



St Alban's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106937
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 287655
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Dee Brigstock

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Morthen Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Wickersley, Rotherham
Age range of pupils	3–11		South Yorkshire S66 1EU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01709 542878
Number on roll (school)	242	Fax number	01709 547950
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr G Lancashire
		Headteacher	Mrs G Atkin
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Alban's is a popular, larger than average school in an area of average prosperity. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average and attainment on entry into the school is above average. The majority of pupils are from a White British background and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the majority of these have moderate learning difficulties. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. A few pupils are looked after in public care. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Mark, Sports Activemark and the Advanced Healthy Schools award.

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 a good school with several outstanding features. In this school, pupils' outstanding spiritual and personal development has a very high priority. As a result of this, and excellent care, guidance and support, pupils have a first-rate knowledge of how to stay fit, healthy and safe. They greatly enjoy and have pride in their school. Pupils' behaviour and their personal development are first class. Their confidence and self-esteem increase rapidly as they mature into responsible and thoughtful young people who believe their views matter.

Children enter school with standards that are above average and by Years 2 and 6 they are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science, and have been for several years. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships between all adults and pupils are distinguished by mutual respect. Pupils learn well because the work they are set is pitched at a level that challenges them but leads to success. Teachers adapt their work to changing circumstances. For example, in 2006 some of the most capable pupils did not meet the standards expected for them. The school analysed the reasons thoroughly. As a result teachers set more challenging targets for pupils, making sure that pupils better understand how to improve further. The school already has assessments that show how well pupils are on track to meet these more demanding targets. In Year 2, pupils learn to write using a joined handwriting style. This is not consistently built on in Years 3 to 6 and some pupils, even the most capable, regress to printing their work. This level of presentation does not match the high standards pupils reach in other areas of their learning.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good rather than outstanding as the school suggests because children make good, rather than excellent, progress in almost all areas of their curriculum. Children make excellent progress in acquiring social skills and satisfactory progress in reading and writing. The school's curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is excellent rather than good as the school suggests, because it is adapted so well to meet the needs of all learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have gifts and/or talents. The school accesses effective additional support for these pupils, including master-classes for the most able pupils. The curriculum is enriched very well through a wide range of visits and visitors, including three residential visits, which have a powerful and effective focus on pupils' personal development.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and drives the school ever onwards and upwards. Leaders are firmly focused on raising standards and in promoting the school's values; everyone in school shares this vision. The well-being and achievement of pupils are at the core of all school development plans, although how success can be measured for each development is not detailed enough. However, the school knows itself extremely well and all members of the school community are involved in evaluating, almost completely accurately, its effectiveness. The maintenance of high academic and personal standards over several years, the school's successful actions to improve further, and an incisive self-evaluation

demonstrate its outstanding capacity to improve. The school gives good value for money. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' handwriting and presentation skills in Years 3 to 6.
- Extend the school action plans to include how planned improvements are to be measured and by whom.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Significantly high standards have been maintained for several years. Year 6 pupils agree that they 'work as hard as they can.' Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, occasionally exceeding the targets set for them. The school analyses pupils' performance rigorously. Prompt and effective action is taken to deal with any identified underperformance. For example, pupils at risk of not meeting their challenging targets are provided with additional booster classes. All pupils now have better information on how to assess their own learning and more focused targets on how to meet the higher Level 5 standards. The school already has assessment data to show that pupils are on track to meet the demanding targets set for them in 2007 and 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. They are alert and attentive in lessons and clearly have a say in school improvement. The school council sees its role as 'listening to make school a better place'. Members have been instrumental in setting up a system of playground buddies, a friendship bench, the promotion of healthy lunches and selling fruit at playtimes. Pupils feel well supported by staff and say that rare instances of bullying are dealt with well. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' charitable work in the local and worldwide community promotes their understanding of economic and environmental issues well and they develop a strong sense of responsibility towards younger pupils and those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils' well above average attendance, their punctuality, their attitudes to work, the high standards they attain and their partnership work with the Young Enterprise in Education programme equip them extremely well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan interesting, practical learning activities in the Foundation Stage, which catch children's imagination and include very good opportunities for them to join up aspects of their learning. For example, they wear jewels and tiaras to play Celebrity Bingo to practise their number recognition and learn how to take turns and follow rules. Throughout the school there are examples of outstanding teaching and learning. Teaching assistants are well qualified and work closely alongside teachers, contributing very effectively to pupils' learning. Staff have high expectations of how much pupils can achieve, except pupils' skills in presentation, particularly in Key Stage 2. Some pupils, despite the fact they know how to join their handwriting, choose to print their work, which takes them longer. Lessons are very well planned to build on pupils' previous learning, are varied, capture pupils' interest and increasingly include an element of learning in information and communication technology. Pupils say that teachers' marking is helpful to them 'more or less every time'. In the lessons visited during the inspection, pupils were busy and very articulate. Older pupils explain their targets for improvement clearly and are beginning to understand at what level they are working and how they can improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum contributes very effectively to pupils' achievement and personal development. It is very well planned to meet their needs and engage their interest. Many enjoyable opportunities are planned that cater for pupils' different learning styles. For example, they have access to computers for research, artwork and history and also act out interviews from different periods in history.

Pupils' understanding of how to be fit and healthy is enhanced through a very good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education. There is rich additional provision with a wide range of sporting as well as residential trips in Years 4, 5 and 6. These, plus a wide range of popular extra-curricular activities, make a major contribution to pupils' well-being and enjoyment in learning. Pupils gain good knowledge and understanding of other religions and festivals through religious studies and the arts. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good. It is well planned and provides a wide variety of interesting learning activities both indoors and outdoors. These capture children's interest and add to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children are well cared for and supported. Outstanding care, guidance and support results in a very healthy and safe environment in which pupils learn well. Individual education and behaviour plans give

precise and achievable small steps of learning for pupils and these, together with very effective support from learning assistants in all classes, enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. The school's partnerships with local agencies effectively safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. Careful attention is paid to health and safety issues, and procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous. The systems to support academic progress for all pupils are very good and pupils say that teachers' marking and pointers on how to improve further are helpful. There are very good links with parents, such as reading with their children before school, in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of senior staff and governors are good, and very effective in raising both academic and personal standards. The headteacher's leadership and management are outstanding. She is the driving force in maintaining the significantly high standards in school over several years. Other senior staff lead and manage well but are less rigorous than the headteacher in making judgements on the quality of teaching and learning and how these can be improved.

The school's processes for self-evaluation are rigorous and take account of the views of all stakeholders, resulting in an accurate evaluation of what the school does well and how it can improve further. Most parents are very positive and supportive about the school although a few feel that communication with school could improve further. The inspection found that parents have an adequate amount of information each term. This has improved since the last inspection. Pupils' progress is tracked very closely and challenging targets are even higher this year. Pupils' well-being and the principles of 'Every Child Matters' lie at the heart of the school's developing excellence plan which accurately reflects the issues identified for improvement in the school's own evaluation of its work. However, the means by which progress is to be measured or by whom are unclear. Good links exist with outside agencies and the local secondary school to support the school's work, for example in the provision of Spanish.

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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
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

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school and for being so helpful when we asked you questions. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and finding out about the things you like to do.

We think there are lots of really good things about your school. These are:

- you are growing up to be mature young people with a strong understanding of right and wrong
- you have an extremely good understanding of how to stay fit, healthy and safe, for your age
- your school is a very friendly and pleasant place to be and you enjoy your learning
- there are lots of learning activities outdoors for the children in the Foundation Stage
- your teachers make lessons lively and interesting and they expect you to work hard
- you are reaching standards in English, mathematics and science that are much higher than usual
- your headteacher and the teachers are doing a good job in always trying to make the school a little bit better.

To improve your school even more, we have asked your headteacher to:

- ensure that you always do your best handwriting and join it all the time in Years 3 to 6
- write down ways to measure how well the school is doing in its plans for the future.

I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Alban's Primary School such a good place to learn.