

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106771
<b>Local Authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	309229
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joe Peacock

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	195
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Kirby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jo Ayres
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Wadworth Street Denaby Main Doncaster South Yorkshire DN12 4AQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01709 862298
<b>Fax number</b>	01709 869457

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is situated in an ex-mining area which has high levels of unemployment. It is smaller than average and takes its pupils from a wide area. About 5% of pupils are from minority ethnic families. All of these pupils speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are broadly average. Children's skills on entry to the Reception class vary year on year from well below to below the levels expected nationally, with many experiencing particular difficulty with their communication and social skills. A new headteacher started at the school in September 2006.

## 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 an improving school that is satisfactory overall and good in some respects. It is giving satisfactory value for money. The recently appointed headteacher has set about raising standards by implementing a range of strategies and these are beginning to pay dividends. Staff are supporting her well and work effectively as a team, showing an equal determination to raise standards. Improving behaviour and pupils' attitudes as well as the quality of teaching and learning are seen, rightly, as the best way forward. The raised targets for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils reflect their efforts and show standards are rising. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall. Attendance is above average. Pupils are courteous and respectful. They show a good understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school makes good provision for the Foundation Stage, enabling children to make a good start to their learning.

Overall standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are improving but are still lower than they could be. The school is working hard to raise them and there are encouraging signs that it is succeeding. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 because of the improving quality of teaching. However, overall standards remain below average. Recent initiatives to raise standards in reading are proving to be effective, especially for pupils who find learning difficult. These pupils are making good progress with their reading.

Standards are below average by Year 6 but pupils achieve satisfactorily. Raising standards in English and mathematics has been a key focus, but there is some inconsistency in the strategies employed. In some lessons the activities planned are not matched closely enough to pupils' capabilities and do not provide sufficient challenge, especially for the more able. As a result, progress is not as good as it could be.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good relationships exist between pupils and their teachers and most pupils now have a good attitude towards their work. Behaviour is much improved and in all the lessons seen learning was not interrupted as most pupils tried their best to finish their work. The curriculum is satisfactory. Improving curriculum planning for English, mathematics and science is currently being undertaken, to good effect, with a view to raising standards.

Parents' views about the school are positive. They appreciate the good level of care and support their children receive. Staff know their pupils well and most set challenging individual targets for them in English and mathematics. However, some pupils do not yet fully understand what is expected of them and some learning targets are not challenging enough. The caring support and clear guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are major factors enabling these pupils to make satisfactory and sometimes better progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. All staff carefully monitor pupils' progress and are beginning to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching by observing one another's lessons. Governors are very supportive and keen to help to evaluate school performance in order to bring about further improvement, although they recognise that they are still in the early stages of developing this aspect of their work. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the spacious new Reception class and enjoy the wide range of challenging and exciting activities provided for them. As a result of effective teaching, they make good progress. Almost all the children in this year's class are on course to reach the standards expected nationally but standards overall in recent years have been below average when children start Year 1. Only 17 children were admitted this year and overall their attainment on entry was well below the level expected. The relatively small number ensures that all are benefiting from the close attention provided by the teacher and teaching assistant as they learn. They listen attentively and are keen to answer questions. Sensitive care, support and guidance underpin the development of children's good personal and social skills and their growing ability to be independent, take turns and work sensibly with one another. Learning is made fun. For example, children thoroughly enjoyed reading the words illuminated by 'the magic spot' from a wind-up torch when they were learning new letter sounds. The classroom is used well to provide a good range of stimulating learning. Boys particularly like the music making area and girls play well together in the 'dark cave'. Speaking and listening skills are promoted well. Those children preparing Easter cards, for example, counted lambs created by finger painting and talked about who the card was to be given to at home. The Foundation Stage is well managed with staff working effectively as a team to meet the needs of the children in their care. However, the new outdoor area does not yet ensure that children's learning out of doors is to the same quality as that provided in the classroom.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science by Year 2 and Year 6.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that tasks are more closely matched to pupils' capabilities and that tasks are sufficiently challenging, particularly for the higher attainers.
- Ensure that all pupils know and understand their targets for learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

By the end of Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics and pupils make satisfactory progress overall from their starting points in Year 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often make good progress in reading due to the strategies in place to support them. For example, Year 1 pupils join Reception children to learn letter sounds and all benefit from individual support in lessons.

In 2007, standards by Year 6 were below average in English, mathematics and science and pupils did not achieve the targets set for them. This was partly due to some older pupils not having a sufficiently positive attitude to school and partly to some challenging behaviour for the school to address. However, school data show that most pupils are making satisfactory progress. The current Year 6 pupils have much improved attitudes and behaviour. A range of measures, such as using computers more and involving pupils in practical activities, are in place to ensure that there is an improvement in the performance of boys, bringing it closer to that of girls. Overall, although standards are on track to remain below average there is an improving trend and pupils are on course to reach the higher targets set for them this year. Pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Most pupils enjoy art and design and produce work of a high standard. The watercolours produced by Year 5 pupils are very impressive.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school has introduced some very effective strategies to improve behaviour. As a result, most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and are starting to enjoy their work and make better progress. Lessons are no longer interrupted by poor behaviour although a minority of pupils continue to have a passive attitude to learning, which impacts adversely on their attainment. Overall, pupils' enjoyment of school is satisfactory. A small minority of boys are not sufficiently engaged in some lessons, as the curriculum is not always relevant to them. Pupils are courteous and show respect to teachers, visitors and to each other. The school has worked successfully to maintain its above average attendance. The school has a Healthy School Award. Pupils are aware of the importance of following healthy lifestyles and increasingly display this understanding in terms of choosing healthy food options and taking part in sports activities. Spiritual, moral and social development is good but cultural development is not as strong. Pupils have some opportunities to contribute to their school environment, the immediate locality and the wider community but the school council and older pupils have limited responsibilities. The below average standards attained in literacy and numeracy and the passive attitudes to learning and social skills of a small minority of pupils restrict the effectiveness with which pupils are prepared for future life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory overall and the proportion of good teaching is increasing. This contributes directly to pupils' satisfactory and improving progress. Teachers manage their classes well and there are good relationships between pupils and adults. As a result, most pupils are respectful to adults and classrooms are calm and orderly. Lessons are generally well planned and teachers collaborate effectively to achieve consistency between classes. Teachers are enthusiastic and are committed to improving their practice and implementing the school's strategies for raising standards. Where teaching is effective, teachers match planning to meet the learning needs of all pupils, engage boys in activities which are relevant and of interest to them, make good use of interactive whiteboards and, with the support of teaching assistants, focus support where it is most needed. In a Year 4 numeracy session, for example, boys enjoyed designing a garden area and measuring the perimeter of lawns and flower beds. Where teaching is less effective, tasks are not closely enough matched to pupils' ability and lack sufficient challenge, especially for the more able. In addition, the introductions to some lessons are too long and this reduces the amount of time pupils spend on learning activities. Furthermore, teachers' questioning skills in some lessons do not always encourage pupils to use and develop their language skills.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is broad and balanced, with an appropriate emphasis on basic skills as well as arts and sports activities, as recognised by the school's Activemark and Artsmark Gold awards.

Staff are working hard to improve the curriculum in English, mathematics and science in order to make it more relevant for all pupils although as yet it does not always match the interests of a small minority of boys. The recently introduced social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme is making an increasingly important contribution to pupils' personal development, especially their social and emotional development. It has resulted in a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. Topics such as India and The Rainforest create useful links between skills in different subject areas. In a literacy session, for example, Year 5 pupils used their knowledge of the Yanomami tribe to empathise with the problems members of the tribe face in their daily lives. Pupils have a limited range of after-school activities. Most of these involve sport. The satisfactory range of visits and visitors and the opportunity to learn French add further to pupils' learning experiences.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents appreciate the caring and supportive atmosphere, especially for those pupils who find learning difficult. Parents' positive views are fully justified. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are diligently carried out and there are appropriate policies in place for child protection and health and safety. The school generally provides good personal guidance for pupils, encouraging good behaviour and helping to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education. It is able to track individual pupils' progress closely from detailed assessments of their progress. All staff are involved in carefully analysing assessment data and this quickly identifies pupils who are not doing well enough. These pupils are supported well to ensure that they make better progress. However, some pupils are not sure about their own individual targets and some of these targets lack sufficient challenge, especially for the more able pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has a clear vision for school improvement and has correctly identified better behaviour and attitudes and more effective teaching as the key elements in ensuring that pupils make better progress. The experienced deputy headteacher adds valuable management expertise. Both have benefited from the support of the primary diocesan director and the school's involvement in an intensive support programme through the local authority. Both have high expectations and the necessary skills to ensure that areas identified for improvement are improved. Effective steps have been taken to involve all staff in bringing about changes and this is beginning to make an impact on raising standards. Other senior leaders have clear roles and a good understanding of the actions required to raise standards. Self-evaluation involves all staff and their assessment of the different aspects of the school is accurate. Staff carefully monitor standards and are beginning to be more involved in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. The management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good with support staff being trained and deployed effectively. The school improvement plan accurately identifies the priorities for improvement but there are too many to be realistically tackled this year. The knowledgeable and extremely conscientious chair of governors knows the school well. Like him, all governors are keen to help the school move forward. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and they regularly visit during school hours. They are over-reliant on the headteacher and staff for evaluating school effectiveness, but this weakness is being tackled.

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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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	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	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

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

I really enjoyed my two days with you. It was good to see everyone getting on with one another and behaving so well in lessons and around school. I was most impressed by your politeness. Your school is satisfactory and it is improving because the headteacher is leading the school well and governors and staff are all working hard to make things better.

It was good to see everyone enjoying all the different activities in Reception. You have so much space in your lovely new classroom for making music, painting and building bridges for the toy cars. The wind-up torch with its magic spot was fun. It would have been useful in the dark cave as well as helping you to read words. It was good to see you using your new computers with the big and small letters on the keys so well. I hope it is not too long before the outdoor area is made more interesting so that you can use it much more.

Some of your teachers are planning really interesting work for you and this is helping to make sure that you enjoy learning and do well. I have asked all your teachers to make sure that they always give you work that makes you concentrate and think hard. It is so important that all of you try your best to improve your work in English, mathematics and science. You told me that you like your after-school sports activities but would like more choice with clubs for things like art, computers and music. I am sure your teachers will listen to you and add a few more clubs for you to enjoy.

The school takes special care of you all and is quick to support you if you need help. I hope you will all remember what your targets are and that your teachers will make them as challenging as they can for each of you.

I hope that you will carry on enjoying school and try your best to make it better.