

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111307
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	288919
<b>Inspection date</b>	5 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Aitken

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	226
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs A Griffin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Frances Curless
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 January 2003
<b>School address</b>	Bewsey Road Warrington Cheshire WA5 0JS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 632128
<b>Fax number</b>	01925 241269

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This popular school is situated close to the centre of town. Pupils come from a wide geographical area and from a variety of backgrounds but the immediate area is characterised by above average levels of economic and social deprivation. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased to above average. The vast majority of pupils are White British but there is a small number of pupils of minority ethnic heritage. The headteacher joined the school in September 2006, while the other two members of the senior leadership team took up their posts in January 2007.

## 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 school. School leaders evaluated the performance of the school to be good. While recognising the promising work being undertaken to redevelop provision, the inspection judges that this is in the early stages of impacting on pupils' academic achievement. The outcomes of the inspection, however, acknowledge strengths in pupils' personal development and the pastoral care pupils receive. Both of these are good. Inspection findings endorse the views of parents. The vast majority commend its work and, in particular, 'its warm and family atmosphere'.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children's skills are below the levels expected for their age on entry to Nursery. They get off to a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage. Here they are provided with an appropriate range of learning experiences and develop well in some areas, but opportunities are missed to reinforce basic skills in literacy. Standards are below average when children enter Year 1. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress thereafter, to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards are usually higher in mathematics and science than in English, where weaknesses remain, especially in writing. Pupils enjoy school and get on well with each other, which are reflected in the good ways that they play together and the concern the older pupils display for the younger ones. The curriculum is successful in promoting their spiritual and cultural development. It has enhanced pupils' motivation through themed weeks which have given all pupils some opportunities to write on more varied topics. However, the curriculum is in transition, and there are insufficient opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning and promote greater creativity. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet fully effective in supporting pupils' learning. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is underdeveloped. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe and the curriculum makes a good contribution to their understanding of the importance of being fit and healthy. While some of the teaching is good, the overall quality is not consistent enough to ensure pupils make good, rather than satisfactory, progress. Work is not always adapted to the needs of all learners and pupils are not engaged fully enough in assessing and improving their work. Pupils are well cared for by the staff. Weaknesses in academic guidance have been identified and are being resolved, but new systems are at too early a stage to have impacted on pupils' achievement.

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since its last inspection. Good foundations for the future have been made as a result of a thoughtful analysis of key strengths and weaknesses. Managers recognise that new systems, although showing early signs of effectiveness, have yet to impact fully on standards. Monitoring arrangements are not yet fully effective at all levels. Partnerships with other organisations and the use of resources are satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, especially in writing.
- Ensure teachers consistently adapt the work to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure monitoring, evaluation and review systems are fully effective in all aspects of the work of the school.
- Improve opportunities for gifted and talented pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The levels of children's skills and knowledge on entry to Nursery vary from year to year but are generally below average, especially in language development. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage in the basic skills, but do better both in physical development and in personal and social development. By the time they joined Year 1 in 2006, most children had not achieved the expected early learning goals, and weaknesses remained, especially in language and literacy. Thereafter, pupils make satisfactory progress, but there is some variation between subjects and year groups. Progress is good in the present Years 5 and 6 in mathematics and science, and in Year 5 in English. Provisional test results indicate that the current Year 6 pupils, who are more able than their predecessors, have exceeded their targets but weaknesses in writing have not been eliminated from Reception to Year 4. In the 2006 national tests at the end of Year 2, results were broadly average overall, but down from the previous year. Results at the end of Year 6 in 2006 were broadly average overall, but barely adequate in English. In part, this reflected the high proportion of pupils with extra learning needs but there was also some underachievement amongst the girls. The school is taking part in the Intensified Support Programme (ISP) with a focus on improving standards in literacy. There is evidence of positive impact in raising the standards of a small target group of pupils. Overall, pupils with language difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy their school, behave considerately and show understanding for the needs of others. They develop well spiritually and older pupils have a keen sense of responsibility and set a good example to the younger children. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. Most relate well to each other at work and play. Pupils are well aware of cultural diversity, as reflected, for example, in their Aboriginal artwork and through participation in Hindu assemblies. Older pupils have a mature understanding of citizenship issues, such as global warming and poverty in the Third World. Pupils know how to stay safe. They are aware of the importance of exercise and are responding positively to the school's new healthy options and snacks scheme. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsible roles in school by acting as playleaders or school councillors. Older pupils sell snacks, but otherwise the opportunities to develop enterprise skills are limited. Pupils acquire a satisfactory command of the basic skills they need for later life. Attendance is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In lessons teachers manage pupils well; consequently, relationships are good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Teachers and teaching assistants are suitably deployed to support pupils who find learning more difficult during their independent work. Where teaching is good, lessons are well structured and

challenging and good use is made of continuous assessment to maintain both the pace of the learning and pupils' involvement. This good practice is not shared widely enough. Although teachers are now more aware of pupils' prior attainment and lesson planning identifies different groups of learners, work is not adapted consistently to meet the needs of all learners, particularly the more able. Insufficient use is made of assessment to ensure learning moves on briskly. Marking is regular and, in some cases, helpful; for example, when it is closely tied to pupils' new literacy targets. Overall, its quality is inconsistent, reflecting the variation in the quality of the teaching.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory in enabling children to make steady progress in their learning in spite of restrictions in the quality of accommodation and the outdoor area. The curriculum for older pupils is being redeveloped. Its strengths lie in its contributions to pupils' personal development through successful new initiatives, such as Art Week. At present, these initiatives are 'add-ons' as the school seeks to develop a more creative curriculum. Opportunities to reinforce basic skills in other subjects are restricted. The school has sought to address this through involvement in an ICT programme to support literacy, and this has impacted on pupils' motivation, but not yet on standards. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory and the school is now making better use of data to direct support programmes. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is underdeveloped. Pupils benefit from a satisfactory range of visits and visitors, including the Year 6 Menai residential. The range of after-school activities is satisfactory, as is the level of pupils' participation. Involvement is restricted for some pupils who travel a long way home. Extended Schools Cluster Clubs provide some extra activities such as circus skills, which pupils greatly enjoy.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

This aspect of the school's work is good overall. Pupils feel safe and are actively involved in working with staff to deal with isolated bullying incidents. Pupils say they can go to an adult who will deal appropriately with their concerns. There are good links with outside agencies to ensure pupils with emotional difficulties get the support they need. Procedures for health and safety are in place. Training in child protection is up to date and other arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff meet current requirements. The school is taking increasing account of the views of parents, by developing its role within the Extended Schools Cluster. Improved procedures for tracking the progress of pupils have been introduced, but these, together with new individual pupil targets for literacy, are too recent to have impacted noticeably on pupils' achievement. Good arrangements exist to prepare Year 6 pupils to settle in at secondary school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new senior leadership team has taken shape in stages following the appointment of the new headteacher in September 2006. New systems are enabling the team to gain a sharper view of strengths and weaknesses, although they have yet to be reviewed and evaluated fully. Senior managers have a clear understanding of what

needs to be done to improve outcomes in pupils' achievement, especially in English, and in promoting their personal development. They have embarked on a measured course of improvement and, within a short period of time, several well-considered actions have been taken to raise standards. There are some early signs of positive impact, for example, in the success of targeted support programmes, but impact in other areas, most notably teaching and learning, is less evident. Monitoring by subject leaders, particularly in areas other than numeracy and literacy, is not fully effective. This is reflected in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and within the curriculum. Governors are supportive of the new direction the school is taking, are aware of the work that needs to be done and offer satisfactory challenge as 'critical friends'.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	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	3
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I visited your school to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for making me welcome and being helpful when 'the Investigator', as some of you called me, talked to you. I was pleased to see how ready you all were, even children in Reception, to show me your work and talk about it. I was lucky to have the opportunity to speak to some of you at lunchtime and was impressed by your thoughtful comments on school and the way the older pupils 'looked out' for the younger ones.

I judge that you are receiving a satisfactory education. I agree with you that your school provides good opportunities for you to understand how to stay safe and be healthy. I was impressed by the new opportunities you have to do fun, but useful things, to develop your skills and knowledge. I'm thinking here, for example, about your Art Week. You follow the teachers' lead in respecting each other and in behaving well most of the time. The school does a lot of good things to help you grow up to be sensible and responsible and make you aware of other cultures and religions. The staff look after you well.

There are some things that I have asked the headteacher and staff to do to make your learning better. First, I want them to make sure that you improve your skills in English, and especially writing. Second, I want them to make sure that teachers set you the kind of work which will help all of you to learn faster. Third, as you know, the new headteacher and her senior staff have started to make changes in school. I have asked them to check carefully how well these changes are going to ensure that they do, indeed, help you to make good progress, especially in your academic work. Finally, I have asked the staff to improve opportunities for gifted and talented pupils.

You can help by always doing your best and by working hard with your teachers to make St Alban's Catholic Primary an even better place to be.