



St Austin's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104643
LEA Liverpool
Inspection number 277197
Inspection dates 21 September 2005 to 22 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Mike Hewlett CfBT Lead Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Riverbank Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Merseyside L19 9DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 427 1800
Number on roll	506	Fax number	-
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Mike McGuinness
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr John Carney

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 21 September 2005 - 22 September 2005	Inspection number 277197
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Austin's is a large size primary school where around 1 in 10 pupils claim free school meals with a similar proportion having learning difficulties or disabilities. Both of these figures are below national averages. The overwhelming majority of pupils are from white, British families. On entering reception classes, pupils generally have skills that are average or above.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Austin's is a satisfactory school that provides sound value for money. Whilst the inspection judgement of effectiveness does not match the school's own view, the team does acknowledge its deservedly good reputation in the community. The school has sustained many of the strengths highlighted in the last inspection. The reason for the mismatch is that, whilst standards are better than those found in most schools nationally, they are not as good as they should be. This is because some groups of children, such as some higher attainers, do not make fast enough progress during their time at St Austin's. Whilst some teaching and learning is good and even outstanding on occasions, it is satisfactory overall. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and has some good features.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school and work hard in lessons. Their behaviour is outstanding and they enjoy taking responsibility through roles as monitors or representatives on the school council.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership team and governors are all committed to the safety and well being of all the children. The school has made steady progress since the last inspection, but self-evaluation and monitoring of what goes on is not sharp enough. School leaders now have a clear understanding of the challenges they face and, more importantly, they have the capacity to deliver the necessary changes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards across the school, especially for the higher attainers in writing and investigative science.
- Track pupils' progress more rigorously so that any underachievement can be spotted early and remedied.
- Analyse the school's performance thoroughly and then use this information to decide priorities when drawing up the strategic plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school judges achievement and standards as good, a view also expressed by parents and children. Standards are indeed good but achievement, based on the rate of progress children make, is lower. Children start school with skills that are average or above and they make steady progress in the reception classes. The sound progress continues in Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) where standards in the tests are above average overall but could be higher still given the good starting point for most of the children.

A similar picture of progress continues into Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) so that by the time they leave the school to move onto high school, children reach standards that are generally higher than national averages, but not enough children reach Level 5. There has been a downward dip in overall performance in recent years, particularly in

2004. The 2005 results are much better, but there are still some shortfalls in reaching some of the higher levels.

Targets set by the school are generally met, but they are not always challenging enough given the children's previous performance, particularly for those who might reach Level 5 in English. Children with learning needs make sound progress overall and are well supported within the classroom.

An outstanding feature of the school is the children's achievement in Spanish. The school is designated as a 'Centre of Excellence' because of its work in this area. Children throughout the school are confident speakers of Spanish and their success is justifiably celebrated.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Although the school reported this area to be outstanding, the inspection judgement is that children's personal development is good. This is because there are areas requiring further improvement.

Children enjoy coming to school and like their teachers. They work hard in lessons and their politeness and behaviour are outstanding. They contribute willingly and listen carefully to each other. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being monitors or school council members, and recognise the importance of these roles. Their views are also sought through class discussions and they are proud of improvements they suggested, for example, changes to the playgrounds that the school has taken on board.

The school has good systems in place to handle any problems arising from cultural diversity. Good opportunities are provided for children to consider spiritual and moral issues. They show a good understanding of each other's feelings and have a strong sense of right and wrong.

Pupils are encouraged to develop social skills, such as working and playing together amicably, but are less experienced in making decisions about their work. Many tasks in lessons are managed too much by staff so that children have too few opportunities for independent investigation during their learning. Children have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and they appreciate the need for a good diet and regular exercise.

Attendance levels are slightly higher than average and the school has effective systems in place to encourage punctuality.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst the picture of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, there are pockets of good and some outstanding provision. There are also inconsistencies in the pace of some of the teaching and the amount of challenge for children found in different lessons. For these reasons, the inspection team does not agree with the school's own evaluation of teaching and learning which it described as good. Some outstanding teaching was seen in a Spanish lesson where highly skilled teachers worked together very effectively. They used a wide range of well judged methods to encourage children and actively engage them in conversational Spanish. The rapid pace of the activity never faltered and children delighted in the outstanding progress they made. Staff throughout the school have demonstrated their keenness to improve their own subject knowledge in Spanish so they are better equipped to support children's learning. In contrast, some science lessons seen, whilst satisfactory, were duller because the children were not sufficiently engaged in practical work to engage enquiring minds and improve their skills.

Relationships in all lessons are outstanding. Pupils feel their contributions are valued by teachers and this helps them to be confident and willing learners. Children's behaviour is exemplary and this contributes to their overall progress. For some higher attainers, progress could be better if teachers used assessment data more effectively to plan future work and set more challenging targets.

Children with additional learning needs are very well cared for and supported in lessons. Some targets contained within individual plans for those with more specific learning difficulties are too open ended, making it difficult to assess and record their step by step progress. Where teachers record more accurately the steps in pupils' progress and set sharper targets, their work shows better progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a sound curriculum which enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily in the majority of areas. It fully meets the statutory requirements

But not enough work is planned to challenge and enhance learning through practical and investigative tasks. All children particularly enjoy the opportunity to learn Spanish. This boosts their confidence very well and provides them with good skills for later life.

The good curriculum for personal development reflects the hardworking, caring approach of the school. The atmosphere is calm and reflects a community of faith.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory overall with some strong areas such as the reading opportunities children are given. They make sound progress during the year.

Pupils are very appreciative of the chance to take part in sports activities outside of lesson time. All understand the need to keep fit and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Children reported that they particularly enjoy educational visits to places such as Chester Zoo and Speke Hall and look forward to the residential visit towards the end of the year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care and support for its pupils. Children are valued and treated with consideration. They trust the adults they work with and feel confident and secure in classes and outdoors. Effective child protection procedures are updated regularly and risks are assessed appropriately to ensure children stay safe. Pupils' opinions are sought through the school council and class discussions and they develop citizenship skills through acting as monitors and taking responsibility for others. The school works well with outside agencies and parents to ensure children receive the support they need.

The assessment of children's work, whilst satisfactory in noting the standards they reach from year to year, does not provide enough help to teachers in identifying what children need to learn next. Some teachers identify what their class can do at the beginning of the school year rather than starting from earlier assessments. Specific targets, that children could use to identify their own strengths and needs, are not yet provided.

As a result of the gaps in assessment, the inspection judges this aspect good, rather than agreeing with the school's judgement of outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judges leadership and management to be good. However, the inspection team judges it to satisfactory. Whilst the headship team has created and maintained a positive and caring environment for the pupils, some of the standards and achievement issues have not been addressed.

The school has experienced periods of extended staff absence in recent years and this has also affected the management team. As a result, many of the systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school are not as good as they should be. Nevertheless, staff commitment, morale and cohesion have been maintained through these difficult times.

The school accepts that its self-evaluation judgements were overgenerous because monitoring the effectiveness of the teaching or how well pupils are doing is not rigorous enough. The leadership of the school is realistic about the challenges it faces, and the plans for pupil tracking systems are a good step in the right direction. The information already collected shows there are some inconsistencies in progress throughout the school linked to teaching, learning and the curriculum. Action to put this right has not

been fast enough. For example, the quality of teaching varies within year groups and this directly affects the progress that some pupils make in areas such as writing and science.

Children feel valued and have equal access to the curriculum, although some higher attainers could be challenged more. The school is well respected within the community. Parents are happy with the school and they feel that it is approachable and that it listens and act on their views.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and has managed the staff absences very sensitively. The governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities, but need to be more closely involved in analysing the school's performance and then, working with the leadership team, contributing to a longer term strategic plan for school improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, a team of inspectors visited your school recently to find out if your school is giving you the education you should receive.

Thank you very much for making us so welcome. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you enjoyed doing.

Some of the things we really liked are:

- the way your Headship Team and other adults look after you and plan some exciting lessons like Spanish;
- the way you take on responsibilities, help to make decisions about your school and care about one another;
- your behaviour and attitudes to work which are outstanding;
- the welcome you give to everyone who arrives at your school.

We have asked your teachers to make some improvements because there are some important areas that need to be tackled.

Some of these things are:

- we would like your teachers to keep a better check on how well you are doing and then make changes if there are any gaps ;
- make sure that the work set for you is hard enough and that you are making as much progress as possible. This is because we think some of you could be doing even better than you are now.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and working together with your teachers to improve St Austin's Catholic Primary School.