

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Priory Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 3HJ

**Inspection dates** 10–11 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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 a good school because

- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not consistently good enough. There is good progress in some classes and not in others. Too few pupils reach higher levels in their work by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good or better in all lessons.
- The headteacher is relatively new to post. While the leadership team has a clear picture of what needs to be improved in the school, there has not yet been a significant improvement in the rate of pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not always set work that is sufficiently challenging for all pupils. As a result, not enough pupils make good progress from their starting points, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Subject and other leaders are not making sufficient checks in order to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

### The school has the following strengths

- Attainment is above average in reading and mathematics at Key Stage 1. This generally continues in Key Stage 2, so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and, often, extended concentration skills.
- Through recent staff training, teachers are beginning to use a variety of teaching techniques to get a better understanding of pupils' levels of achievement.
- The school has a supportive community. The strong governing body and new senior leadership are successfully eliminating inconsistencies that arose during the school's long period without a substantive headteacher.
- In the Reception classes and in Key Stage 1, consistently good teaching leads to children's good progress, above average attainment and a positive climate for learning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and different groups of people involved in the school. These included pupils, parents, members of the governing body, members of the teaching staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 62 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), two items of correspondence from parents, and the results of the school's recent parent surveys.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school's checks on pupils' and teachers' performance, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school policies.

## Inspection team

Faheem Chisti, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Terry Bond	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Alban's is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012. There is no deputy headteacher in post currently.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all classes by ensuring that:
  - all teachers adapt their planning and lessons as they proceed, to meet closely the needs and interests of pupils and provide them with suitable challenge
  - the good practice already within the school is shared so that all teachers have a clear understanding about what makes good and better teaching
  - pupils have more opportunities to develop collaborative learning skills.
- Increase the proportion of pupils who achieve well by the end of Year 6, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that progress in all lessons is rapid and sustained.
- Increase the precision with which leaders, including governors, check on the school's performance by:
  - making certain that actions taken are having the intended impact on raising pupils' achievement and attainment in lessons
  - checking more closely on the performance of different groups of pupils, particularly those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and those who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills that are below those typical for their age. This is a change since the time of the previous inspection when most children started school with broadly typical skills. Given their starting points, children make good progress in the Reception Year as a result of a clear focus on language development and a rich curriculum. The excellent relationships between adults and children ensure that most children develop good social and learning skills.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards are consistently above average in reading and mathematics but only broadly in line with the national average in writing. The school is addressing the relative weaknesses in writing, but the impact of this work has yet to be fully realised, with the most recent national tests in writing showing few gains in attainment.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress requires improvement because it is not consistently strong in all subjects and all year groups. Pupils' attainment, however, is consistently above average in reading and writing, but there has been a decline in mathematics in recent years with attainment now only average.
- The teaching of reading is good. The recent national phonics check at the end of Year 1 showed that pupils link letters and sounds exceptionally well to support their reading. Pupils read widely and often throughout the school.
- In writing, attainment by the end of Year 6 is well-above average. This is an improvement from Year 2 where writing is broadly in line with the national average.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is inconsistent, particularly in Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress does not compare favourably with national averages. Progress in mathematics, therefore, requires improvement.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make less progress than other pupils in the school in mathematics. In reading, however, they make good progress, typically making around two years better progress than similar pupils nationally.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs varies from class to class. Pupils make the greatest progress in small group or specialist one-to-one teaching groups. The school promotes equality of opportunity adequately.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The majority of lessons seen by inspectors were of a good quality, with some requiring improvement and some outstanding. Teaching is inconsistent across year groups, particularly in Key Stage 2. This lack of consistently good and better teaching, which leads to pupils' inconsistent rates of progress, leaves teaching requiring improvement.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, a lack of challenge results in the pace of learning slowing for many pupils, particularly the more able.
- Many teachers plan lessons well. However, not all use their questioning skills during lessons in order to make adaptations and adjustments to meet the needs of all pupils. Some teachers still lack appropriate skills in gauging how much, and how quickly, pupils' understanding is progressing during a lesson.
- Analysis of pupils' work shows that most teachers mark and assess pupils' work in writing regularly, often providing detailed feedback, to which some pupils respond. This is not matched by the quality of marking in mathematics.
- In the weaker lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively or to develop their problem-solving skills. For example, pupils seldom work on a theme in small groups or apply their developing mathematical skills to real-life scenarios and problems.
- The quality of teaching in the Reception classes is good. Staff plan appropriately challenging

activities to develop children's understanding of reading, writing, mathematics and social skills well. Children are adept at choosing their own tasks, work collaboratively and have an excellent understanding of routines. Their learning is often tailor-made through children's personal preferences, such as the establishment of a wormery, as a result of one child's idea.

- In the best lessons, pupils are pushed to think hard. They respond well to the effective teamwork between adults and are keen to work together and share ideas. Links between different subjects make learning meaningful and provide opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills in lots of different ways. The school could do more to share this effective, and sometimes outstanding, practice so that all teachers can learn from it.
- The appropriate use of resources in Key Stage 1 encourages a positive climate for learning. In Year 1, for instance, the use of a puppet in a literacy lesson provided an excellent focus for interest and stimulated pupils' discussions well.

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

- Pupils at St Alban's are polite, courteous and helpful. Their good behaviour helps them to get on well with their work.
- Staff manage the behaviour of children well, particularly since the arrival of the new headteacher. Pupils and staff enjoy very positive relationships, which support their mutual respect. This ensures that pupils have positive attitudes to school and are generally eager to learn. A typical comment by a pupil reflects attitudes throughout the school: 'You are made to feel welcome here and your voice is heard.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- Most of the parents who responded to Parent View agree that behaviour is good, well managed, and that their children are safe at the school.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because pupils are not given enough leadership roles in school, behaviour is not always impeccable outside classrooms, and a very small, albeit reduced, amount of name-calling is still being reported. However, the school's firm stance against unacceptable behaviour is clearly working and pupils feel safe and happy in school.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- This is a steadily improving school, with more settled leadership following lengthy periods of instability. The headteacher has a clear vision of how successful this school could become. She has well-informed plans for driving forwards future improvements and in all three joint lesson observations with the headteacher, inspectors agreed with her judgements. However, without the support of a deputy headteacher, improvements are taking time to become embedded.
- The role of subject leaders is underdeveloped in helping the school to improve and in checking on the impact of actions taken. They understand the school's key strengths and areas for development and are able to explain why certain actions are being taken. However, they are less confident in using performance data to measure the impact of these activities. For example, the analysis of data related to pupils' progress lacks rigour.
- Senior leaders have an accurate assessment of the main areas for development in pupils' progress and in teaching. Their plans have so far had insufficient time to have an impact on the quality of support and the checks made on teachers' performance to secure rapid improvements.
- There is good and sometimes outstanding teaching at St Alban's but it is not always shared so that all teachers have a clear understanding about what makes good and better teaching.
- Leaders have used external consultancy support effectively to identify areas of improvement and are now beginning to tackle these through clearer school action plans. The local authority has provided adequate support to the school when required.
- The new primary school sport funding is being used well to provide extra-curricular sporting activities and specialist physical education lessons, complementing a strong sporting heritage

and contributing well to pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The school benefits from the educational expertise of some governors who know the school well. They demonstrate a good grasp of the school's strengths in teaching and learning and areas for further improvement. Through their understanding of data that compares the school's performance with schools nationally, they are able to challenge and hold the school to account for its performance in positive ways. Governors have a good understanding of how the pupil premium is spent. They check how well pupils in school who are known to be eligible for support from this funding are performing in comparison with other pupils. Governors understand fully that performance management must support improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' performance and be related to any increases in pay.

## 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>	111330
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	426242

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	310
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	P Wilcox
<b>Headteacher</b>	T Cooke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 November 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 425905
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