



# St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105519  
**LEA** Manchester  
**Inspection number** 277367  
**Inspection dates** 10 July 2006 to 11 July 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Ian Thompson CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Rackhouse Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Northern Moor
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Manchester, Lancashire M23 0BW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 9984126
<b>Number on roll</b>	216	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 9455677
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Fr M Gannon
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret McGee

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 10 July 2006 - 11 July 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277367
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average size school serves a disadvantaged area. Eligibility for free school meals is very much higher than usual. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds; a few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with no groups of significant size. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school is part of an Education Action Zone - a government initiative aimed at raising standards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that it provides a satisfactory standard of education. Following a period of decline, the school has been turned around, so that standards are improving and pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Improvement since the last inspection has only been satisfactory because of recent improvements in performance. The positive impact of the headteacher's initiatives gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the school with well below average standards. The majority make good progress in communication and social development that supports learning as they move through the school. Pupils' personal development and well-being is good. The school's successful efforts to improve attendance, behaviour and attitudes have had a positive effect on the atmosphere in the school that is recognised by parents and pupils.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the best lessons, assessment is used effectively to match work to pupils' needs. However, there are times when this is not the case. A common shortcoming is that, although teachers make supportive comments when marking work, they do not consistently let pupils know what they should do to improve. The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. Pupils develop their self-confidence from the many enrichment activities that the school offers to broaden their experience and enhance learning. Care and support are good. Pupils rightly feel well known and cared for. Academic guidance is satisfactory. A start has been made on using assessment to help promote pupils' progress, but this is at an early stage.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership, clearly communicates her vision for the school's improvement and has the support of managers at all levels. Governors provide good support for the school's work and hold it to account for its performance well.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the link between assessment, marking and pupils' targets so that pupils understand the next steps to take to improve.
- Improve the match of work to pupils' learning needs.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' starting points. After a period of decline, standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are below average but improving. Children enter the Nursery with well below average standards, particularly in communication and social skills. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage towards the goals for their early learning. Throughout the school,

girls do better than boys, but teachers' efforts to improve the quality of boys' learning are beginning to pay off in rising standards, and the gender gap is narrowing. The persistent difficulty, as pupils move through the school, is in writing and this affects progress in many areas. Recent initiatives, such as the writing project, are beginning to work, but standards still lag behind compared to reading and mathematics.

Achievement and standards are improving because of the well focused support that teachers and classroom assistants provide. Progress is good in social learning, building on very good work in the Foundation Stage. This is seen in better standards of behaviour that are now having a positive impact on learning and achievement. Pupils with additional learning needs and those at an early stage of learning English are well supported to make similar progress to their classmates.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Work to improve attendance, behaviour and attitudes has impacted well on the ethos of the school, improving learning. Pupils' behaviour is good; their good response to being given responsibilities, such as being good role models as prefects, enhances personal development. Opportunities for reflective thinking and group discussions contribute well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Initiatives to improve attendance have been successful, so that it is now satisfactory, and better than the local authority average. Playground 'buddies' are effective in their work, enabling pupils to take responsibility for purposeful playtime activities. Pupils say that they would like more opportunities to contribute to making decisions about improving their school; currently, there is no school council. Projects, such as the 'super learning day' event, develop pupils' learning skills well. This has a marked impact on their self-confidence and ability to work productively together, preparing them well for the next stage in their learning. Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to keep safe and live a healthy lifestyle. They show good commitment to the needs of others, such as by holding charity fundraising events throughout the year. Close communication with parents keeps them well informed about their children's personal development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers work hard to manage pupils' behaviour so that little time is wasted. The majority of lessons are well planned with a variety of activities to maintain pace and interest. Teachers make good links between subjects to reinforce learning. In the best lessons, pupils are consistently challenged and the work is well matched to their needs. In occasional lessons, the level of difficulty in the work is not adjusted closely enough to needs, with the result that some higher attainers find the work too easy, while some lower attainers struggle to

cope. Teachers are good at providing well timed support to enable pupils to make progress, and many pupils commented on how much they appreciate the help that they know they can depend upon. Marking of work is supportive, but it does not consistently let pupils know what they should do to improve, nor is it consistently linked well enough to pupils' targets. Clear improvement is evident in the use of assessment to identify pupils' needs and to promote progress. Nevertheless, the school is aware that there is still work to do in managing the full implementation of recently developed assessment procedures.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Its breadth and balance meets the needs of pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and learners in the Foundation Stage. There are strengths in extra-curricular activities and additional opportunities available through good partnership links, all of which help pupils to value learning. A good range of whole-school activities, for example, 'super learning day' and the Bible Exhibition seen during inspection, together with a wealth of visits and visitors, ensures that pupils enjoy interesting learning experiences. Pupils learn well from enjoyable sports and arts workshops, visits to places of interest and educational trips. For example, an annual watersports activity builds confidence and develops teamwork. The wide range of school activities, including learning Italian, is popular with pupils. Links with local community organisations are satisfactory, helping pupils to appreciate their place in society. The lively programme of personal, social and health education supports all aspects of pupils' learning well, benefiting their personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care and support are good. Academic guidance is satisfactory. This is a very caring school where staff know the pupils and their personal needs well. Pupils agree that they are well cared for, feel safe and are happy. They trust staff to look after them, saying that they always have someone they can talk to if they have worries. One pupil said that he tries hard because he knows that the teachers are interested in his learning. Robust procedures for child protection and assessing any risks to pupils are fully in place. The school is very sensitive and responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents say they are pleased that staff regularly meet with them to review their child's progress, give guidance and plan any support needed. The school has made a start in improving pupils' understanding of how they could achieve better, but this is at an early stage of development.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership by clearly communicating her vision for the school's improvement. She is well supported by the senior management team in tackling weaknesses in performance that are identified through monitoring, and in implementing new ways of working. A good example is the writing project, designed to tackle the weakest area of pupils' standards. Assessment data shows that almost all the pupils involved made good progress. The result of the headteacher's efforts to improve the school's performance in all aspects of its work is that the school has gained the overwhelming support of parents, and has turned around after a period of decline. All groups involved with the school acknowledge that there has been considerable improvement since her appointment, pointing, for example, to improved behaviour, rising standards and the refurbished Foundation Stage accommodation. Improvements to the school building reflect the headteacher's skill in finding alternative sources of funding to benefit the school. Governors provide good support for the school's work. Because they are well informed and understand the challenges the school faces, they are able to hold it to account and to help shape its direction. They recognise that the priority is to maintain the momentum of progress that has begun to show in pupils' personal development and in their achievement.

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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>	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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

<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	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	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>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	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>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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	2	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**

As you know, two inspectors visited your school recently to find out if it is giving you a proper education. Thank you very much for the kind welcome you gave us and for the politeness and cheerfulness you showed us during both days of the inspection.

You will be pleased to know that we decided that your school does some things well and gives you a satisfactory education. These are some of the things that we thought were particularly good:

- the many improvements that your headteacher and the staff have managed to bring about
- the way that the school cares for you, particularly when you have any concerns or problems
- the activities that the school gives you to help you to enjoy learning.

We have asked your teachers to improve some things to make your school a better place to learn. These are:

- to make sure that, after your work has been marked, you know what you need to do to produce your very best work all the time
- to make sure that all your lessons are planned to help you learn at the right level.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We both hope that you will carry on enjoying learning, and help your teachers to make St. Aidan's Catholic Primary School a good place to learn.