

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Rothbury Avenue, Pelaw, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE10 0QY

**Inspection dates** 14–15 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils thrive in the school's exceptionally caring environment. They enjoy coming to school, have good attitudes to learning and make good progress from their starting points. A parent commented, 'My son goes to school with a smile on his face and comes home with a smile on his face.'
- Teaching is good and there is some which is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting activities that allow pupils to develop good skills in a range of subjects. Pupils say that teachers make learning 'fun' at St. Alban's.
- Pupils feel very safe and are confident that teachers will sort out any problems.
- Every member of the school 'team' is passionate about providing the very best care and support for all pupils.
- The governing body, the new headteacher, other leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop.
- The Christian ethos and the school's motto – 'Live Life to the Full' – are central to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils develop into confident, articulate and reflective individuals who are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is insufficient outstanding teaching over time to ensure that pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- Progress in mathematics is not as consistently good as it is in reading and writing across the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons. A joint observation was carried out with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to other lessons.
- Inspectors heard pupils of different ages read.
- They looked at a range of evidence, including: the school development plan, monitoring reports, safeguarding policies, minutes of governing body meetings, records of pupils' progress and work in their books.
- Meetings were held with members of staff, the governing body, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day and took into account responses to the school's own surveys. There were no responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

## Inspection team

Carol Gater, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Deborah Bailey

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Alban's is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs through school action is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The school has met the current government floor standards, which sets the minimum expectation for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has a number of awards, including Artsmark Gold, Fairtrade and the International Award.
- There have been several staff changes since the last inspection. The headteacher has been in post since April 2012. Following the closure of a local school, 36 pupils joined the school during the last academic year.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding, and ensure that it is never less than good by:
  - sharing the outstanding practice that exists within the school
  - ensuring that teachers take account of all information about how well pupils have learnt to plan activities that meet pupils' learning needs, in order to increase the rate of learning, particularly in mathematics
  - ensuring that pupils have opportunities to act on the improvement points given by teachers in their marking.
- Accelerate the rate of progress across the school, particularly in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that teachers know which pupils need to make accelerated progress and plan focused support to make this happen
  - making regular checks on the progress made by those pupils who receive this focused support.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are below age-related expectations, particularly in mathematics. Children settle well in the welcoming environment and very quickly become confident and independent learners. They make good progress, although they join Year 1 still below expectations in some areas.
- Throughout the school, they continue to make good progress and leave Year 6 with attainment in English and mathematics that is overall in line with the national average. The school has actions in place to address the dip in attainment in mathematics in 2012. Current standards in Year 6 show that pupils are on track to reach standards above the national average in 2013. A sharper focus on tracking the progress of individuals has also led to improved attainment at the end of Year 2 and to more pupils reaching the higher levels across the school.
- A focus on improving writing has narrowed the gap between boys' and girls' attainment across the school.
- Progress in reading and writing is consistently good, and in some cases outstanding. However, it is not yet consistently good in mathematics.
- Reading is a strength of the school. The systematic teaching of phonics (linking sounds and letters) gets children off to a good start with early reading. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their favourite authors and the opportunities to read often in school. Family reading sessions have been very successful in raising the profile of reading and home/school record logs show how well parents support their children's learning.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and the few from minority ethnic groups make the same good progress as their peers do because the school identifies their needs at an early stage and provides high quality support. Pupils, who are known to be eligible for pupil premium, make good progress in all areas. This is because the school has used the funding for these pupils to employ and train teachers and teaching assistants to deliver effective support programmes.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall and there are some examples of outstanding practice. Relationships between pupils, teachers and support staff are excellent. All teachers are well-organised and have clear rules and routines in place that promote pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning. They praise pupils' achievements and this leads to raised self-esteem and confidence. Communication between teachers and support staff is very good and joint planning ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- Pupils are engaged in their learning because teachers take account of pupils' interests. Writing improves when they cover topics such as 'Dinosaurs' and 'Superheroes' or plan a sequence of work from a book. Younger pupils conduct research to devise pictograms and pupils in Year 6 create and market products in 'Apprentice Fortnight'. As a result, they develop good thinking and problem-solving skills as well as gaining confidence in social interaction. There are opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills across the curriculum and teachers make meaningful links between subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 rise to the challenge of creating items found in a synagogue for a class museum.
- Teachers use interactive whiteboards very effectively to stimulate pupils' imagination as well as to clarify teaching points.
- In the best lessons, teachers use information about how well pupils have learnt to clearly define activities that are well-matched to pupils' skills and abilities. They take account of where pupils are in their learning, and adapt planning to meet these needs. As a result, progress is rapid and sustained. This is not yet a consistent practice across the school, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers assess pupils' learning and progress regularly. Marking is very thorough and teachers

point out how well pupils have done and provide next steps for improvement. In some cases, however, there are limited opportunities given for pupils to act on the advice given.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a wide variety of activities both indoors and outside, engages children in their learning. They use their imagination well in role play; for example, to work out how to free a superhero who has been frozen in ice. Teachers and support staff work well together and use every opportunity to develop children's vocabulary. Children enjoy sharing their 'World Around Us' books. These books show clearly how children develop their learning and how well parents are engaged in the process.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. From an early age, they are attentive and settle quickly to their work. They are supportive of one another and one boy said, 'everyone is responsible for caring for others'.
- Older pupils recognise how everyone in school, including the secretary and the caretaker, play a part in keeping them safe. Pupils say are confident that bullying is rare and that any issues are dealt with promptly. Parents, too, are confident in this regard and one parent's comment typifies the views of others, 'The teachers and staff provide a safe and happy environment for my child'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different contexts both in and out of school. They are very aware of e-safety.
- Behaviour around the school and in the yard is excellent. It is exemplary in lessons where teaching moves at a quick pace and holds pupils' attention. Sometimes, when the lesson is not tightly focused, behaviour becomes more passive.
- Pupils are extremely polite and considerate to each other and to adults. They respect and celebrate their cultural differences.
- They have a strong sense of the school's role in the local and wider community. The head boy and head girl are proud to represent their school. Pupils, elected to the school council, eagerly take the roles of Chair, treasurer and secretary. They are keen to make things better; for example, planning 'Children in Need' activities to raise money for those less fortunate than themselves, and deciding on which games to purchase for 'rainy' playtimes.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average.
- Systems to support those pupils new to the school are excellent. An older pupil comments that initial fears about changing school were dispelled quickly - 'After a week, we were all friends!'

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The governing body, headteacher and leaders share the same high expectations for St. Alban's. These are underpinned by the school's vision that all children should be given opportunities to 'Live life to the full'. The school's strong Christian ethos and the rich curriculum support pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school has good procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas to improve. Actions taken since the last inspection have improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage successfully. Much has been done to raise the level of attainment in writing and there have been improvements across the school, particularly for boys. Leaders and managers at all levels are committed and enthusiastic in their contribution to moving the school forward. As such, the school has good capacity for further improvement.
- The headteacher has acted quickly to address the 'dip' in attainment in mathematics. New resources have been purchased and there is a focus in the timetable on improving pupils' skills in mental mathematics. There is extra support to target any underachievement. Procedures to check on the impact of this support are not yet fully in place.

- Systems to record pupils' attainment and progress are robust. Analysis has identified pupils who need support to accelerate their rates of progress and this has helped close gaps in their learning. This has been more successful in English than in mathematics.
  - The new headteacher has an excellent understanding of what constitutes outstanding teaching. Through an extensive programme of training and performance management targets for staff, she is ensuring that teaching improves.
  - Safeguarding procedures meet statutory government requirements.
  - The school has effective systems for promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. All groups make equally good progress over time. Funding has been used well to support those pupils in receipt of pupil premium and they have made good progress.
  - The local authority works well with the school to provide support for teachers and leaders at different stages of their careers.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors provide good support for the school, using the expertise of members to best effect and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They ensure that performance management of the headteacher and staff is tightly focused on school priorities. They ask challenging questions about attainment of core subjects and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. The governing body authorises funding, including pupil premium, effectively to provide extra support for pupils who need extra tuition and ensures that staff and pupils' welfare receives the highest consideration. Governors strive to put the school at the heart of the parish and the community and are aware of opportunities for further training.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108398
<b>Local authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	400232

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	235
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vincent Cavanagh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Bridon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 January 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 4693251
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