



St Austin's Catholic (VA) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124361
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281702
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector Edward Wheatley AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Garden Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Stafford
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		ST17 4BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 356765
Number on roll	159	Fax number	01785 356769
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr A Riley
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Benetia Mounsey

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school with pupils from almost entirely White British backgrounds. A very small number of pupils do not have English as a first language, although none is in the early stages of learning English. Attainment on entry is broadly average, though there are variations from year to year. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is average.

There have been several changes in staffing in recent years, with most changes in Years 3 to 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. The leadership of the headteacher is very strong and she has the support of all staff. The headteacher has evaluated the school's performance accurately and other staff are becoming increasingly involved in this process. Governors are supportive and know the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school gives satisfactory value for money, has made satisfactory progress since it was last inspected and is well placed to make further improvement.

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Children's progress in the Reception year is satisfactory because the provision for them is satisfactory. In Year 2, standards are above average and pupils make good progress. In Year 6, standards are above average and progress is satisfactory, considering pupils' starting points, although in English progress has been good. The rate of progress is starting to improve in Reception and Years 3 to 6 now that staffing is settled and teaching is sharply focused on raising standards. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory in these years and there are often good features. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is consistently good. In some classes, pupils are not doing as well in writing as in other subjects. The school is working to improve this, but the action taken is yet to have full effect.

A wide range of activities enrich the curriculum and many visitors and after school clubs reinforce pupils' learning. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory, however, because pupils have too few opportunities to use computers. The school promotes pupils' personal development effectively. Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy being at school and most are enthusiastic learners. There is good care for pupils' personal welfare. Pupils have academic targets, but there is inconsistency in how well these are used to help pupils make progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing for all pupils by making sure pupils know where they make mistakes and what they need to do to correct them.
- Ensure all pupils experience the full ICT curriculum.
- Improve the use of pupils' academic targets in helping them to make progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall as they move up through the school. In the Reception class, standards are broadly at the level expected at this age and children make satisfactory progress. Recently, progress has improved. In Year 2, standards are above average and pupils achieve well, having made good progress since the start of Year 1. The weakest area is writing where standards are average, but the recent work is leading to improved progress.

In Year 6, standards are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to their starting points and capabilities. However, standards have risen sharply in English and here progress is good because of the concentrated efforts of the school to improve writing. Standards are now rising, although frequent changes in staffing have disrupted many pupils' learning. The school's focus on improving teaching has had a marked effect and pupils are starting to make better progress now, although there are gaps in pupils' learning because of a legacy of underachievement.

Although a downward trend in standards has been reversed, there is still some underachievement in writing in some classes, particularly for a small proportion of less capable pupils. Standards in ICT are below the level expected nationally because pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress because of individual support from teachers and support assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In assemblies, for example, pupils listen attentively to presentations on how people live in different countries and learn how they can make a difference to those who are not as fortunate as themselves. They enthusiastically raise money for world charities. The school council members are proud of the positive contribution they make to the school community. In particular, they like the fact that they have instigated 'Friendship Stops' where pupils who are lonely at playtimes can gather and find someone to play with.

Relationships and behaviour are good and pupils like coming to school. Most pupils are keen and eager learners who work hard. They respond well to the many opportunities to learn about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and say they feel safe and secure in school. Development of skills to help them in their later life is satisfactory although ICT skills are underdeveloped. Pupils enjoy their links with the local community and have many opportunities to do this. For example, at Christmas 2005, Year 6 pupils made a CD and visited a local radio station to promote it. Attendance is average and has dropped slightly, mainly because of a small number of pupils who have time off school because of medical problems.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is consistently good in Years 1 and 2, and is improving steadily in Reception. There are some instances of good teaching in Years 3 to 6. In the best lessons, learning objectives are very clear, carefully planned work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils, and activities are varied and challenging. In these really effective lessons, pupils know what they have learned and

what progress they have made. In weaker lessons, learning objectives are not so clear and pupils do not have such a secure understanding of what they are aiming to achieve.

Teachers develop pupils' speaking and listening skills effectively. In writing, activities for the more capable and 'average' pupils are challenging and demanding. Marking is satisfactory overall, often giving pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. However, for a small proportion of less capable pupils, marking does not give enough indication of where they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and well organised. The school has identified writing as a weakness and many opportunities are provided to give pupils opportunities to write both in English lessons and in other subjects. Although provision for ICT is inadequate, plans to improve it are good. Personal, social and health education is good and results in pupils' keenness to learn, their good behaviour and their positive relationships.

The school offers an impressive range of out of school clubs which reinforce and promote learning in many subjects, in particular in physical education. Pupils enjoy the well planned visits out into the local area. Year 6 pupils particularly enjoyed going to see the Queen when she visited Stafford. The many visitors who enrich the opportunities available to pupils include the specialist teachers who teach art and design and music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school cares for its pupils' personal welfare well and pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. Younger pupils say that older pupils look after them if they need help and the school is effective in promoting a caring atmosphere among pupils. Arrangements for ensuring health, safety and welfare are good, with risk assessments fully in place and governors actively involved. Child protection procedures are clear and effective. External specialists are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

All classroom areas are bright and cheerful and have many examples of pupils' work that promote literacy and numeracy skills well. The school has satisfactory procedures to track pupils' progress and identify pupils who require additional support. However, pupils are not consistently told what levels they have reached or what their targets are. As a result, targets have little impact on raising standards and improving progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides very strong direction for improvement. She has initiated effective procedures to evaluate the school's performance and is training other staff to be fully involved in this process

and to take responsibility for improvements in their own subject areas. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher, and all staff and governors are in agreement with the school's priorities for improvement. Evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Improvements are being implemented and are starting to have a positive impact on standards, for example in writing, and have reversed recent underachievement.

There have been considerable staff changes over recent years and a significant minority of parents expressed concern over how this disrupted pupils' progress. However, the situation has been resolved; the school now has a permanent staff and pupils' progress has started to improve. Most parents are very supportive and the school takes their views into account as well as those of pupils.

Governors are well informed and supportive. Partnerships with other schools, the church and support agencies are good. The school has dealt satisfactorily with the issues from the previous inspection and has good capacity to make further improvements.

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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	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

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	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	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?	3	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	2	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

We very much enjoyed our time at your school. You made us feel very welcome and many of you spoke to us in meetings, lessons and around school and helped us to gain a clear impression of your school.

The best things about your school are

- You make good progress in Years 1 and 2, and in English in Year 6. Progress is improving in the rest of the school.
- Your behaviour and attitudes are good, you enjoy school and work hard.
- The school takes good care of you and makes sure the school is a safe place for you to be in.
- The headteacher is giving good guidance on how the school should improve and she is well supported by all staff.
- All of the changes in staff you have had recently are now over and the school has a complete team of permanent teachers.

To improve things further we have asked the school to

Make sure standards in writing improve for all of you.

Make sure you all use computers regularly in all subjects to help improve your information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Make sure that you all know what levels you have reached and what your targets are.