

St Aidan's CofE Community Primary School Billinge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104798
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	308674
Inspection date	9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Eric Craven 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	175
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rod Dakin
Headteacher	Mrs Melanie Ravenscroft
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	off London Fields Billinge Wigan Lancashire WN5 7LS
Telephone number	01744 678042
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Introduction

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

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well the pupils in the different year groups were progressing; how effectively the quality of teaching is being improved; and the quality of the curriculum.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, brief lesson observations and pupils' work. Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, a governor, pupils and representatives of the local authority. School documents and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Pupils come from further afield than just the area surrounding the school. They are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and the number eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The vast majority are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. For the past three years about a quarter of the pupils have joined the school at times other than the usual time of first admission. The school has gained the National Healthy Schools Standard, Activemark and the Early Year's Quality Mark. There is a privately run nursery on site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school and some of the work it does is outstanding. It is a school with a tangibly happy, productive and Christian atmosphere.

Pupils arrive in the Reception class with knowledge and skills typical for their age and by the end of Year 6 these have risen and, in comparison to other primary schools nationally, they are above average. Therefore the progress the pupils make is good.

The school has responded well to the dips that occurred in the 2007 test results for higher levels in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at end of Key Stage 2. The school's records show that the 2008 results should meet the school's targets. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. This is for two reasons. First, the school is inclusive and embraces every child fully. Second, the plans to meet their needs are thorough and regularly reviewed, and the pupils receive good support from teaching assistants and other professionals. Pupils who under-perform are identified by the school's tracking system and effective interventions are put into place to help them. The school's tracking system has been in place for about two years and is being used with increasing effectiveness. It confirms that pupils are progressing well. The school could analyse the data more by checking on the progress of particular groups of pupils, for example, the large group who do not start their primary education at St Aidan's. Senior staff also recognise that assessments in mathematics need to be more accurate.

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. The great majority of pupils say they like coming to school. One captured the views of others when she said, 'We are always being told that every child matters and that staff are very proud of us. Teachers are always there for us.' Pupils get on well together and with the staff. They behave extremely well. They have an excellent understanding of morals and the importance of playing their part in society. They make valuable contributions to the school. Older pupils support and help younger ones. Pupils also contribute to the local and wider community through their performing arts and extensive charitable work. The school council makes a positive difference. For example, its advice to staff was instrumental in setting up the Friday 'Treasured Time' which gives the Key Stage 2 pupils a wonderful array of activities, including web-design, Japanese, card making, gardening and cooking, to experience for six weeks at a time. The rest of the curriculum is also impressive, especially the opportunities pupils have to take part in extensive after-school clubs and residential experiences. The school uses visitors well to enhance the curriculum and the pupils gain a really thorough understanding of cultural and spiritual aspects of life. The school has been too modest in its own judgement of the quality of the curriculum, which inspection judged to be outstanding. Pupils are taught a great deal about healthy living and keeping safe and they use this knowledge extremely well. The Year 6 pupils, for example, run the morning and lunch-time 'wake-up and shake-up' fitness activity on the school playground. The staff care for the pupils exceptionally well. They are very vigilant with regard to their safety and well-being. Other agencies are used to provide support for the pupils who might need their help.

Overall the quality of teaching is good and improving. In some lessons it is outstanding and in a few it is satisfactory: none of the teaching is inadequate. Lesson planning is consistently thorough and includes a focus on different groups of pupils to help match work to their particular abilities. Staff are using information and communication technology well to help the pupils understand what they are learning and to keep them interested in the lessons. Pupils are given

targets to work towards and they were able to tell the inspector how these are helpful. Marking celebrates what the pupils have achieved and also explains what they need to do next to improve even more. However, in a small number of cases this feedback could be written more precisely so the pupils understand exactly what needs to be done. Nevertheless, the feedback pupils receive along with the high calibre care provided by staff means that the quality of care, guidance and support at this school is excellent.

The headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has gelled staff into an extremely cohesive team. Everyone knows they have an important part to play and they are encouraged to take responsibility and to be accountable. The headteacher has high expectations and wants to improve the quality further so that it becomes consistently outstanding. If realised this aspiration will take standards up another notch. Towards this end subject coordinators are increasingly influencing the work of other staff. A few have observed other teachers' lessons, and team-teaching and coaching have been used to support their colleagues. The welfare of staff is viewed as very important and this makes a good contribution to the very positive ethos in the school. Staff have high praise for the contribution of the headteacher. The school monitors and evaluates what it does with increasing effectiveness. Senior managers know what improvements need to be made. The school improvement plan is generally good but some of its targets could be more specific, which would enable the school to be clear when it has achieved them. The governing body plays its part because it is well informed, not least through the reports it receives and the questions governors ask. Governors are helpfully linked to classes and subject areas. Around half of the parents returned the Ofsted questionnaire and they were overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching in the Reception class is good. The continuous access children have to outdoor equipment helps them gain valuable experiences, not just in terms of physical activities. Children are well inducted into the Reception class and effective communication with parents keeps them abreast of their children's development. Pupils get off to a good start in their education at St Aidan's and they are prepared well for their transition into Key Stage 1. Management of the Foundation Stage is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that it is consistently good and more of it is outstanding.
- Analyse data so that senior leaders have a view of the overall progress being made by different groups of pupils.

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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?	1
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	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	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.

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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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 CofE Community Primary School Billinge, Wigan, WN5 7LS

I had a thoroughly enjoyable day when I visited your school. Many thanks to those of you I spoke to on the playground and in classes. Thanks also to the school council for sharing their views and opinions with me.

Yours is a good school and some of the things it achieves are excellent. In particular, your understanding of how to get on with each other and how to help others is super. Your behaviour is great and you were polite and courteous every time I saw you. You understand about being healthy and safe and all of you I spoke to said you thoroughly enjoy your time at St Aidan's. The staff really look after you very well. They make things as safe as possible for you and you told me you had every confidence that they are there for you if you ever need anything or have any worries.

I was very impressed with all the activities you do and the things you can learn. The 'Treasured Time' for the Juniors sounds wonderful. You have lots of after school clubs as well which you thoroughly enjoy.

Because most of the teaching is good you achieve well. By the time you leave the school you are doing better than lots of pupils in other schools. I think if all the lessons were the same quality as the best ones you have then you could achieve even more than you do now.

Things are as good as they are because the school is well managed by the headteacher and other senior staff. They understand what the school is good at and what it needs to do get even better. Mrs Ravenscroft is keen to make all the teaching as good as it can be so that you learn as much as you possibly can. You can help her by continuing to listen carefully and concentrate in all your lessons. I have asked the senior staff to check a little bit more on the progress different groups of you make so that they can be sure they are doing all they can to make sure you all do as well as possible.

Thank you again for your very warm welcome. You have my good wishes for the future.