



# St Austin's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104806  
**LEA** St. Helens  
**Inspection number** 277223  
**Inspection dates** 4 October 2005 to 5 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Ms Cathryn Kirby HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Heath Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		St Helens
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Merseyside WA9 5NJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01744 606598
<b>Number on roll</b>	260	<b>Fax number</b>	01744 819697
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr B Bielby
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr B Fyles

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 4 October 2005 - 5 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 277223
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Austin's Catholic Primary School serves a local community in St Helens which has slightly higher levels of social deprivation than is the case nationally. The school has close links with the parish of St Austin and recently celebrated 110 years on the existing site. Some of the original school buildings are still in use. Numbers have fallen steadily over the last 10 years and there are now 257 pupils on roll, including 31 who attend the nursery part time. When children are admitted to nursery many do not have the skills and knowledge typical of three and four year olds. Around a quarter of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very few children are from minority ethnic backgrounds or do not speak English as their first language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

St Austin's Catholic Primary School does not provide an acceptable standard of education because the leadership and management of the school have too little effect on raising standards and improving the progress pupils make. Staffing levels are generous and, when viewed against the inadequacies in provision, indicate that the school does not provide good value for money. The school fails to check sufficiently whether new initiatives are having the desired effect. Actions initiated since the last inspection in 1999 have not yielded substantial or sustained improvement.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and make a positive contribution to the community. The care, guidance and support they receive are satisfactory. Parents are generally satisfied with the standard of education the school provides although a small proportion indicated that they do not receive sufficient information on how well their child is progressing. Attendance is satisfactory.

The curriculum is enhanced by a broad range of enrichment activities, but does not adequately meet the needs of all the pupils. Standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are below average and pupils make insufficient progress between the ages of 7 and 11, because too much of the teaching is satisfactory and not enough is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of lessons where teaching and learning are good or better.
- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure the whole school curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.
- Senior managers need to systematically monitor new initiatives to make sure that they are leading to measurable school improvement.
- Improve the way the school keeps a check on the progress and effectiveness of the actions it introduces.
- Ensure policies for assessment are better understood by all staff and are consistently implemented.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

The school's view of achievement and standards is that they are satisfactory. The inspectors' view is that they are inadequate because standards attained by the pupils were well below those attained by pupils in socially similar schools. The progress pupils make between 7 and 11 has also been unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 1 the overall trend

in results has been of consistently below average standards for the 4 years to 2004. Pupils do less well in reading and writing than they do in mathematics. In 2004, less than half the pupils reached the standard in writing expected for their age. Provisional figures for the standards attained in 2005 show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 has fallen in reading, writing and mathematics.

The trend in standards attained at the end of Key Stage 2 shows a more variable pattern from 2000 to 2004, although the school results in national tests were significantly below the national average in 2003 and 2004. At Key Stage 2 pupils do less well in English than in mathematics and science. The test results in 2005 showed a significant improvement in standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2 compared to the previous two years. However, the proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 in mathematics and science in 2005 fell considerably compared to 2004.

Pupils do not make the progress inspectors feel they should in Key Stage 2. Their gains in mathematics and science are broadly satisfactory, but they are unsatisfactory in English based on their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. The girls in particular underachieve.

The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and there is good provision for outdoor play. There is careful induction of pupils and a strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' personal skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall personal development and well-being of learners is good.

Spiritual and moral development are good and are at the heart of the school. Pupils explore their own and other faiths and show respect for themselves and others. Pupils behave well and are polite and courteous to their teachers and other adults. Their confidence is boosted through the celebration of citizenship awards. Bullying and racism are rare; a recent case of bullying has been resolved effectively. There are planned times for younger children to discuss their feelings. Older pupils think carefully about healthy lifestyles and what they need to do to stay safe. Skills that contribute to pupils' economic well-being are developed through activities such as running the school tuck shop. The new school council has already improved sporting activities including football and rugby clubs. Pupils relish these responsibilities. In some lessons where pupils are expected to listen for too long learning is not enjoyable.

The school provides a good range of enrichment activities. Pupils are introduced to foreign languages and cultural events one of which was recognised with an International School Award. The pupils' contribution to the local community is good. Activities include support for the church and a music-hall evening for retired people. The school has improved attendance rates but some parents persist in taking their children on holidays in term time. This means pupils miss important work.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory but there is not enough good teaching to improve the pupils' overall progress and their standards. Relationships between pupils and teachers are founded on mutual respect; clearly understood classroom routines have been established; colourful displays in classrooms provide a bright and attractive learning environment. In some lessons lengthy introductions do not leave pupils time to produce enough good work. Other lessons are characterised by learning activities which fail to capture the pupils' imagination or retain their interest. Too few opportunities are taken to engage pupils in stimulating activities which make learning enjoyable, and too many pupils are allowed to be passive in class and are not stretched or challenged. Often work is inappropriately matched to individual needs, with few demands made on more able pupils; consequently in some lessons the progress pupils make in the learning is unsatisfactory. Class sizes are large in Key Stage 2; in Year 3 this inhibits learning.

The recently introduced 'assessment for learning' and 'focused marking' strategies are not applied consistently or used well enough to meet the needs of all the pupils. Whilst there are examples of good marking which inform pupils of what they need to do to improve their work, this approach has not been adopted across all year groups and subjects.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 4

The curriculum does not adequately meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able. Time allocations to subjects have been informally agreed but these are not always reflected in practice. Not all classes have enough time allocated each week to the teaching of English, mathematics and science; the school has not adopted a systematic approach to curriculum planning and evaluation. Guidance offered by subject coordinators is informal and monitoring systems lack the rigour to support improvement. Even allowing for the good range of enrichment activities, including modern foreign languages, current provision is not enabling all pupils to reach their potential.

Teachers use appropriate nationally produced materials but do not adapt them well enough to take into account the specific learning needs of their pupils. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning across the curriculum is underdeveloped, and plans to improve the facilities for this area of the core curriculum have proceeded too slowly since this was identified as an area for improvement in 1999.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

The care guidance and support that pupils receive is satisfactory and the school's procedures for child protection are good. There is a welcoming ethos in this school where every child matters. Parents are happy with the arrangements for settling children in the Reception class and for the Year 6 pupils transfer to secondary school.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is always someone they can turn to for help. Good levels of adult supervision are a feature of morning and lunchtime outdoor activities. Regular safety checks are made on the school buildings and grounds. The areas outside the school's boundaries are a cause for concern in relation to vehicle movement and because of this road safety education for the pupils is stringent.

There are some weaknesses in supporting pupils' academic development; the way teachers assess pupils' work and how they use this to plan teaching is not effective enough. As a result some pupils do not do as well as they should. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective in helping these pupils to participate in lessons. The topics of drugs misuse and changes encountered at puberty are sensitively introduced to older pupils.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

The headteacher's focus on improving pupils' performance in core subjects has not led to an overall increase in standards or an improvement in pupils' progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have not been adequately addressed.

The school's own self evaluation provides a reasonably accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision but lacks a properly objective review of actions taken in 2004/05 to improve the overall quality of provision. Development planning is weak; it is not clear how the impact of actions will be measured and some of the success criteria refer to the completion of tasks rather than to their impact on provision. There are few milestones for monitoring and evaluating actions.

Senior managers do not gather the information to inform them of the school's progress systematically enough. Consequently they have an over-generous view of some of the aspects of the school's provision; for example, the quality of teaching and learning, the balance of the curriculum, and the use of assessment information in planning lessons. In particular the monitoring of teaching has not led to the improvements necessary to secure at least satisfactory progress for pupils at Key Stage 2.

The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school and has formed positive relationships within the school community and with parents. Since the last inspection in 1999 governance has not been rigorous enough in holding the school to account for the progress of actions intended to improve the quality of provision and the pupils' performance.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	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	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	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	4	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all that you do. This letter is to tell you what we have said.

We found the following things that are done well at your school

- Most of you behave well in class and are polite to each other, your teachers and other adults
- Your school has done very well to have been given an International school award
- Many of you do good work in your local community by giving your time to help others
- You have a good range of sports activities to take part in
- Some of you do a good job running the tuck shop and managing the money spent by other pupils

We think that your school needs to improve some of its work. We have asked school to do this by:

- making your lessons a little more interesting by adding greater variety to the sorts of activities you do and by asking your teachers to talk a little less so you can spend more time on learning activities
- pushing you a little harder so that you are able to do better in your work
- looking more carefully at the way your work is marked to help you understand how well you are doing and what you need to do to make your work even better
- making sure that you spend enough time on English, mathematics and science every week
- checking that all the things your teachers do to try and improve your progress really work