responding thoughtfully. Second, we would like those teachers who are new to being subject leaders to play a bigger part in bringing further rapid improvements so that the school gets better and better.

Yours sincerely

Sharona Semlali
Lead inspector

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