

St Augustine's RC (A) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124322
Local Authority Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 292958
Inspection dates 26–27 February 2007
Reporting inspector Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sandon Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Meir
Age range of pupils	3–11		Stoke-on-Trent ST3 7DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 319504
Number on roll (school)	222	Fax number	01782 319504
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Jan Nowotnik
		Headteacher	Loretta Marie Frain
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The majority of pupils are White British, with a small number from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. There have been significant staffing changes in the last two years with the appointment of four new teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'St Augustine's is a great place to develop and learn.' This comment from one parent sums up the confidence that they all have in the school. Inspectors agree that this is a good school. Pupils achieve well and thrive both academically and socially because of good care, guidance and support. Outstanding pastoral care results in pupils knowing how to keep safe and feeling confident that adults will help them if they have a concern. 'We trust our teachers. They are kind and always listen' is the view shared by many.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception), where teaching is good. They make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1, the majority are working securely within the goals expected for their age. Progress continues to be good so that by Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Although progress is good overall, in Years 1 and 2 it is mainly satisfactory, resulting in broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Activities do not consistently challenge all pupils and the pace of learning is not fast enough. As a result of staffing changes, this is improving. However, there is still some way to go to ensure that progress is even throughout the school.

Pupils' good achievement springs from their enjoyment of learning. They develop as well-rounded individuals and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils show a high level of respect for themselves and for others. As one pupil said, 'Our school motto is special and encourages us to treat people as we would like to be treated ourselves – that means being good and kind!' Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, knowing, for instance, that 'we should eat five portions of fruit or vegetables each day.' Teaching and learning are good. Strengths include outstanding relationships that encourage pupils to ask and answer questions. Pupils are often asked to explain their ideas and this effectively helps to deepen their knowledge and understanding. A good example of this was seen when Reception children explained why their heart was beating faster in an energetic physical development lesson. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants and make good progress. The curriculum is good and the good range of after-school activities, visits and visitors makes it more interesting and exciting. Although good activities are provided in Nursery and Reception classrooms, opportunities for outdoor learning are not well developed. The headteacher's drive and enthusiasm inspire the staff, governors and pupils. She leads an enthusiastic team that is committed to getting the best for pupils. Good leadership and management maintain a close focus on improvement and rigorous checking identifies clearly where things could be better. Some subject leaders, however, are quite new to their role and as yet do not have a strategic overview of how they might improve provision in their subject. Considering the good improvement since the previous inspection, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure progress is even throughout the school by maintaining good pace in lessons and providing activities that make all pupils think.

- Improve opportunities for outdoor learning in the Foundation Stage.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in checking on the quality of provision in the areas for which they are responsible and planning for improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery with skills that are below the levels expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress and, by the end of Reception, children are working within the goals expected for their age. There are particular strengths in personal, social and emotional development, where many children exceed the goals expected. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. From a below-average starting point, this represents good achievement. Although progress is good overall, it is uneven. The good start in Nursery and Reception is not built upon sufficiently well, resulting in broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Outstanding relationships and pupils' excellent behaviour contribute significantly to their good achievement. Pupils are polite and confident and their attitudes to learning and enjoyment of the school are outstanding. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is supported well by the school's strong Catholic ethos. Pupils respect and value each other and the world around them. Their understanding of other religions and their appreciation of their place in a multicultural society are satisfactory. Most pupils attend regularly but there are a few with unsatisfactory attendance. The school is taking effective steps to tackle this and this year has significantly improved attendance rates.

Pupils are fully aware of the importance of healthy eating, exercise and how to protect themselves from potential risks involving drugs, alcohol and smoking. Adopting safe and healthy lifestyles, in the words of one pupil, 'gives you a longer life!' Pupils' contribution to the community is excellent. Membership of the school council, acting as playground leaders and raising funds for charity are just a few ways that pupils learn about their role in the community. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives because of the good basic skills they acquire, and their ability to work with others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers make good use of questions that do not have a simple answer. They listen closely to pupils' responses and then develop a conversation that deepens their understanding and improves spoken language skills. Outstanding relationships between teachers and pupils and interesting lessons help to ensure that pupils behave extremely well, have productive attitudes to their work and are very keen to share their ideas. Resources such as information and communication technology (ICT) are used effectively to support pupils' learning experiences. Teaching assistants are also deployed well, ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are included sensitively in all activities. In the drive to improve pupils' progress, teachers are making more effective use of assessment information to plan lessons that offer pupils more challenge and ensure a good pace of learning. As yet, however, this is not embedded throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced with a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education. Pupils find the curriculum fun, particularly enjoying practical science lessons and using ICT. A good range of after-school activities and a wide range of visits and visitors, including representatives from the health, police and fire service, effectively enrich the curriculum. Effective links with groups such as local sports organisers, for example, also enhance pupils' learning opportunities.

In Nursery and Reception there is a good balance between activities taught by the staff and those children choose themselves. Involvement in the 'Stoke Speaks Out' project is proving effective in terms of improving children's spoken language skills. The outdoor area, which is not easily accessible, is mainly used for physical activities. There are good plans in place to improve accessibility and use of the area to extend provision for other aspects of learning such as creativity and communication.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and well-being of pupils and the celebration of their achievements are at the centre of all that the school does. Parents are confident that their children are safe in school. Robust procedures to ensure health and safety and promote child protection are securely in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive effective support. The good partnership with external agencies means pupils benefit from specialist support and guidance when necessary.

Good systems are in place to check pupils' progress. Most pupils know what they need to do to improve their work, through a good understanding of their targets. As yet,

teachers do not consistently refer to these targets when

