



St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101801
Local Authority Croydon
Inspection number 286187
Inspection dates 12–13 September 2006
Reporting inspector Lynn Bappa

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Portnalls Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Coulsdon
Age range of pupils	4–11		CR5 3DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01737 556036
Number on roll (school)	206	Fax number	01737 558444
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Reverend Josef Doetsch
		Headteacher	Mrs Kathleen Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school located in an area of socio-economic advantage. Most children start school with levels of skill, knowledge and understanding which are well above those expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is above average. The main groups represented, apart from White British, are White Irish and mixed ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. There has been substantial recent staff turnover, particularly in Years 3 to 6. The school has just gained an award for the teaching of basic skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Aidan's is a satisfactory and improving school, and this is the way the school sees itself. It is a happy school with good standards of pastoral care. Pupils attend regularly, enjoy school and make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start and enjoy a wide range of activities, including those in the new outdoor play area. These aspects are praised by parents, one of whom said, 'Nothing is ever too much of a problem, the school is open, friendly and approachable. My children are happy, content and love school'.

Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress and nearly all exceed the expected standards by the time they start Year 1. Pupils in the rest of the school, including those from minority ethnic groups, also make satisfactory progress overall, given their high starting points. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities, however, make good progress because of the good support they receive. Pupils leave the school with well above average standards in mathematics and science. Although standards in English are well above average in reading, the proportion of pupils who gain the highest levels in writing in the national test results at the end of Year 6 is only just above average. Standards in writing, therefore, are not as good as they should be, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

Teaching is satisfactory and there are some good features, especially in the way staff meet the needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities. As one parent said, 'The teaching assistants really support and nurture the children'. Lessons are fun and pupils are encouraged to help each other and work together. Teachers are keen to see the pupils succeed. They are aware that more able pupils are capable of making faster progress, especially in writing, and they have begun to tackle the problem. Work is marked regularly, although comments written on pupils' exercise books, especially in English, do not always show them how to improve their work. Teachers are beginning to track pupils' progress more thoroughly in order to identify and tackle underachievement but this process is not yet rigorous enough.

The good curriculum promotes pupils' personal skills well. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy extra curricular activities and visits. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education through good links with local secondary schools.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has steered the school well through a difficult period of change. There is a tangible sense of determination to do better. The most important areas for improvement have been identified and appropriate actions are being taken to tackle the issues. School leaders, including the re-organised senior team and the governing body, are now effectively focused on ensuring that all groups of pupils, including higher attainers, achieve their full potential. Subject leaders are beginning to be more involved in monitoring standards in their area, although procedures are not yet as rigorous or consistent as they need to be. Recent initiatives have met with some success and the school is in a good position to build on them.

What the school should do to improve further

- * Improve the quality of teaching in English by giving higher attainers more challenging tasks, particularly in writing, and making sure that teachers' marking shows pupils how to improve their work.
- * Raise standards in English by improving the systems used to check on pupils' progress to ensure that higher attainers make the progress they are capable of.
- * Embed monitoring procedures and involve subject leaders more strategically in the process.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. By the end of the reception year, most children are confident learners and have exceeded the expected goals for their age. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are well above average overall. This represents satisfactory progress, given pupils' well above average standards on entry. Standards in writing, however, are not as good as they should be, particularly for higher attaining pupils. There is evidence to show that the school has begun to build more effectively on pupils' very good starting points although it is too soon to judge the full impact of recent initiatives. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As one parent said, 'Children are given an excellent grounding in life skills such as courtesy and caring for others as well as religious guidance'. Pupils behave well and they enjoy their lessons and other activities. Pupils feel safe and respect the rules for using the playground equipment. They report bullying, if it occurs, and play and work together happily. Pupils contribute to the school in many ways, although they would benefit from even more opportunities to demonstrate responsibility. Pupils participate enthusiastically in sporting activities and show a good understanding of why it is important to take part in them. They show an excellent understanding of which foods are good for you, and are very keen to show visitors that their school dinners or packed lunches are healthy. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and is improving. This means that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their learning across all subjects. Pupils in lower ability groups

are well supported by teaching assistants and make good progress in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to work together and share ideas. The teaching of writing is beginning to improve, although more remains to be done to ensure that higher attaining pupils make the progress they should. Most teachers plan their lessons well, although sometimes they are not clear enough about what each group is expected to learn. Teachers set targets for their pupils and mark their work regularly. However, the marking does not always show them how to improve, and target-setting is not used rigorously enough to challenge pupils who are at risk of under-achieving.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum consists of a wide range of well planned activities and meets the needs of pupils well. There is good, planned support for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers are getting better at planning the structure of work in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. They are also beginning to address the needs of higher attaining pupils more effectively in English, although more remains to be done in this area. Planning for the development of pupils' basic skills is good and links between English and other subjects are improving. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage promotes effective learning and the new outdoor play area is having a beneficial impact on children's progress. There are good enrichment opportunities and pupils enthusiastically attend extra-curricular activities, such as the hand bell club. There are very good curricular links with local secondary schools. Pupils in Year 6, for example, enjoy Latin lessons, and children throughout the school benefit from PE lessons taught by specialist teachers from these schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for in a safe and happy environment where it is clear that every child matters. Parents express a great deal of confidence in the support provided by staff. There are good procedures for child protection. Teachers are beginning to systematically track pupils' progress, but they do not yet make rigorous enough use of this information. This means that some higher attaining pupils do not always reach their full potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been recent improvement in developing the writing skills of higher attaining pupils, although the level of improvement is not yet good enough. The school has developed effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating its work. The drive to improve standards is supported by subject leaders but at the moment they do not play a rigorous enough part in checking and evaluating work in their areas. The school has begun to provide training to help them to become more involved. The headteacher has steered the school well

though a difficult period of change, which included a complete change of teaching staff in the junior classes. Staffing is now stable and everyone works together well. As one teacher said, 'Everyone is pulling together now'. While it is too early to see the full impact of these measures, there are many signs of improvement, and the school is in a good position to build on them.

Staff and governors take good account of parental opinion and respond well to suggestions made by them. Governors are supportive and have a growing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. We were very impressed by the way in which you go out of your way to make visitors welcome. We think you are given a sound education that prepares you well for when you go to secondary school.

Everyone seems to behave very well and it was delightful to see the friendly way in which you played together and made sure that everyone was included. You obviously enjoy coming to school. It was great to see so many of you involved in activities outside of lessons and also to see that you take learning seriously. Your teachers obviously care about you and many of you told us how much you appreciate all that they do.

Because you work hard and listen carefully you are successful in learning new things. You are especially good at mathematics, reading and science and it is clear that most of you enjoy your other lessons too. We think that some of you, particularly those of you who find your work too easy, could do even better in your writing. Your headteacher and teachers need to find more ways to make sure that everyone is as successful as possible in this, and need to check carefully on how well you are getting on. They have already started to do this and your writing has begun to improve. We have also asked your teachers to write more comments on your work that show you exactly what you need to do to improve it. Teachers who are in charge of subjects have started to look carefully at work in those subjects to make sure that standards stay high and that everyone is doing as well as they can. We have asked them to carry on doing this. We are sure that you will do your best to help them.

Mr Nathan and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours truly

Dr Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector