

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104463
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	286949
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss P Seddon
Headteacher	Miss M Kenneway
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002
School address	Adswood Road Huyton Liverpool Merseyside L36 7XR
Telephone number	0151 4778370
Fax number	0151 4778371

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school mainly serves the parish of St Aidan's. The number on roll is rising. More than half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, well above the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, over half on the school's register, is well above that found nationally. The social deprivation of the surrounding area is high. The school has a number of local and nationally recognised awards including Healthy Schools, ActiveMark Gold and Basic Skills Quality Mark. A new headteacher was appointed at the start of the current academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Aidan's is a good school which provides a good quality of education. The staff are committed to improving the school and are led by a highly effective headteacher. The excellent direction she offers is well supported by governors and staff who feel informed and involved. Indeed parents and pupils also play a significant part in making decisions, such as in the changes to the school uniform and improvements to pupils' toilet facilities.

The school entrance welcomes visitors with photographs, posters and examples of pupils' many successes. Plaques depicting the school's awards are prominently on show. Classrooms are characterised by colourful displays of pupils' work that create interest and celebrate pupils' achievements.

The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and, overall, is judged as good. It is variable between classes in Key Stages 1 and 2. Teachers are knowledgeable about subjects and plan mostly interesting lessons. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils make rapid strides to develop their speaking and listening skills. The school's consistent focus on improving pupils' language and communication skills ensures they attain satisfactory standards by the time they reach Year 6. Standards are a little below average in English, mathematics and science. Given the very low levels of skills with which most enter the school, their achievement is good.

The school curriculum successfully develops pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy but they are not always provided with relevant, appealing and interesting experiences for learning in all subjects. Themed weeks, organised annually, provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and traditions. Computer facilities have been improved and include a well equipped suite which is used by all classes. In lessons, good use is made of projectors, screens and whiteboards to focus pupils' attention and add variety to their learning experience. The school successfully tracks and targets pupils' performance and sets high expectations for each year group. Every pupil has individual curriculum targets for English and mathematics and these are shared with parents in termly reports. This is a relatively new initiative which is yet to impact on pupils' results. There is a good range of visits including a residential opportunity to an outdoor activity centre which took place for Year 6 pupils during the inspection. The curriculum is also enriched by visiting speakers. For example, local museum staff were seen teaching Year 3 pupils about the ancient Egyptians and pupils enjoyed translating their names into hieroglyphs.

St Aidan's is a happy place where pupils enjoy learning and take pride in their achievements. They say that there is little or no bullying and that it is dealt with well if it happens. Staff show a high level of care and pupils say that they feel safe and are confident in turning to an adult for help if needed. Pupils are identified early if they need extra support. Well trained teaching assistants provide good guidance to pupils and there are very strong relationships built upon respect and confidence. As a result, pupils' self-esteem increases and they mature into responsible young people with positive attitudes to learning. Although the school has a number of strategies in place to encourage good attendance it is still below average. However, attendance is improving and the impact of the school's rewards system is clearly working well. Pupils like school; they feel they are listened to and value the way staff treat them. Behaviour incentives such as golden time are successful in motivating good behaviour. Pupils appreciate

the opportunity they have to consult on how sanctions and rewards for golden time work. These are displayed in every class and pupils are quick to point out how this works.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the consistency of good teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure a greater relevance to pupils' needs.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Nursery with levels of skills which are well below those found in most schools. They are particularly low in pupils' social development and in the skills of communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes so that by the end of the Foundation Stage standards rise to below average. Gains made by pupils in speaking and listening skills and in their social development are especially good.

In Key Stage 1 pupils progress well and attain standards which remain below average but are nearer to the national benchmarks. There is some variation in progress between classes and in different subjects. In language and literacy pupils make significant gains. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 attain overall satisfactory standards by age 11 though a little below national average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils make good but inconsistent progress as they move through Years 3 to 6. The latest available data reveals a trend of improved pupil achievement in Key Stage 2 though there was a slight fall in 2006. The school's analysis of pupils' performance during the current academic year demonstrates good progress.

Given the very low level of skills with which many pupils enter school and the broadly average standards they reach by Year 6, pupils' achievement is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils at an early age know right from wrong and show a respect for themselves, others and their environment. Pupils enjoy school and behaviour is generally good, with a clear system of rewards for good behaviour. A small number of pupils display some challenging behaviour which is well managed by skilled staff. Attendance is below average but broadly satisfactory. It has improved significantly due to the considerable efforts of the school to both promote and reward good attendance. Pupils contribute well to their school community by taking responsibilities such as being prefects, playground buddies and members of the school council. Pupils are clearly listened to, and suggestions made by the school council to improve the toilets for pupils have been implemented by the school.

Pupils feel safe in school and are making good choices about what they eat. They take regular exercise including opportunities to be involved in the many active after-school clubs. This encourages healthy lifestyles. Pupils acquire satisfactory basic skills and they work well with

others. Prefects are interviewed by the school council. In this way pupils are gaining experiences which are prepare them well for future life in secondary school and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the Foundation Stage pupils receive consistently good teaching, with some outstanding features in the Reception class. In Key Stages 1 and 2 teaching ranges from satisfactory to good. The majority of teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good.

Teachers' classrooms are bright and stimulating. They are very well organised to encourage and develop pupils' independence and to motivate and engage pupils in learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. There is effective support for the large proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants deployed to work with these pupils are calm, patient and understanding which results in pupils showing respectful attitudes. Behaviour in classes is good. Very good attention is given to developing pupils' speaking, listening and communication skills. The level of co-operation between pupils is good, brought about by effective social development which is inspired by the excellent role models given by the staff. All teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they are expected to teach. Planning for lessons is thorough but the quality of objectives for pupils' learning varies. Many teachers employ a range of teaching styles to interest pupils and hold their concentration. In the less successful lessons pupils pay less attention because the teacher relies on giving instructions and pupils have no opportunities to discuss or collaborate with each other. In all classes there is good use of the school's rewards system. Teachers regularly praise pupils for their effort and good behaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is suitably broad and satisfies statutory requirements. In some Key Stage 2 classes the teaching of French extends the curriculum. Plans are in place to provide this across the whole school in the next academic year. There is good provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. All groups of learners are well provided for including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Enrichment of the curriculum is good, with all pupils having many opportunities to visit places of interest and older pupils having the chance to experience a residential visit. Many visitors including artists, poets and museum staff come into school and provide artefacts, specialist information and guidance to help to capture pupils' imaginations. Focus weeks are used in school to develop pupils' personal, social and health education. Visitors help make learning interesting relevant and enjoyable. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about their health and safety, including drug awareness and road safety. A good range of extra-curricular opportunities is on offer for pupils, many of which involve exercise and develop a variety of interests from athletics to chess.

The relevance of the curriculum to pupils' needs and interests is restricted because it is organised and taught mainly as single subjects. Pupils have insufficient opportunity to apply their basic skills in numeracy and literacy across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for by a highly committed and well trained staff who have a good knowledge of pupils and their families. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at a very early stage. They are well supported, including the use of specialists from beyond school. Pupils with behaviour difficulties are well managed by class teachers and support staff. The learning mentor is always positive and understanding, which encourages and motivates the pupils.

Staff are clearly very concerned for the welfare of the children in their care. Procedures are in place to ensure the safeguarding of pupils and the school follows the latest government guidance.

Though pupils are guided in lessons to improve their learning, the marking of their work is weak in some areas and inconsistent across classes. All pupils have targets for literacy and numeracy. This system is in the early stages of development and the impact on pupils' progress is not yet seen in their results.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Overall leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstandingly strong direction to the school. She has made effective changes to the quality of communication with parents and governors and the monitoring procedures and she has set high expectations of everyone in school. These are embraced by all staff who appreciate the way the headteacher values staff expertise and skills. Collectively, there is a high level of commitment to improving the school. There is unanimity of support for strategies to improve the quality and use of curriculum targets and pupil tracking, which are seen as the key to raising standards of pupils' attainment. Governors are well informed and knowledgeable about the school. They successfully challenge the school leadership where appropriate and provide effective support. Governors are increasingly seeking information for themselves and this is welcomed by the school leaders.

The school's self-evaluation matches closely with inspectors' views of the school though their own grades are too modest. The school has a good understanding of where it needs to improve. Subject leaders in English and mathematics are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching and learning. Strategies to develop this good practice throughout the school are at an early stage. Appropriate staff training is pinpointed.

Due to effective initiatives to improve teaching, standards are rising and pupils make good progress in their learning. Attendance rates are increasing. The Foundation Stage provision, which had a weakness in the Reception class at the last inspection, is a significant strength of the school. There is good capacity for the school to improve further and the school gives good value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	3
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	3
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.

Annex A

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

Inspection of St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Huyton, L36 7XR.

Following our visit to your school we would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your experiences. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

- St Aidan's is a good school.
- You work hard and achieve well.
- The standards which you reach in English, mathematics and science are a little below average.
- Teaching is mostly good though it varies in Key Stage 1 and 2.
- Most of you behave well in lessons and around school.
- Your headteacher is excellent at leading your school and the staff and governors support her well.
- All the staff care for you.
- If you have learning difficulties and/or disabilities the school provides extra help and this helps you to achieve as well as any pupil.
- Your attendance is below average and needs to improve.
- The school provides very good extra activities for you.
- The curriculum is good, but it is not always very interesting because subjects do not join up well to make sense to you.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Aidan's Catholic Primary School an even better school.