

St Augustine's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105490
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	308867
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Leszek Iwaskow HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Winston
Headteacher	Ms Kath Potter
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	St Augustine Street Monsall Manchester Lancashire M40 8PL
Telephone number	161 2052812
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Augustine's C of E Primary School is a small school located in an area of very high social and economic deprivation, three miles from the centre of Manchester. The school works in challenging circumstances as it serves one of the most deprived communities in the country. The changing demographics of the area are reflected in the fact that the number of pupils from dual heritage and black families is increasing and numbers now reflect the national average. The number of pupils whose first language is not English is below the national average. Two in five pupils have special educational needs, double the national average. Many of these pupils have specific learning or speech and communication difficulties as well as social, emotional and behaviour problems. Few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Many pupils experience stress due to home and family circumstances. The school's uptake of free school meals is very high.

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is very low with most children having poor manipulative, speaking, listening and construction skills. Reading, writing, mathematical and social skills are also poorly developed. On entry to Year 1, attainment remains well below average. The school has achieved the Manchester Inclusion Standard, the Active Mark and also gained the National Healthy Schools award this year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Augustine's is an improving school. The challenges it faces are complex and in many ways unique reflecting the very difficult environment in which the pupils live. In contrast, the school provides a safe and loving oasis for the children in its care. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school because they are able to socialise, play, learn and forget about their worries. Even very young children see the need for and express a desire to learn to give themselves an opportunity in their lives. As one youngster stated, 'If I don't make it to play for Man United, I'll need an education to get a good job'. Standards remain an issue and reflect the very low attainment on entry to the school. However, the school is beginning to make a difference and improvements in achievement, although fragile, are becoming evident. The small numbers and the variations in the special needs of cohorts of pupils can have a profound impact on standards. The school ensures that most pupils make satisfactory progress, although the more able could do even better. There are encouraging signs that the greater majority of pupils want to come to school, although a small group still continue to be persistent absentees, despite the best efforts of the school and local authority.

Worries about the low standards justified the local authority in identifying the school as one causing concern. The school has benefited from the more intensive support provided as it tackles the many social and educational issues that have impacted on outcomes for the pupils. This has coincided with the appointment of a new headteacher who has provided good leadership and clear direction. Parents and pupils have noted the changes in the culture of the school and the improvements which are gradually beginning to impact positively on pupils' progress and achievement. The small, close-knit team of teachers and the governing body are fully supportive of the direction the school is heading. There is a greater confidence that 'things are happening' and that 'they are getting better'. There is also an acknowledgement that there is a great deal more that still needs to be done.

Teachers follow clear routines and overall teaching is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy many of their lessons, especially those where they can be involved practically. They enjoy afternoon sessions where they get a break from the routines of literacy and numeracy. Teachers are less secure in teaching subjects such as design and technology, history or geography. They have not made sufficient use of subject specific support to help develop their expertise to deliver these areas of the curriculum more effectively. There is a need to ensure that there is more good teaching. The school acknowledges that subject leaders need to be more proactive in managing and monitoring their subjects more effectively to ensure that this happens and this is an ongoing priority.

Pupils throughout the school benefit from the frequent opportunities to work outside the classroom. They are proud of their singing, which has drawn the school community together so that even the most self-conscious Year 6 pupil is keen to participate. They enjoy the more frequent visits to places of interest in the locality which have opened up a whole new world that many did not realise existed. They and their parents are appreciative and positive about the changes which are being made to make their experiences happy and rewarding.

The headteacher, her management team, the governors and the local authority are working hard to address weaknesses and tackle underperformance. The school is determined to make a real difference to the lives of the children in its care. It accepts that standards must rise and

that improvements need to continue in the classroom. However, there is a positive attitude and a feeling that 'they are getting things right'. The parents and children certainly think so.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start in the Nursery with very poor skills, especially in language, communication, mathematics and personal development. Teaching and progress are satisfactory overall, with children well below the expected goals in reading, writing and mathematical calculations as they enter Year 1. However, recently introduced programmes to develop the children's understanding of sounds and letters are having a positive impact. Good induction systems ensure that the children settle quickly into school routines. Relationships are good and the children are happy and well cared for in a safe and secure learning environment. The curriculum is satisfactory, although activities are not always matched well enough to the children's needs. However, the children are interested in and enjoy the good range of practical activities, visits and visitors that effectively develop their 'first hand' learning experiences. The school recognises that the outdoor area needs to be developed further to create a more stimulating learning environment. Adults work well together as a team and the children's progress is regularly monitored. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards, especially in English and mathematics, to ensure that pupils make even better progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching to make learning better and ensure that all pupils are challenged.
- Improve attendance, especially among hard core absentees.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to enable them to manage their subject areas effectively, support teachers professionally and improve the quality of provision.

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

Although standards are inadequate, most pupils are now making satisfactory progress. The majority of children enter Year 1 working within the expected goals in some areas of learning, although there are very significant weaknesses in their language, communication and mathematical skills. For the past three years standards in Key Stage 1 have been well below average and well below average in Key Stage 2 over five years. However, the data needs to be looked at in relation to the small cohorts of pupils and the above average numbers with special education needs. In 2007 standards in English, mathematics and science improved by the end of Year 6. Much work has been done, especially over the past two years, to raise achievement in English and mathematics and this is having a positive impact. Levels of progress are improving because pupils are assessed more regularly and rigorously and the results are analysed so that weaknesses can be addressed and additional support provided. Specific speaking, reading and writing programmes have been put in place and work in pupils' books shows that standards are better than the statutory test results suggest. The school is working on boosting pupils' confidence and their ability to work independently to enable them to approach tests with greater

self-belief. Mental calculations and more practical 'real life' activities in mathematics are also having an impact. Consequently, all groups of pupils are now achieving satisfactorily in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The greater majority of pupils really enjoy coming to school. They wear their new uniforms with pride, talk enthusiastically about all the activities provided for them and many of them 'would like the school day to be extended so they could have even more lessons'. However, attendance is below average because, despite the school's best efforts, there is still a small group of persistent poor attenders. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, but the school recognises the need to further develop pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity of British society. Most pupils have good attitudes to their learning and behave well, enjoying the longer lunchtime to socialise with their friends. They know how to keep themselves safe and have a good understanding of the need for a balanced and healthy diet and keeping fit. They enjoy a good range of physical and sporting activities and the excellent outdoor play facilities are very well used throughout the day and are available to all until early evening. Youths in the community enjoy the privilege of using these facilities to 'kick a football about' and treat the play areas with respect. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously as older pupils act as 'pals' to younger ones. The school council feels effectively involved in decision making and organises special events such as the recent non-uniform day and coin collection for the charity Water Aid. The successful 'neighbourhood and sports development' days effectively involve the pupils with the local community in a wide range of 'fun' activities. Pupils' personal and academic skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next steps in their education and their role in wider society when they get older.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that, although some aspects of the teaching are good, overall it is satisfactory. Good teaching was observed, but the greater majority of lessons were satisfactory. Teachers show greatest confidence in teaching core subjects such as English and mathematics, rather than foundation subjects such as history or design and technology, for example. This is also reflected in the planning of lessons which is more detailed for the core subjects. In foundation subjects, there is a tendency to focus on developing key skills rather than the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in the subject. For example, in a history lesson, pupils questioned a member of staff who was dressed as Florence Nightingale. This engaged their interest and provided a context for reinforcing speaking skills and learning new vocabulary. However, they were not learning sufficiently about the history of the period.

The great majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and are very appreciative of the patience of the teachers in helping them when they have problems in understanding or are 'stuck' with their work. The classroom assistants provide good support, especially in getting pupils to think through their answers. Pupils particularly enjoy those lessons which allow them to work practically and collaboratively. They are less engaged when teachers talk rather than show them what they are expected to do. Better use could be made of interactive technology to engage pupils visually in their learning. In one lesson, where pupils were asked to watch and interact

with a video clip, their interest and concentration was stimulated enabling them to recall much of the required information. Where teaching was good, there was real clarity in the tasks set and pupils were clear about what they were expected to do. They were made to think and solve problems which stretched their thinking and the teacher recognised when interventions were needed as confidence or accuracy flagged.

Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from small group teaching which allows them to receive more personalised learning and support. However, there is a tendency in many lessons to focus on raising the standards of the less able pupils to the extent that more able pupils are not always being sufficiently challenged. There was little evidence that these more able pupils were being provided with additional tasks or extension activities. Some pupils felt that they do not get sufficient homework. Most pupils are still not confident in working independently. There remains a tendency to support pupils to the extent that there is a dependency on the teacher. Relationships in class are good. Behaviour, overall, is also good although there are occasions when a small minority can disrupt the learning for others. Pupils' work is marked regularly. Comments are, however, more informative on their work in English and mathematics than in the other subjects.

Most pupils want to learn and see this as an opportunity to change their lives for the better. As one group remarked to an inspector, 'Can you please get the school day extended; we enjoy coming to school and want more lessons.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school meets statutory requirements and is currently reviewing its curriculum to ensure that it is broad and balanced. The need to raise standards especially in English and mathematics has resulted in a strong focus on teaching these subjects during the morning sessions. This leaves limited time to ensure coverage of other subjects in the afternoons. The school is making a realistic attempt to integrate subjects across the curriculum. This is more successful in some subjects than others. ICT benefits from discrete time allocations and improved resources since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy using computers, especially since a significant number do not have access at home. They enjoy working in the computer cluster and benefit from the opportunity to use it after school, one night a week. They would like more frequent access. However, in some other subjects, such as the humanities and design and technology, coverage is more superficial, especially when the subject is used as a context for developing skills in literacy, numeracy or computing. The school relies heavily on nationally published schemes of work. It is currently reviewing these so they link more purposely to pupils' needs and are more relevant to the single age classes which are to be introduced next year.

Pupils benefit from the opportunities to participate in sporting activities both in school time as well as after. They particularly enjoy the long lunchtime which allows them to socialise and let off steam in the extensive and well maintained outdoor play areas. Pupils also speak with enthusiasm about the increased opportunities which the school provides for visitors from outside the school to come in and talk about their lives and occupations. They also appreciate the increased opportunities provided to visit and to experience places they were previously unaware of. They were enthralled by visits to museums, Manchester Art Gallery and other places of cultural and educational interest in the local region. They naturally enjoyed the visit to Chester Zoo, were excited by the opportunity to see Olympic swimmers competing in the Manchester Arena and were surprised by their visit to the art gallery. In one case, one pupil was so engaged she persuaded her mother and the rest of her family to return to see 'the wonderful and colourful

pictures' on display. Pupils also are proud of their status as a 'singing school' and enjoy performing in assembly and to audiences in the community, as well as visiting VIPs. These activities have broadened horizons, introduced pupils to a whole new world of interesting experiences and enriched their lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Every child really does matter in this school and pastoral care is strong. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in this calm, supportive learning environment. They feel valued and respected as individuals and know there is always someone to talk over any worries they might have. All systems for safeguarding their health, safety and well-being are securely in place and meet requirements. Teachers and skilled teaching assistants provide good support to those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the more vulnerable pupils and the small number at an early stage of learning English. This ensures that these pupils are fully included in all that the school has to offer and that they make the same progress as their classmates. Parents have become increasingly involved in the school and its work and several have gone on to further training and eventual employment after attending learning workshops run in school. They appreciate the support given by the school with day-to-day concerns and the very good care provided for their children. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and extra support given where needed. However, target setting and marking is not yet used consistently through the school. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is facing many challenges, especially the need to raise standards as well as provide a safe and caring environment for the pupils. The headteacher provides good leadership. She has identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school, has a clear vision centred on improvement in performance linked to care for the pupils. She is beginning to transform the culture of the school, change attitudes and improve achievement. There is evidence that change is occurring and that expectations are being raised, although there is also an acknowledgement that much more remains to be done. The school is benefiting from the recent intensive support being offered by the local authority. Much work is being centred on improving performance in English and mathematics and in empowering subject leaders to monitor, manage and develop their subject areas more effectively. Currently, some subject leaders are more effective than others. Training has focused on the core subjects. Some curriculum leaders have taken the opportunities provided to improve their expertise in the subjects they have responsibility for, others have been less proactive.

The school is keen to involve and develop partnerships with parents and there is improved response from this area. The threat of closure 18 months ago also created concerns and helped parents to realise the importance of the school to their children's lives and as a focus for their community. Relationships with parents have improved and this has coincided with the appointment of the current headteacher, two years ago. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the school and the changes which are being initiated to make their children's future more secure. Equally, they are increasingly seeing the school as an asset to the community.

Governors are fully supportive and well informed about the task facing them and the school. They are aware that standards need to be raised and the pace of change and improvement needs to accelerate. There is a clear sense of purpose but also a realism about what can be achieved. The school offers much to the children but, until standards are improved, will continue to provide satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Augustine's C of E Primary School, Manchester, M40 8PL

This letter is to tell you about my recent visit to your school to inspect how good it is. Inspectors think that your school is improving and changing for the better. However, there is still a great deal more that needs to be done, and you can play your part and help.

The inspectors particularly enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We found what you told us about your school to be very important. You told us that you really enjoy coming to school and would even like the school day to be extended so that you can stay even longer. However, there are still a very few of you who do not attend on a regular basis. It's not that difficult to get out of bed in the morning if you really want to make something of your lives. Many of you talked proudly about your desire to work hard in school so you can get a good job when you grow up, especially if you don't quite make it to play alongside Rooney or Ronaldo at United.

You are very proud of your school and you appreciate the hard work that Ms Potter and all your teachers and helpers are putting into making your time in the school a rewarding and happy experience. I now understand what a 'singing school' is. Your pride shone through when you sang your hearts out during assembly with even the Year 6 boys joining in. Singing really does bring you together as a community. You also enjoy the many opportunities provided to visit places in and around Manchester. You talked with enthusiasm about your visit to the museum and art gallery, as well as to the MEN arena to watch the Olympic swimmers in action. It's great that some of you even persuaded your parents to go on a return visit. I'm glad that you're discovering that there are many interesting places to visit and things to do in the local area. Manchester can be an interesting and exciting place to live in.

You and your parents have noticed the changes that have taken place since Ms Potter became your headteacher. I know that your teachers are trying really hard to help you improve your grades in mathematics and English, especially your writing. Although you are improving you could still do better. If you try a little harder in lessons and pay a little more attention to your teachers, I am sure you could do so. The teachers will also be trying to make your lessons even more interesting and will try to get you really thinking by giving you some more challenging tasks. I bet you that you will be able to get the right answers as long as you concentrate and don't waste time.

I have asked your school to put improvements in place as soon as possible. The school may also receive a monitoring visit by another Ofsted inspector in order to check that all is going well. I am sure you will give your teachers all the help and support they need to continue to improve the school and build on the firm foundations that are being put into place.