

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Wigan

Holmes House Avenue, Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6EE

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- In recent years, all groups of pupils have made consistently good or outstanding progress from their starting points, attaining standards above the national average, especially in reading and mathematics, by the end of Key Stage 2.
- All pupils enjoy reading and are using this to improve their writing, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Teaching is never less than good and is often outstanding, especially in Key Stage 2.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is amazing.
- Pupils' behaviour in and out of class is exemplary. There is no bullying and everyone feels safe.
- Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, the newly formed leadership team and governors work extremely well together to foster exceptionally high morale, as well as a clear mission and sense of direction for the school.
- Staff are passionate about their school and want to ensure an even greater proportion of outstanding teaching by sharing the best practices already within the school.
- Parents are full of praise for what the school provides for their children.
- Governors are extremely knowledgeable about the school because they visit frequently and report on their findings.
- The headteacher and her staff are providing excellent support to other local schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a total of 25 full or part lessons taught by 18 teachers and one teaching assistant. Four lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Two learning walks were carried out.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the senior leadership team, middle leaders, pupils and seven members of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to individual pupils read both in and out of lessons. Two small groups of pupils spoke with inspectors about their experiences in school. Inspectors observed pupils on the corridors, at class assembly time, in the dining room, sports area and out on the playground at break times.
- Inspectors took account of 25 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). An inspector met with 11 parents to gather their views about the school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and studied a range of documents including the school development plan and its report on how the school is performing, governing body documents, curriculum policy documents and policies relating to safeguarding, child protection, attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

John Ashley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ian Young

Additional Inspector

Julie Webster

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Aidan's is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average, as is that of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families, and 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.
- There have been recent changes to increase the size of the school's leadership structure to include two assistant headteachers.
- There is a Child Care Club on the site, which is subject to separate inspection arrangements, but is now newly managed by the school's governing body.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs are provided at the Child Care Club.
- The school is part of the WOWS (With Others We Succeed) partnership of 17 primary schools and one special school.
- The headteacher provides support three days per week at a local primary school, as an acting headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the very best teaching practice in the school to make more teaching consistently outstanding and thus raise achievement further by focusing on:
 - how well teachers mark pupils' work and provide them with feedback on how to do better
 - how well teachers insist on high standards of presentation and accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar in pupils' independent writing
 - how outstanding teaching keeps pupils keen to learn throughout every lesson through speaking or writing about their own and each other's learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been above national expectations over the past five years and have not dropped below national levels during this period. The achievement of pupils is, therefore, outstanding.
- From starting points that are generally in line with those typically expected for their age, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enter Key Stage 1 fully ready for the challenge of more formal work. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage respond well when exploring their surroundings or engaging in number games, leading to the most able children sequencing written numbers from one to ten. They develop good social skills and behave well. They are encouraged to speak about their experiences, for example, when a child explained that she could now drink the juice when it squirted from an orange she was eating.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, because work is set at the right level for all abilities, including for the most and least able pupils.
- In recent years, attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has been consistently above average. The proportion of pupils who make good progress from their individual starting points has been consistently high in comparison to national figures.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress because teaching challenges them rigorously. They develop a real thirst for knowledge. This thirst was evident in, for example, a literacy lesson in which pupils explored a shared text and wrote their own hugely imaginative and creative accounts, which they read out loud confidently and proudly in celebration with their classmates.
- During class assembly times or religious education lessons, there are exceptional examples of pupils' abilities to think, talk and write about the needs of others when discussing the theme of 'mission'. These are examples of how incredibly well pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.
- Pupils of all abilities enjoy reading and practise regularly, supported by their parents through the reading records that are sent home. Pupils develop their skills in reading new words and making sense of what they read because of outstanding teaching and support. This demonstrates the school's successful promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils. This was evident, too, when less-able pupils were supported by teaching assistants to develop their skills in working out fractions or using their knowledge of letters and sounds when writing independently.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve very well and in line with their peers in school. One or two pupils with more complex needs make smaller steps of progress but succeed well.
- The very small number of disadvantaged pupils make good and improving progress. Gaps are closing securely. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above that of similar pupils nationally. In this school, their attainment in reading and mathematics is above that of their classmates, while in writing the gap has closed on previous years to be about one and a half terms behind their peers.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Inspectors agree with the school that, over time, the quality of teaching has never been less than good with much that is outstanding. One parent stated, 'We are lucky to have such talented teachers caring for our children.'
- Because teachers are very skilled and knowledgeable about their subjects and assess pupils' abilities accurately, they set work at the right level and provide resources and support to help pupils make excellent progress overall.
- In many, but not all lessons, marking and feedback to pupils on their written work are of

exceptional quality. Teachers insist on high-quality presentation and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Where learning is at its best, teachers encourage pupils to provide spoken or written comments about their own work and that of their classmates. As a result, many pupils feel very confident when practising their reading, writing or mathematical skills so that they can improve. They are not afraid to 'fail' or to ask for assistance because outstanding teaching encourages in them a thirst for learning.

- Teachers plan all their lessons in each of the subjects to ensure that pupils have the benefit of first-hand experiences, for example, through visits to a local mosque. These experiences broaden pupils' cultural awareness and understanding, as well as presenting them with golden opportunities for writing and talking at length.
- Teachers and support staff are skilled in continually checking pupils' understanding so that they are certain pupils have grasped what they are meant to be learning. Teaching assistants do excellent work in supporting pupils in, for example, learning their letters and the sounds they make.
- In an outstanding lesson on writing about characters in a text in Key Stage 2, excellent teaching enabled pupils of a wide range of abilities to make outstanding progress. The teacher made it crystal clear to pupils what the purpose of the lesson was, so that they tackled challenging tasks confidently and enthusiastically. The teacher modelled how one of the characters might describe his deepest feelings following a difficult experience in a shared story. This led to pupils trying out different ideas in their writing and sharing them with other pupils to get feedback.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They demonstrate care for one another and their surroundings. They respond very positively in lessons and they come to school smartly attired in the correct uniform, which they wear with obvious pride. Indeed, one pupil said she was 'proud to be part of this school... say it with pride!'
- Pupils have excellent relationships with the staff and have wonderful manners. Midday supervisors praise pupils' positive attitudes and politeness at lunchtimes.
- Pupils have a thirst for learning and display outstanding motivation in their work. They are extremely keen to do well and succeed.
- Attendance is well above the national average and pupils are always on time for school, settling quickly into their lessons.
- There are high-quality displays around the school and no evidence of graffiti or litter.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and pupils state that there is no bullying. There are no recorded incidents relating to homophobia or racism. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils have an excellent sense of right and wrong. Older pupils take responsibility for making sure that younger children are happy and safe.
- Pupils are well aware of different types of bullying, and know how to use the internet safely. They have set up a 'safety squad' that checks on the building and whether there are any concerns. They have successfully completed an audit of the signs in school, carried out a presentation to everyone in assembly and successfully obtained funds from governors to replace the old signs. This is another example of the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher has successfully developed and included middle leaders in setting a clear direction for the school, especially in teaching and learning. Staff and pupils state that there is a very positive climate for learning where everyone can succeed.

- The quality of teaching is never less than good. Staff are passionate about ensuring that even more lessons are outstanding. They know that sharing outstanding practice that is already within the school will be the best way forward for this to happen.
- School systems and policies are excellent. The school's improvement plan is based closely upon accurate checks on how well the school is performing. Leaders and managers all play a role in checking the quality of teaching and whether or not pupils are making the progress they should. They are not afraid to change teaching and support arrangements to target the needs of the most able or the least able pupils, including those who are eligible for the pupil premium funding, so that they make good or better progress.
- Teachers are held rigorously to account and benefit from the highly informative and sharply focused feedback they receive following lesson observations. A number of teachers stated that they have really appreciated the chance to work in threes to do joint planning and observations. They state that this has had a very positive impact on teaching and learning. There are comprehensive and stringent procedures in place that ensure that teachers' pay is linked to the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school's curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to enjoy first-hand experiences through educational visits, for example, to Quarry Bank Mill as part of a history project, and after-school clubs, of which there is a wide range. Exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well through, for example, class-based assemblies. Equality and diversity are also promoted exceptionally well through visits to local faith establishments and a link with a rural school in Horwich. The school prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in a diverse society.
- The effective use of additional funding for physical education and sport means that teachers at the school have benefited from a visiting specialist so that they can develop their own expertise. Pupils are now actively involved in developing their physical skills and fitness levels through, for example, hockey lessons.
- Safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements; staff and governors have regular update training.
- The local authority provides 'light-touch' support to this outstanding school, while the headteacher and her staff, through the 'WOW' (With Others We Succeed) partnership, provide outstanding support to local schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They visit regularly and write reports which are shared with other governors. They ensure that teachers' performance is closely linked to their salaries; they have an excellent grasp of pupils' achievements over time and how they link to the quality of teaching. Governors attend a number of training courses. They ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent appropriately. They know that disadvantaged pupils make progress broadly in line with their peers and that the gap with other pupils has narrowed because of the effective use of funding. The school budget is well managed and is linked closely to school improvement priorities. Governors ensure safeguarding procedures are fully in place and meet 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	106463
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	434586

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	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eddie Walsh
Headteacher	Christine Mason
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2009
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