

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Wadworth Street, Denaby Main, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN12 4AQ

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. It is not good or outstanding in enough lessons so that some pupils make less progress than they should.
- Although most pupils make expected progress in English and mathematics, too few make good progress during their time at the school.
- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, while improving, is still below average.
- The school has recently changed its curriculum and this is not fully established to meet the needs of all its pupils.
- Leaders at all levels do not check the school's work well enough to bring about improvements.
- While members of the governing body understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, they rely too much on the headteacher for information.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school and say that they feel safe while at school.
- In lessons where teaching is good, pupils make better than expected progress.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school, and particularly so in lessons.
- The headteacher leads the school well. She has managed the difficulties in staffing well in order to minimise disruption to pupils' education.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good, reflecting the Catholic ethos of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed seven teachers teaching in 11 lessons.
- They observed pupils in lessons, at play, as they moved around the school and in assemblies.
- Discussions were held with the staff, members of the governing body, including the Chair, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors heard pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6. They analysed in detail pupils' work from Years 2 and 6.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and a letter from one parent.

Inspection team

John Foster, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sue Twaits

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and those of serving forces personnel.
- In 2012, the school met the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection the school has experienced significant disruption to its teaching staff, through illness and maternity leave.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - eradicating all inadequate teaching
 - ensuring that a fast pace of learning is maintained throughout all lessons
 - raising teachers' expectations of how well pupils, and particularly the more-able, can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers' marking clearly focuses on what pupils do well and lets them know what they need to do in order to improve
 - sharing the best practice found in the school.
- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that information gained through assessing pupils' work is used most effectively in planning future work
 - fully embedding the newly introduced schemes into the school's work
 - involving all staff in making sure that work set is relevant to pupils' individual needs
 - ensuring that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are used including when appropriate in other subjects.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - appointing specific middle managers to oversee the monitoring and development of English and mathematics
 - developing the role of the governing body by using the skills of all governors fully to check at first-hand on the school's performance and to plan for its future
 - consolidating the newly developed curriculum into all aspects of the school's work.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age, particularly their language and communication skills.
- They make expected progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that by the time they start in Year 1 their attainment is below average, although their language skills remain weak. Children are given a good range of experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage but these are mainly within the classroom. The outdoor area is not organised so that children can choose activities outside and this limits their learning.
- Throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils continue to make expected progress. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have made expected progress overall. Not enough of them reach the higher levels because the work for the more-able does not always challenge them.
- Progress is inconsistent across the school because of the inconsistencies found in teaching. Where teaching is strong, pupils make the greatest progress. In these lessons, pupils are challenged to think for themselves and because they are enthusiastic in their learning, they progress well.
- At the end of Year 6 attainment in English and mathematics is below average overall. In 2011, there was a significant dip in attainment, which was low in the national tests. The school has identified the disruptions in staffing as the major reason for that cohort's slower progress and lower attainment. Attainment rose again in 2012 and pupils' achievement was broadly average. This has been maintained so that the current Year 6 group is on line to attain below average standards in English and mathematics.
- Recently introduced arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have not had a significant effect on raising standards. The new systems allow teachers to identify which pupils are not making enough progress so that individual's learning needs can be planned for. The systems are too newly introduced to judge their effectiveness in raising attainment.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well and make similar rates of progress to other groups.
- The pupil premium has been used to give pupils eligible for free school meals specific support to enable them to make progress in their learning. This is through focused group learning and the introduction of commercial schemes for English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals attaining the expected Level 4 in English has improved significantly compared to other pupils although there has been little improvement compared to other groups in mathematics.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading. As one pupil told an inspector, 'I like reading because it gives me good words that I can use in my writing.' Most pupils successfully work out unknown words using letter sounds.
- Pupils' writing and mathematical skills are adequately developed. Pupils write in a range of styles and use literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects. As a result, they are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, because of the disruptions in staffing, the quality of teaching has been very variable and this has impacted on pupils' learning. In one half-term, for example, one class had eight different teachers resulting in a lack of continuity in pupils' learning. Teaching observed ranged from good to inadequate.
- Currently, the school has a more stable staff, but the headteacher has had to rearrange the staff so that their skills are used to give the best education to all pupils. As a result, teaching is improving, particularly towards the end of Key Stage 2.

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage allows children to make expected progress. Children are given a range of tasks to help them to learn, but the outdoor area is not used sufficiently well to extend their learning through fully developing their skills.
- Where teaching is at its best, pupils are enthusiastic in their learning and work together well. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, for example, they joined together to identify their favourite books and made graphs based on their findings. This stimulating activity was part of the celebrations of World Book Day, where most pupils and all teachers dressed as characters from books.
- Teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to think for themselves and take an active part in their learning.
- Where teaching is not as effective, the pace of learning is too slow. Pupils, and particularly the more-able, are not challenged enough to make as much progress as possible. This is because they are not always given hard enough work. On the rare occasion when teachers do not manage behaviour well, some misbehaviour disrupts learning.
- The quality of teaching for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, is similar to that for other groups of pupils so that they make similar rates of progress.
- Teachers' marking is variable across the school but is better in English than in mathematics. The highest quality marking shows pupils what they are doing well and how their work can be improved. Where marking is less secure, pupils are not given enough guidance about how they can improve.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted soundly through their class work. They are encouraged to talk to each other about their work and for most of the time this is done sensibly. This encourages them to listen to others and take their views into consideration.

■

■ The behaviour and safety of pupils ■ are good

- In lessons pupils' behaviour is good overall, though very occasionally some misbehaviour by a few pupils disrupts learning for their classmates. Scrutiny of behavioural records shows that behaviour is good over time. Parents' views on behaviour are inconsistent. While over half believe that pupils behave well, a smaller proportion feel that this is not the case.
- As they move around the school most pupils are considerate to each other and to adults. They are acutely aware that their actions affect other people. Occasionally, in the playground, play becomes boisterous but pupils told inspectors that there is no bullying at the school and should it ever occur, they are confident that it would be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel totally safe and that the staff care for them well. They told inspectors that if they have a problem, there is always an adult to talk to and they are confident that the problem will be dealt with quickly and efficiently. The school's Catholic ethos is evident through the care shown towards each other by pupils and staff.
- Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning, particularly when the teaching they receive is good. As one Year 6 girl told an inspector: 'We like school because our teacher makes learning fun.'
- Over time attendance has improved because the school works hard with parents to ensure that pupils attend regularly. In 2011 to 2012, attendance was broadly average but this has fallen to below average for the current year because many pupils have been absent with childhood illnesses.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection the school has made reasonable progress in addressing the issues identified at that time. Significant difficulties in maintaining a stable teaching staff have meant that the headteacher has had to make frequent changes to maintain a balance and ensure that

pupils' learning has been disrupted as little as possible. This has been managed well by the headteacher resulting in a more stable situation and subsequent improvement in teaching. She has a clear vision for improving the school and this is shared by staff and members of the governing body.

- The school's views of its performance are broadly accurate. The evaluation of how well it is doing is undertaken largely by the headteacher with support from the senior leadership team. Middle leaders and members of the governing body have limited input at the early stages. This is reflected in the planning for the school's future where the headteacher produces the initial plans.
- The senior leadership team works well together to improve the school. Subject leadership is less secure. No specific leaders are identified for English and mathematics, largely because of the frequent staffing changes. However, a group of teachers work well together to identify where improvements need to be made. This is at an early stage of development and has yet to have a significant impact on pupils' progress or in raising attainment.
- The curriculum is in the process of development. The school has introduced commercial schemes for English and mathematics, focusing on improving pupils' reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills. Inspection evidence indicates that the implementation of these programmes is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' learning. The curriculum has been designed so that pupils use their improving skills in English and mathematics across a range of subjects.
- The arrangements for checking on staff's performance are undertaken regularly and used to improve teachers' performance. The information is used to plan for teachers' professional development. Staff know that they need to meet their agreed targets before governors consider a move to the next salary level.
- The arrangements for safeguarding meet all current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Members of the governing body know the major strengths and weaknesses of the school. This information is largely gained from the headteacher, with limited first-hand knowledge. Recent changes in governing body personnel and newly introduced processes mean that governors are more involved in checking what the school does well and where improvements need to be made. These changes are too recent to have impacted fully on the governors' work. Governors have a good understanding of the school's finances. The funding for pupil premium has been used to support learning through curriculum developments and to subsidise pupils for residential visits.

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	106771
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	405057

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	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Kirby
Headteacher	Jo Ayres
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2011
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