



St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103466
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286669
Inspection date 23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Hazel Callaghan

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Broad Lane
School category	Community		Kings Heath
Age range of pupils	4-11		Birmingham B14 5AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4446530
Number on roll (school)	200	Fax number	0121 4434994
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Judith Allan
		Headteacher	Robert Maloney
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Albans' is an average sized Catholic primary school that takes pupils from across the local parish. Most pupils are of White British heritage, some are from an Irish background and there are a few from other minority ethnic groups, including a very small number of refugees. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Children enter the school with a range of knowledge and skills but many have more limited language skills than expected for children of this age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Alban's is an effective school that continues to provide a good education for its pupils. The strong Catholic ethos that pervades all sections of the school's work securely underpins the exemplary levels of pastoral care provided for pupils and their good personal development. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and a good track record of making improvements, as in raising standards and achievement, which shows the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils achieve well through the school because of consistently good teaching. Children make a good start in the Reception class, which is successfully built on through the school. Standards in Year 6 are significantly above the national average and have been so for many years. Standards in reading are outstanding and so English standards have been consistently high. Effective strategies have raised the attainment of the more able older pupils in mathematics and science but they are still not achieving as well in writing as they do in other subjects. The school has correctly identified the slow progress of some more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 and is now focusing on improving their work. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good and most pupils are given good academic guidance. Pupils' progress is checked regularly but the school recognises that targets for the more able pupils to aim for have not been high enough and teachers have not expected enough of them. Less able pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well.

Pupils enjoy school, they feel safe and have good attitudes to their work and want to do well. A good curriculum, which is enhanced by many additional activities, fosters pupils' enthusiasm and prepares them well for the next stage in their education. Parents think very highly of the school. One parent's comments are typical of many others received during the inspection when she wrote, 'All staff are very helpful and really care for the children and that's what makes them relaxed and happy and enables them to learn.'

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has a strong sense of purpose and vision for the school. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and a strong team of staff. Governors are well informed and they provide a supportive yet challenging partnership with the management team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set academic targets to ensure that pupils of all abilities, especially the more able in Years 1 and 2, are suitably challenged to make good progress in all areas of their work and for more able pupils in Year 6 to attain higher standards in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and standards are significantly above average by the time pupils leave in Year 6 and have been so for many years.

Children make good progress in the Reception class because the teaching staff have a good understanding of children's needs and plan work effectively. Pupils continue to make good progress through Years 1 and 2, except for some of the more able children. Standards in Year 2 are broadly average because too few pupils attain the higher levels. Most pupils achieve well through Years 3 to 6 and those with learning difficulties and disabilities often make good progress because of good teaching and support. In recent years, inconsistent levels of challenge had resulted in the more able pupils making less progress than they should. The school identified this weakness and has introduced strategies to encourage pupils' self-evaluation and understanding of how to improve. This has raised standards, particularly in mathematics, science and writing in Years 3 to 6. Strategies to improve the progress of more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 have not yet found similar success. Standards in English have been consistently high in Year 6 because of outstanding results in reading and, although standards have risen in writing, the more able pupils in Year 6 are not yet reaching the same high levels attained in reading, mathematics or science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good and this has a significant impact on their progress. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is excellent and the result of the strong Christian ethos of the school. Pupils are courteous and polite and have excellent relationships with each other and the adults around them. Their social and cultural awareness is good and they show care and consideration towards each other. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe and use their knowledge well to make positive decisions.

Behaviour is good. There are a few pupils who find difficulty in behaving as they should at playtimes, but this does not worry other pupils who have no concerns about bullying. Pupils' positive attitudes towards school are reflected in their high attendance rates. During a discussion with a group of pupils they used words such as 'fantastic' and 'great!' to describe their school. Pupils of all ages respond very well to the opportunities to take on responsibilities and make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council has been very successful in promoting many positive changes in the life of the school. They are very proud of their achievements, especially the provision of air conditioning in some classrooms. All pupils respond well to opportunities to support those less well off than themselves and they make a substantial contribution to various charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good through the school and this underpins pupils' good progress. Pupils hold their teachers in high regard saying they are tremendously caring

and supportive. Teachers explain clearly what the purpose of the lesson is and sessions move along at a good pace. Resources, such as the computerised whiteboards, are effective in stimulating pupils' interest and in helping them to understand new ideas. Pupils know how well they are doing in lessons and feel teachers help them to improve. Pupils are given targets to aim for in English and mathematics. These are not yet systematically linked to pupils' levels of ability and are often not challenging enough for the more able. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided with skilled teaching in withdrawal sessions, as well as in class lessons. Teaching assistants are well trained and play an important part in all pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good basis for learning in the Reception class and throughout the school. It is enhanced by many additional activities and visits that extend pupils' interest, knowledge and skills. The curriculum plays an important part in promoting pupils' personal development. There is a good emphasis on supporting pupils' understanding of how to develop healthy lifestyles but some aspects of drug education need to be tackled more thoroughly if the school is to be successful in its aim to achieve the Healthy Schools' Award. The curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) plays an effective part in supporting pupils' learning in other subjects, but as yet there has been little thought given to how different subjects can be linked more effectively to further enrich pupils' experiences and learning. The curriculum is successfully adapted to meet the need of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who have a different home language than English.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils are highly valued as individuals and so feel very secure and well cared for. Christian principles support pupils' personal and spiritual development and strong relationships ensure that pupils feel confident to talk about any difficulties or worries. The school takes the safety of its pupils very seriously and provision for aspects such as child protection is secure.

Academic support and guidance are good. The attainment and progress of all pupils are checked and targets for future attainment regularly set and reviewed. The school now recognises that these targets are not always sufficiently challenging, especially for the more able pupils, and plans to review them so that expectations for all abilities are consistently high. Strategies to support pupils' evaluation of their own work are working well and pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to achieve in each lesson. This is helping to raise standards further. The achievements of pupils with learning difficulties are systematically monitored and effective targets for their progress help them to achieve well. There are good links with outside agencies that are drawn on as required.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The ethos of the school is strong and there is a clear focus on raising achievement and on the pastoral care of all pupils. Well established systems for checking the work of the school are used to identify where weaknesses lie and strategies for improvement are developed. Governors, staff and parents are consulted effectively about how well the school is moving forward. The priorities for school improvement are well founded and based on an accurate evaluation of the school's provision. However, the performance management cycle for staff and the school improvement plan are not sufficiently linked to ensure all staff are working towards the same priorities. The school management structure has recently been changed in line with national guidance but responsibility for the management of subjects has yet to be confirmed so that the good leadership of the past is maintained. The role of governors has been strengthened and they play a more active part in strategic planning and ensuring value for money.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	2
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?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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

I am writing to thank you for making me feel welcome in your school and for helping me with my questions. I really enjoyed chatting to you and found everything you said very interesting. I thought you would like to know what I found out about your school.

What I liked about the school:

- It is a good school where you are happy and enjoy your lessons.
- You get on exceedingly well with each other and with the adults in the school.
- You behave sensibly and are kind to each other.
- You try hard to do well in your work.
- You understand the importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- You are given opportunities to take responsibility and you do it well.
- You try very hard to help other people at school, in the community and around the world.
- Teaching is good and teachers do all they can to help you get better in your work.
- You have lots of additional activities that make the work planned for you interesting.
- All the adults in school look after you exceptionally well and help you feel safe.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher lead and manage the school well.

What I have asked the school to do now:

- To give you a very clear idea of what you need to do to move forward in your work, particularly those of you who find work easy in Years 1 and 2 and the older pupils who could do better work in their writing.

Thank you again for being so pleasant and helping me with my questions.