



# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111330  
**LEA** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 278659  
**Inspection dates** 19 September 2005 to 20 September 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Lesley Traves 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>	Priory Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Macclesfield
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Cheshire SK10 3HJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 425 905
<b>Number on roll</b>	362	<b>Fax number</b>	01625 511 330
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr P Wilcox
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Sadler

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 19 September 2005 - 20 September 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278659
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

St Alban's is a large, popular primary school, which takes pupils from across Macclesfield. The majority of pupils are of the Roman Catholic faith. Although most are of white, British heritage, a small number are from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds and a few speak English as an additional language. On entering reception, most children have above average skills. There are fewer pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, than in most schools. Similarly, a low proportion have free school meals.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Standards are high and the pupils achieve well. This is because teaching is consistently good and, for the oldest pupils, often very good. Pupils enjoy school very much indeed; their behaviour is outstanding and they work really hard. This has a significant impact on their learning. They relate very positively to the adults who work with them and to each other. The good quality care and support they receive from staff enables them to develop positive attitudes to all aspects of school life. From the earliest stages in reception, a strong emphasis is placed on ensuring pupils feel secure and valued and, consequently, the youngest children get off to a good start. Most parents rightly feel that the school provides a high standard of education and that good teaching ensures their children make good progress.

Good leadership and management, backed by the strong commitment of staff and governors, ensure the right priorities for development are identified. These stem from the good procedures the school has put into place for evaluating its work. As a result, the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and has identified the need to further improve pupils' writing. It has effectively tackled the issues from the last inspection and consequently, there is good capacity for improvement. The school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

Improve standards and achievement in writing by:

- providing more exciting and imaginative experiences to stimulate writing in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1,
- ensuring that assessment and target setting in writing enables pupils in Key Stage 2 to build more rapidly and systematically on their skills,
- sharing the examples of very good practice in writing more effectively throughout the school,
- ensuring that all parents feel fully included in the life and work of the school,
- ensuring that fire drills are held more regularly.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The pupils' achieve well. When they start school, their skills are above average. By the end of reception, they are on course to well exceed the learning goals set for this age group. Pupils build effectively on their early achievements throughout the school, because of consistently good teaching. By the age of 11 the standards they reach in English, mathematics and science are well above average. The oldest pupils make particularly good progress because the teaching they receive is often very good and challenges them to the limit. Those who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those learning English as a new language achieve well as a result of good support. However, throughout the school, pupils could achieve higher standards in writing.

More could be done to stimulate their imaginative writing at Key Stage 1 and to help them build more effectively on their previous learning in writing at Key Stage 2. The school has identified writing as a key priority for improvement.

In the most recent national tests for 11-year olds, pupils met the challenging targets set for them in reading, mathematics and science. In fact, their mathematics results were the best ever for the school and their science results were exceptionally high. The picture in writing was not as strong, with too few pupils reaching high levels. The results of tests taken by the Year 2 pupils in 2005 were not as good as in previous years. This was expected because of the large number in the group with learning difficulties. These pupils achieved well, but not all reached average standards. These results are not typical and the present Year 2 pupils are set to do better.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils really love coming to school and are happy to talk at length about all the exciting things they do. They strike up delightful relationships with each other and this can be seen in the playground where all age groups mix together with carefree glee. They say they feel totally safe.

Children make great strides in their personal development. They are aware of the needs and feelings of others, as seen in the effortless way new members to a class blend in, including those who, as yet, speak little English. They show a selfless approach as they help one another in lessons, for example, when pointing out 'tricks of the trade' such as a teacher's clearly displayed examples of how to divide with remainders during a Year 5 mathematics lesson. They do this quietly and help to build each other's self-esteem in a very mature way. There are many opportunities for pupils to learn more about their own and others' cultures and they approach such activities with enthusiastic curiosity. Pupils are keen to support those less fortunate than themselves and take on fundraising activities for a number of worthy causes.

Pupils respond well to the messages about healthy living promoted by the school; they really enjoy the many sporting activities on offer. Pupils share their opinions through the school council and help to effect change in school. They are constantly learning more about how to play an active part in the community. Their very regular attendance and good punctuality helps to establish encourages good routines for later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils get off to a strong start in the reception classes and continue to learn well through Years 1 to 6. They make the best progress in Year 6 because teaching here is of a high standard. The older children are grouped by ability for lessons in mathematics and English and this has a positive impact

on their learning. The pupils in Year 6 say that their work is very challenging, but that they thoroughly enjoy it. They especially like problem-solving activities.

The teachers have high expectations of their pupils and the pupils rise to these. The relaxed, warm relationships staff create ensure the pupils' enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Teachers set questions expertly, at just the right level for individuals and their responses are valued. Consequently, pupils are very confident in discussion. Teaching assistants have a good impact on learning, particularly for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those in the younger age groups. Although there is effective deployment of staff overall, at times there is too little extra help for the pupils in Year 3, where there is a high number of pupils with particular learning needs.

Procedures to assess how well pupils are doing are good, including the marking of pupils' work. A key feature is the very good tracking of pupils' progress which the staff use very effectively in reading and mathematics to set targets for pupils to achieve. However, target setting is not as effective in writing.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of the curriculum good and is planned well to meet the needs and interests of all pupils. The curriculum for the youngest children provides good opportunities for a full range of practical activities both indoors and outside. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities as well as those few who learn English as an additional language receive good support so that they can take a full part in all that the school offers. However, in the reception classes to Year 2, insufficient use is made of role-play to stimulate and encourage the children's writing.

Subjects are often brought to life through visits to places of interest and by visitors to the school. Learning opportunities are also enhanced through innovations such as the teaching of French in Year 3. There is a good range of activities for pupils to enjoy outside lessons, such as clubs in French and Spanish and opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument. Pupils take part in competitions and festivals in sports and music and are often highly successful. Good opportunities for personal, social, citizenship and health education are carefully woven through different subjects such as science and religious education. This has a demonstrable impact on the pupils' personal development and on their understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.

Staff and pupils are looking forward to the completion of the new computer suite currently under construction, to further improve the already good provision in information and communications technology.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Robust systems for child protection ensure that vulnerable children are given first class support by well-briefed staff. Outside agencies are involved as soon as a need for their expertise becomes apparent and parents really appreciate the help given to

their children. One parent of children with special needs commented, "The school understands and responds well to all the needs of my children". There are well-embedded systems in place to assure all aspects of pupils' health and safety at school, with the exception of fire drills. These have not been held regularly over the past two years.

Staff have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. The light-hearted atmosphere central to the pupils' enjoyment of so many lessons belies the clear understanding pupils have of what it means to be part of the school community. The concept of respect, which is central to the aims of the school, is truly at the heart of its work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. Senior managers have created a climate in which pupils are taught well, enjoy learning and make good progress. This is a significant factor in their strong personal development and the generally high standards they reach.

The senior management team systematically and accurately evaluate the work of the school. As a result, there is a clear focus on what needs to be improved and high standards are mostly maintained. Pupils' progress and test results are rigorously checked and any gaps in learning are highlighted and addressed. In writing, although the school has identified the key areas for improvement, the quality of teaching and learning are not monitored systematically enough to drive up standards. The pockets of very good practice in teaching writing that exists within the school are not shared effectively.

The views of parents and pupils are sought and often acted upon. Although the majority of parents hold the school in very high regard, a significant minority feel that the school could be more approachable and take greater account of their views.

The governors are supportive, knowledgeable and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They have thoroughly addressed the deficiencies in their work identified during the previous inspection. They work hard to sharpen their skills and use their individual expertise to best effect. As a result, governors are much more closely involved in shaping the direction of the school and have set up good systems for ensuring that they meet their responsibilities.

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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>	2	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>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	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	2	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**

N/A

As you know, three inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well your teachers are helping you to learn. Thank you for being so polite and friendly. We really enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school and what you like best about it.

The things we think are really good about your school are:

- The way in which teachers enable you to do well in your lessons.
- Your outstanding behaviour.
- The kind and helpful way you treat others.
- Your attitudes to lessons and the way you really enjoy them and all the other activities the school offers.
- The way in which all the people in school care for you and help you in all you do.

We have asked your teachers to improve the following things to make the school even better.

- We would like them to help you improve your writing.
- We would like them to make sure that all your parents feel involved and included in the school's work.
- We would like them to make sure you have more fire drills.

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection. We hope that you will carry on enjoying school and doing so well in your learning. Most of all, we hope that you will carry on helping the staff make sure your school gets even better.