

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Bewsey Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 0JS

Inspection dates 18–19 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 make good progress and achieve well in all subjects. The results achieved by pupils are rising.
- Teaching is good across the school. Teachers know their pupils very well and plan lessons which take into account each pupil's ability. This means that all pupils make good progress.
- Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes are particularly well taught and supported, so that they make good progress both academically and personally.
- Reading is taught successfully, and standards in literacy and numeracy are at national average levels by Year 6.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are very well supported by teachers and other adults, so they are able to catch up quickly and achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They feel safe and are proud of their school. Pupils work hard in lessons and want to do well.
- The headteacher has high expectations of all pupils and staff. She monitors the quality of teaching very carefully, so she has a very clear idea of the strengths of the school, and of which areas still need to improve.
- The governing body is very effective in holding the school to account. Governors carefully check pupils' results for themselves, so they can challenge the school to improve further.
- The school has good relationships with parents, who are very supportive of the school and its leaders.
- Children from different backgrounds get on well together. The school works successfully to make sure that all pupils feel included and valued as members of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school's checks on how well pupils are doing do not measure very precisely the progress they have made.
- Some teachers' marking does not always show pupils clearly how to improve their work.
- The school does not make sure that all pupils in Key Stage 2 regularly read books at home.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or part-lessons, including two which were jointly observed with the headteacher. All classes were observed. Inspectors made a number of shorter visits to see pupils at work and at play, including in the breakfast club. An inspector also attended the school's Advent Mass.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, with members of school staff including senior and middle leaders, with governors and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the 11 responses to the staff questionnaire that they received. They spoke to a small number of parents and took account of the six responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also looked at the results of a recent larger survey of 120 parents' opinions carried out by the school in February 2012.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books and at teachers' planning. They looked at a number of documents including information on pupils' current progress and at plans for improving the school. They looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and at how well the school keeps its pupils safe.

Inspection team

Mike Phipps, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anthony Buckley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has Early Years Foundation Stage classes for Nursery and Reception-aged children.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, the extra funding for pupils in local authority care, from forces families and who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than national averages, with a higher than average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is in line with national figures. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below national average figures.
- The school manages a before-school breakfast club.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the school's system for checking pupils' achievement so that school leaders, including middle leaders, can judge more easily the progress that pupils are making, by:
 - looking more closely at the progress that pupils are making, rather than on whether they have reached the expected level for their age
 - making judgements more accurate by measuring smaller units of progress.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - making sure that teachers' marking of pupils' work always shows pupils how to improve, and that pupils have the chance to respond to teachers' marking
 - strengthening the teaching of reading in Key Stage 2 by making sure that all pupils read regularly at home
 - making sure that all lessons are hard enough for more-able pupils, particularly in writing, and that they have more chances to work independently
 - making sure that middle leaders with a responsibility for a subject area can check on and help to improve the quality of teaching in their area.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement across the school is good. Children join the school with levels of skills and understanding which are generally well below the level expected for children of their age. They are taught and supported very well in the Nursery and Reception Years, so they make good progress. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 they have nearly caught up to the levels expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Pupils who fall behind are given extra help, so they catch up well. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards which are in line with national average figures.
- As a result of consistently good progress through Key Stage 2 for the majority of pupils, attainment is broadly in line with national figures. A slightly higher proportion of pupils reach the higher levels in reading and mathematics than is found nationally. Pupils make at least the expected amount of progress in English and mathematics and many do better than this.
- Pupils learn to read successfully. They are taught phonics (the sounds that letters make) very effectively, and most can read well by the end of Year 2. By Year 6 many pupils enjoy reading, and can talk with enthusiasm about favourite authors and books. However, not all pupils in Key Stage 2 regularly practise their reading by taking books home to read on their own.
- Pupils learn to write well and they practise their writing in a range of subjects. More-able pupils sometimes do not have the chance to attempt harder work or to work independently. As a result, by the end of Key Stage 2 fewer pupils reach the highest levels of attainment in writing than they do in reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils in school who speak English as an additional language has increased significantly in recent years. These pupils are very well supported by teachers and other adults, including support given in their first language. As a result, these pupils are able to catch up quickly and they do well.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, minority ethnic pupils and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs all make good progress and achieve well.
- Lesson observations, a check of pupils' work and an analysis of the school's own data all clearly indicate that pupils are making good progress in all year groups and this trend is set to continue.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching in school is good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and friendly. Teachers know their pupils very well, and they plan lessons which take into account each pupil's ability and what each pupil already knows and can do. This helps pupils make good progress. Lessons are interesting and enjoyable. As a result, pupils pay attention, work hard and learn well.
- Teaching is particularly strong in the Early Years. In a Reception class lesson seen by inspectors, children made outstanding progress in learning the sounds that letters make because of the good subject knowledge of the teacher and her awareness of each child's needs.
- Where teaching is less strong, activities, especially in writing, are not hard enough for the most able pupils in the group, or do not allow them to work independently. For example, in one writing lesson that inspectors saw, more-able pupils were given too much guidance on how to complete their work, which limited their independence and their progress. In another writing lesson, the opportunity was missed to allow more-able pupils to develop their writing skills in a new context.
- Pupils who are disabled or with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and other adults. Inspectors saw one small group of Year 3 pupils getting extra help in multiplication and division. The adult in charge knew her subject well and she questioned pupils skilfully, so all made good progress. In a Nursery literacy lesson, a small number of pupils at an early stage of

learning English were well supported by an additional adult who was able to translate key words so that these children could make outstanding progress.

- Some teachers' marking is very good and gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve. Pupils have the chance to follow the advice they have been given. This good practice is not always carried out by all teachers in the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons. They enjoy learning and want to do well. Most pupils concentrate well and work without help from their teacher when they have the chance. Pupils help one another and they like to answer questions and offer their opinions in lessons.
- Pupils are considerate and treat adults and other children with respect. They move around the school safely and sensibly. Playtimes and lunchtimes are orderly, so the school is a calm place to learn in. Children from different backgrounds get on well together. Pupils like the rewards they get for working and behaving well. The school's system of consequences is rarely needed.
- Parents are confident that their children will be well looked after. They rightly feel that pupils' behaviour in school is good. Questionnaires indicate that staff also feel that pupils behave well.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, and they understand potential dangers such as those from roads, railways and the internet. Racist incidents are very rare. No pupil has been excluded from school since the last inspection.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying such as name-calling and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying in school is rare, and the school's records support this. Pupils know who to report bullying to, and are confident that it will be dealt with effectively if they tell an adult.
- Children are well looked after in the school's breakfast club in a warm and welcoming environment. They can choose from a number of activities. This provision is appreciated by parents and helps to further strengthen the school's good relations with them.
- Attendance rates are rising and are now at national average levels. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is falling and is also at national average figures. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- The effective leadership of the headteacher, well supported by an effective acting deputy headteacher, has led to significant improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher expects a lot from pupils and staff. Several staff commented on how much improved the school is now, and there is a shared commitment to continue this improvement. Pupils' standards are rising, attendance is rising, and the quality of teaching is improving.
- The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching very carefully, so she has a clear idea of the strengths of the school, and of which areas still need to improve. Actions taken to improve teaching, including staff training, have been effective. The management of teachers' performance is well established, and is linked to their salary progression. Plans to improve the school focus on the right areas.
- Pupils' performance is checked carefully and extra help is given to pupils who are struggling. Regular meetings between teachers and senior leaders hold teachers to account for the performance of pupils in their class.
- The school's systems for tracking how well pupils are doing are detailed but they concentrate too much on whether pupils have reached the level of attainment expected for their age, rather than looking at the actual progress they have made from their starting points. The way the school assesses pupils' progress does not easily allow smaller gains in progress to be measured.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable and are keen to improve standards in their areas of responsibility. Leaders of literacy and numeracy have a limited role in checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in their areas.

- School leaders, including governors, use the school's finances well. Extra funds from the pupil premium have been spent well on additional in-class support and on paying for after-school care. As a result, these pupils make good progress and do as well in school as similar pupils nationally.
- The school's curriculum is planned well, and meets the needs of all pupils. It provides them with interesting lessons, visits and other experiences. Pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across a number of subjects. Specialist teachers take music and physical education lessons. Pupils go to a number of clubs and activities after school, such as football, handball, rugby, music, art, dance and cooking which enhance their enjoyment of school.
- The school promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development very well. Pupils' ability to reflect on their experiences was evident in the Advent Mass observed by an inspector. Strong links with the local church contribute to the school's positive, Christian ethos. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong, and support the school's systems of rewards and consequences. The school celebrates the range of cultures from which pupils come so that all pupils feel valued. Pupils visit places of worship from different faiths.
- The school's arrangements to keep its pupils safe meet all requirements.
- The local authority in the past provided a relatively high level of support to the school, including advice on judging the quality of teaching and on the use of data. This level of support has now decreased. The school's record of substantial recent improvement shows that its leaders have good capacity to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious to improve the school. They know what is happening in school, and are aware of its strengths and weaknesses. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching, the management of teachers' performance and its links to salary progression. They oversee the budget well and know how extra funds from the pupil premium are being used to close gaps in achievement. The governing body is very effective in holding the school to account. Governors monitor the success of the school's plans for improvement effectively. Governors carefully check data on pupils' results, so that they can compare the school's performance to that of other schools nationally and identify which areas need improvement. In this way they successfully challenge the school to improve further.

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

Unique reference number	111307
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	405329

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernadette Gorman
Headteacher	Frances Curless
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2011
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