

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Broad Lane, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 5AL

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 of all abilities make good progress and achieve above-average standards in English and mathematics.
- Teachers are very good at spotting any pupil not making enough progress and they help them to improve.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils behave well. They are socially aware and sensitive to the needs of their peers. Pupils feel safe in school.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- The headteacher's strong but sensitive leadership has encouraged good teamwork. There have been rapid improvements in teachers' practice.
- Leaders check the work of teachers and pupils' progress carefully. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas which need to be improved.
- Good links with local schools support a dynamic approach to the development of good practice at all levels.
- Governors hold the school to account well. They critically examine the detailed information provided by the school, and visit frequently.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, teachers do not provide practical activities which engage and challenge every pupil, particularly the more able.
- Opportunities are missed to develop pupils' independent learning skills in all lessons and in decision-making across the school.
- Teachers' targets are not closely linked to pupils' progress and whole-school planning.
- A small minority of parents do not always feel their concerns are fully addressed.
- Lack of outdoor facilities limit learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons; two of these were observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to two groups of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 and spoke to others informally throughout the inspection. Pupils' work from each key stage was examined, and pupils from Key Stage 1 were heard reading.
- The 40 responses from parents (Parent View) were examined, as well as responses from the school's own questionnaires. Additionally, inspectors spoke to parents on the telephone. Returns from 21 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body and the governor responsible for safeguarding. The inspectors held a discussion with the headteacher of the local secondary school and a representative of the local authority. Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspectors evaluated documentation regarding pupils' current progress and the curriculum, development plans, and procedures, and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Kathy Hooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Appleby

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding (pupils known to be entitled to free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and other groups) is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school works with a group of other primary schools and a secondary school to share good practice.
- The headteacher has been in post for two years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - providing practical and engaging activities in every lesson to ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, are challenged and extended
 - providing a wider range of opportunities for pupils to develop their independence in lessons and their decision making across the school.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - linking teachers' targets more closely to the progress of pupils and whole-school planning
 - ensuring that parents' concerns are addressed fully
 - developing a dedicated outdoor learning area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve above-average standards in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average. The proportion achieving higher levels is similar to the national average.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop a firm foundation for joining Year 1. Almost three quarters of them reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. They listen attentively and follow instructions. The higher attainers count reliably to 20 and beyond. While teachers make every effort to provide outdoor learning opportunities, children's development is limited by the lack of a dedicated outdoor space.
- In line with other schools, more than two thirds of pupils achieved expected levels in the screening check in phonics (sounds and letters) at the end of Year 1 in 2013. Pupils achieve particularly well in reading. Lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 read well and have a good understanding of what they have read.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils write lively and often lengthy and imaginative accounts, showing a good understanding of audience and of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Their achievement in mathematics dipped in 2012, but has improved this year as a result of improved teaching. Current data show pupils making similar progress in mathematics to that in reading.
- There is little variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Their progress is checked regularly and, where necessary, extra support is provided. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because there is good liaison between staff with respect to their individual needs. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including the small number whose first language is not English, make similarly good progress.
- The progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is good. Funding has been used to provide a wider range of practical resources to support these pupils' learning. Additionally, teaching assistants have been trained to address the identified gaps in pupils' understanding. The gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their classmates is reducing. Last year, the number of eligible pupils in Year 6 was too small to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individual pupils.
- The achievement of more-able pupils is not always as high as it should be. This is because, in occasional lessons, they do not have work that challenges them sufficiently.
- The extra funding for physical education is used to extend teachers' expertise and provide more after-school opportunities for pupils to engage in physical activities. Assessments show that pupils who are supported by a physical education specialist from the local secondary school make particularly good progress. Evaluation of the full impact of the funding is not possible at this early stage of the year.
- While literacy is reinforced well across the curriculum, opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce pupils' understanding of numeracy. Information and communication technology is competently employed by pupils in Year 6 to produce weekly newspapers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils' progress in English lessons throughout the school is supported well by good teaching of phonics (sounds and letters). The progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 in mathematics is promoted well through the use of a range of exciting, large equipment and resources. Opportunities to encourage a love of reading have recently been extended. There are more opportunities to be involved in listening to stories and there is a wider range of reading books available.
- In the best lessons, pupils are actively engaged in learning because it is relevant to their interests and experiences, and sufficiently challenging for pupils of different abilities.
- Where pupils are given choices, they persevere particularly well. Teachers' questioning is challenging and carefully explores individual pupils' misunderstandings. Pupils learn the value of discussing their understanding with others. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 are encouraged to consider their individual targets as they work.
- Teachers make good use of pupils' work to share best practice. They sensitively draw pupils' attention to issues at appropriate points during the lesson. Learning is applied well to different contexts to make sure it is secure. Teachers' positive feedback promotes pupils' confidence and encourages them to persevere.
- Teachers use resources well, maintain a good pace and challenge pupils well. Pupils in Year 2 were well absorbed using a good range of resources and practical activities to understand multiplication and its relationship to addition.
- Teaching assistants have good knowledge of ways of supporting learning. They are well trained to teach groups and individual pupils. They competently challenge and extend learning as they question pupils.
- Teachers use a variety of strategies to motivate and engage pupils. For example, role play was used very well in a religious education lesson in Year 6 to help pupils understand the purpose of parables and the meaning of advent. Not only did pupils learn how parables could help people live their lives, but they demonstrated high levels of social awareness of others.
- Teachers make clear the intended learning for lessons and give pupils pointers for success. This helps pupils to assess their own work and that of others. Pupils take pride in their work and care over its presentation.
- Teachers promptly spot those pupils who are in danger of falling behind. They check pupils' work well and provide good support to address gaps in their understanding. They give helpful comments and suggestions to pupils to help them to improve. The best practice identifies the next steps in learning. In some books, pupils are developing an excellent dialogue with teachers about their learning.
- In all lessons, pupils arrive ready and eager to learn and they persevere extremely well. Those whose special educational needs make concentration more difficult, are well supported to stay on task.
- There is a sound balance of child- and adult-initiated activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage which help children to develop good learning skills ready for joining Key Stage 1. In the best lessons, adults have strategies for checking children's learning as they take part in practical activities.

- There is little space for outdoor learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although the school has plans to develop a dedicated outdoor area for these children, other more urgent building works have taken priority. Nevertheless, teachers provide an adequate range of outdoor activities.
- In occasional lessons where the pace of learning is slower, there are not enough engaging resources and practical activities to stimulate and support each pupil's understanding. Too many interruptions by teachers cause pupils to lose their concentration. Pupils are passive for too long and they are not encouraged to discover things for themselves. The more able are not challenged to achieve as well as they should. These lessons do not encourage pupils to think for themselves, solve problems and become independent learners.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They appreciate their teachers and like working and playing with their friends. They enjoy their lessons and out-of-class activities.
- Attendance is higher than average.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school. Celebration assemblies and regular whole-school mass taken by local priest stimulate a tangible feeling of community. There are many opportunities for reflection through daily prayer and a strong emphasis on religious education.
- Positive behaviour management by adults and a strong moral code throughout the school support pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils are cooperative, polite and ready to engage others in conversation.
- Pupils' behaviour during playtimes is supported by coaches who organise their games. The limitations of outside space mean that pupils are particularly aware of the needs of others.
- Despite pupils' responsible attitudes, they have few opportunities to take responsibility and make decisions regarding the development of their school. Pupils believe that the school council has limited impact on provision.
- Parents, staff and pupils agree that school is a safe place to be. Any thoughtless behaviour is addressed promptly. Internet safety is addressed. Although there are helpful resources for parents to use with their children on the school website, some pupils are not aware of the dangers of using the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership from the headteacher has brought about significant improvements in teaching and learning. She has welded a team of teachers who are anxious to improve provision. Recent initiatives to enrich the teaching of mathematics have resulted in a marked upturn in standards. There is strong teamwork among the staff, who take pride in the school's achievements.
- The senior leadership team works collaboratively with subject leaders to regularly check teachers' work. A well-focused programme for training staff addresses issues identified through the checking of teachers' work. Senior leaders carefully track pupils' achievement, promptly

identifying those pupils who are not making sufficient progress. Pupils appreciate the extra help they are given when they are in danger of falling behind in their learning.

- The school has a good picture of its strengths and areas for development. Teachers' targets are well matched to the professional standards, but not always closely to the progress of pupils. The plans for improvement are well described. They are not always measurable in terms of the intended improvements in teachers' work and pupils' progress, as identified in teachers' targets.
- The local authority has devolved support for schools to groups of primary and secondary schools working together. The school takes full advantage of the system to improve its planning, assessments and teaching of different aspects of the curriculum, including reading, writing, mathematics and physical education. The school is well regarded in the community for its professionalism and the good learning skills of its pupils.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and some teachers are beginning to link subjects to make them more meaningful for pupils. Year 1 linked science and art through a visit to Jasmin Fields to look for natural and man-made materials.
- The headteacher has an 'open-door' policy and so is available to meet parents. Nevertheless, a small minority of parents do not believe that their concerns are always fully addressed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is knowledgeable and anxious to support and develop the school. It is informed and questions the school well. The governing body has a high profile and supports all aspects of school life. The governing body's good handle on finance ensures developments are sensibly prioritised. Training has enabled governors to check that all pupils, including those for whom the school receives the pupil premium, make good progress. They have good oversight of teachers' work and understand their responsibilities regarding teachers' progression up the pay scale. As a group, they are reflective and responsible. They ensure that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding meet current requirements.

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	103466
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	433181

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geraldine McLeish
Headteacher	Maureen O'Leary
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2011
Telephone number	0121 444 6530
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