

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103431
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308317
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Burke
Headteacher	Mary Stanley
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Avenue Road Handsworth Birmingham B21 8ED
Telephone number	01215 545069
Fax number	01215 541768

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School serves the local parish and surrounding areas. There is considerable economic and social hardship in the district. It is a little larger than most primary schools. The pupils come from about 15 different ethnicities, with Indian, Vietnamese, Polish and Black Caribbean being the largest groups. Half the pupils speak English as an additional language, including a small proportion of older pupils who join the school with no English at all and very little experience of school. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties, most frequently for moderate learning needs or behavioural, emotional and social reasons. There have been a number of staffing difficulties in recent years.

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 Catholic Primary is a good school. This is due to the very strong lead by the headteacher and the growing emphasis on pupils' progress as the key indicator of how well it is doing. Parents are almost unanimous about the many strengths of the school, not least its warm, family, Catholic ethos. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are welcomed into the school and they benefit from good teaching and an effective curriculum. Standards are average and progress is good. Both are being improved successfully. There is good capacity for the school to improve the existing satisfactory preparation for pupils' later life and work. This good potential for improvements in the future extends to other aspects of the school's work because senior staff know what requires improvement and how to go about addressing it.

The pupils are a real strength of the school. They work hard, greatly enjoy their learning and support each other well. Behaviour is good and is often even better than this. Pupils play and work together harmoniously, including those with behavioural, emotional and social needs. The personal development of pupils is effective, although opportunities for them to show work independently are not frequent enough. Pupils have good knowledge of how to keep healthy and outstanding understanding of safety issues. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is first rate, not least because the pupils work really well with other members of the community and reflect thoughtfully on why they are important and valuable friends. Cultural development is based on the diverse range of cultures and faiths in school and pupils develop warm sensitivity and appreciation of each other's traditions.

Care, guidance and support are good. Effective procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils' welfare. The school works well with outside agencies in caring for the pupils. Attendance rates are satisfactory and are rising from their below average levels because of the effective partnership with external welfare staff and parents. Whilst pupils know their individual targets, they are not always given enough opportunities to talk about their progress and how to improve. This particularly affects the more able pupils as their targets are not always pitched high enough. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress. Those with moderate learning difficulties also do well because their teaching is good.

All aspects of leadership and management are good. School leaders have made sure that the recent staffing difficulties have not affected the pupils' good progress. The Foundation Stage is well led, which is producing an effective education and good achievement by the children. There is a very marked focus on improvement and accurate school self-evaluation. In the past, judgements about school effectiveness tended to focus on what had been provided for the pupils rather than on what the pupils achieved. This focus is shifting, but there is still work for school leaders, especially the subject managers, to ensure that monitoring and the tracking of progress are smart enough and focused on learning and pupils' achievement. Governors play a useful and effective role in checking that the school's performance is good enough.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery with skills well below those expected for children their age, particularly in the areas of communication and language development. Several are at the early stages of acquiring English. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, developing

a secure foundation for their future education. By the time they enter Year 1, their skills are average. Their social skills are particularly well developed.

The pace of the teaching of phonics has increased recently and this is helping the children acquire reading and writing skills effectively. Children learn well as a result of the thoughtfully planned adult-led tasks and when working away from an adult. They enjoy their activities, behave very well and work effectively together, for example when working in the 'Travel Agents' to sell airline tickets. Children's learning is supported by an interesting range of activities both indoors and out. Occasionally, children's ability to work independently is limited because of the large number of adults who support learning. Despite being housed in separate areas of the school, suitable opportunities are provided for Nursery and Reception children to work together to develop their social skills. This was observed when they sang songs based on their recent visit to the seaside.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the challenge of pupils' work by giving them more opportunities to self-assess their progress and identify how to reach their precisely stated targets.
- Draw subject leaders into the process of smarter tracking of progress and monitoring of school performance that is focused on learning and pupils' achievement.
- Increase pupils' independence in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are rising well. At present, they are average at the end of Year 6, which shows the pupils have made good progress from their below average skills and knowledge when they started school. There have been some differences in standards in the three core subjects in recent years. Standards and progress in writing lagged behind those in reading, mathematics and science. A successful improvement to the way in which writing is taught has seen a rise in progress and achievement this year, with broadly average standards across the school. Good progress is made in Years 1 and 2 and pupils build skills and knowledge effectively.

The demand made of the more able is not consistent and in the last few years, not enough pupils have reached the higher levels in their assessments and tests in Years 2 and 6. In some classes they often complete work of a very similar level to that of the other pupils because their targets are similar and there is not enough feedback that is focused on how to attain the higher levels. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds do equally well in school. The pupils who join the school with no English and very little experience of school make rapid progress in English and are soon achieving as well as longer-established pupils. This is due to the very effective support provided for them.

The pupils with learning difficulties are also supported well, especially by the talented teaching assistants. Pupils' work is carefully structured to enable them to take the necessary small steps to success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by excellent cultural development. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how they learn about the diverse range of cultures and languages at the school. Spiritual

development is also of high quality, with many opportunities for reflection and appreciation of the special things pupils encounter in school. This was observed during the whole-school assembly when pupils reflected carefully on the work of people who helped their school community.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is very good and they play together harmoniously. They ensure no one feels left out or excluded. Pupils say there is no bullying at the school and that any isolated incidents of name-calling are effectively dealt with by the staff. Pupils look after each other and say they feel really safe and secure. They readily take on a wide range of responsibilities, for example being members of the school council, ensuring they know who is in the school building at break time and helping to distribute the daily fruit.

Pupils are actively involved in the local community through charitable events, church occasions and working with visitors with interesting things to share. The pupils speak enthusiastically about the recent visit of a well-known sportsman to school and the linked fundraising activity. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. They take part in regular sporting activities and have many successes in sports competitions. They know the importance of eating nutritious and healthy lunches. Their preparation for future life is satisfactory. Standards in basic skills are average and pupils have the self-confidence and good social and personal qualities to be successful in their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning has improved substantially in recent years and is good overall. School leaders have successfully managed the staffing difficulties and ensured that teaching enables the pupils to make good progress. Most of the time teachers adopt a range of approaches to lessons that maintain pupils' interest and good motivation. There are times, however, when pupils have insufficient opportunities to work independently. Effective use is made of computer technology to bring liveliness to lessons, and opportunities for pupils to talk about how well they are learning are increasing. Where the self-assessment of learning is well established, the pupils are making particularly good progress.

Lesson planning is detailed, although it is not always structured to show the skills and knowledge to be learned by pupils in different ability groups. The marking of pupils' books is not always sufficiently well linked to their targets, and does not consistently show how the work can be improved.

The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is good. Effective assessment of their needs enables staff to match the support given and results in good achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties are also taught well and they enjoy the different activities that are designed to build their skills and knowledge. They too make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good quality curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the diverse needs of learners of all ages. Personal, social and health education is given good attention and helps pupils build firm social skills as well as keep healthy and stay safe. However, pupils' independence in learning is not as well promoted by the planned activities. French is a positive feature that helps pupils

appreciate a different culture as well as learn a modern foreign language. Art is a strength, with some high quality work reflected in the plates designed in the style of Clarice Cliff.

The school has invested in bilingual teaching to the good advantage of pupils who join the school with very limited spoken English. They are able to gain confidence quickly because of the good quality of support. Good arrangements for pupils with learning difficulties enable them to build key skills with enthusiasm and meet their individual targets.

Good enrichment through the effective programme of visits and visitors and extended provision, such as the family Spanish sessions, further enhance the pupils' experiences. The visit to Min-y-Don was much enjoyed by Year 6 pupils. Partnerships with parents are very good. Parents support their children very well. The school has developed very good relationships with the local community and the parish church.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because of the good pastoral care the school provides. Health and safety has a high profile at the school and appropriate checks are carried out on all staff members. Pupils feel safe and secure as a result of the close work between the school and a good range of outside agencies. The headteacher describes the school as an 'oasis of calm for the pupils' and this clearly demonstrates the high priority given to promoting the pupils' welfare.

Staff know the pupils well and this helps them support them effectively in their work. Pupils who have very little English, and those with learning difficulties, make good progress because their work is well matched to their needs by the talented teaching assistants. Although pupils have targets to achieve in their work, these are not precise enough and do not have sufficient impact on their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides clear educational direction and promotes a shared ethos for moving the school forward. School monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and enable senior leaders to have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. There are secure links with the school improvement planning process. However, the success criteria in place to test the impact of action are not precise enough.

The tracking of pupils' progress is developing successfully, with greater consistency of approach across the school than in the past. School leaders are ready for the next step, which is to sharpen their view of progress, especially of the more able learners.

The work of subject leaders is successful, although they do not have a full monitoring and evaluation role in the subjects for which they are accountable. Governors are alert to their role in seeking best value and holding the school to account. They act as positive and constructive '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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham B21 8ED

We had a really good time with you when we visited school recently. Thank you for helping us find out about your school. We think it is a good school that is improving well. Like your parents, we think you are well taught and that you make good progress. You are reaching average standards. Children in the Nursery and Reception are doing well and they enjoy learning.

It was pleasing to see that you are so well behaved and that you all get on well with each other. We noticed that you are sensible learners who work hard – well done! The school is doing an excellent job of helping you find out what is special in life and how to keep safe. We think you are well looked after and helped to do well in your lessons.

Your curriculum is carefully planned to give you many chances to learn new things. You told us how much you enjoy the out-of-school activities, especially the residential visit to Wales. Those of you learning English as a new language are making good progress because you are given good help.

In our report, we have identified three things for the school to improve. Firstly, we think you can be given more opportunities to talk about your learning and how to improve it. This is to help you make even better progress, especially those of you who are doing particularly well in your work. Secondly, we have asked school leaders to use your progress to judge how well the school is doing. Finally, we think you could have more chances to work independently in lessons.

We know that school leaders and the governors can make these improvements. You can help them by telling when you find your work easy and when it is hard. Mrs Stanley wants you all to learn successfully and to become good people. You are well on the way to this. We wish you good luck in your work.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington Lead inspector