

St Austin's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108254
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309637
Inspection date	12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	James Kilner 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	
School	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs O Rowley
Headteacher	Mr David Willis
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
School address	Back Duke of York Street Wakefield West Yorkshire WF1 3PF
Telephone number	01924 303710
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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: standards and achievement, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from meetings with the headteacher, senior managers, governors and pupils; visits to every classroom; scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and documents; and analysis of the parent questionnaires. Some 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, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Austin's is a larger than average voluntary aided Catholic primary school. There has been a recent arrival of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), currently at 26.9% of the school population. The most significant group are of Polish nationality. A further 4.7% of pupils are at the very early stages of learning English.

Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average at 22.7%, with two pupils having statements of special educational needs. The number of pupils entitled to a free school meal has risen in recent months and now exceeds the national average. The school serves two Catholic parishes over a wide geographical area, some of which include areas of social deprivation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Austin's Roman Catholic Primary is a good school, and the personal development and well-being of pupils and the levels of care, guidance and support they receive are excellent. A large number of parents wrote to compliment the work of the school. One summed up the view of so many by saying: 'I am proud to tell people my children attend this school.' The school welcomes all who arrive in the community. Recently arrived pupils settle quickly under the caring, Catholic ethos of the school. Older pupils act as guides and mentors for younger ones. Any family problems which affect the lives of pupils are readily tackled by a vigilant and well-qualified learning mentor. Arrangements for pupils to join the school and for when they leave in Year 6 are exemplary. The fact that the learning mentor is also employed in the feeder secondary school ensures that transition arrangements are seamless. Arrangements for safeguarding of pupils are robust and understood by all in school. Parents feel they can approach the school to discuss any concerns. Consequently relationships amongst adults, pupils and parents are harmonious. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are very strong. They have a good knowledge of other world faiths and cultures, achieved through visits and visitors to school. Pupils are also encouraged to develop an understanding of the different cultural and faith backgrounds of their classmates.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and thoroughly enjoy school because 'we do exciting lessons and our teachers make our learning fun'. Attendance is satisfactory; the majority of recorded absences are due to a small number of families taking extended holidays during school time. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary at all times: in lessons, when at play or moving around the school. They are polite and courteous to one another and to adults. They are given opportunities to make real decisions about developments in school, particularly in respect of designing their playground. Healthy eating is promoted with pupils discouraged from bringing unhealthy snacks to school: accreditation for Healthy School status is close to completion. Pupils are actively involved in the local community and the city of Wakefield where they have opportunities to display their many talents. For example, pupils in Year 2 represent the community at the annual service of remembrance at the cenotaph.

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Pupils enter the school with skills well below those expected for their age. By the end of Reception year in 2007 many pupils achieved the levels expected of them but only a few reached those expected for language and literacy. Standards, although broadly average, have fluctuated at the end of Key Stage 1 in recent years. Not all pupils reached expected levels in the end of Key Stage 1 assessments in 2007. A recent emphasis on developing pupils' reading skills through the focused teaching of phonics has had an impact on raising standards in the Reception class and Key Stage 1. Provisional data supplied by the school suggest that this year the recent decline has been halted. Standards are improving both in Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 with the majority of pupils expected to achieve well.

By the end of Year 6 pupils are attaining standards which are consistently above average. This pattern has been sustained for a number of years; predictions are that in 2008 pupils will maintain this position, reaching even higher standards in mathematics. Recently arrived EAL pupils or those with no understanding of English are quickly assessed and given good quality support so that they make the same rates of progress as their peers. Equally, there is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they too make good progress.

Contributing to pupils' good achievement is the good quality of teaching. Pupils are motivated to learn and work conscientiously. Well organised lessons run smoothly. High quality displays of pupils' work provide a stimulating backdrop to classrooms ensuring that the achievements of all are celebrated. The best lessons are practical and challenging; they have a brisk pace and include a variety of activities to challenge and excite pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a real strength and is used well by teachers and pupils. For example, older pupils are able to work confidently in control-technology using the school's interactive whiteboards. Pupils have a good knowledge of their curricular targets and are proud to share with adults the levels they working towards. Parents are well informed about how their children are progressing and many reported that they are kept up-to-date about target setting and standards of work. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously but do not always guide pupils to the next steps to improve their work or how those improvements will assist them in reaching the next levels.

Leadership and management of the school are good. Underpinning the success of the school is the strong, purposeful leadership of the headteacher. Over the years he has developed the work of his staff and leadership team so that there is a now a shared responsibility and commitment to raise pupils' achievement even further.

Self-evaluation is accurate and based on thorough assessments of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Recently, the leadership team have had the opportunity to take on senior roles in the school when the headteacher was seconded to assist in another part of the diocese. Subject leaders have a good understanding of standards in their areas, observing the work of colleagues and scrutinising the good quality data on rates of pupil progress. Plans are in place to discuss these rates of progress more formally with all teachers next term. Subject leaders also contribute to school development planning which is well founded in the needs of the pupils. However, success criteria in this planning are not consistently linked to specific outcomes for pupils. Consequently, it is difficult to fully evaluate the extent to which initiatives have led to improved pupil understanding, achievement and enjoyment.

An initiative to develop a more creative, skills-based curriculum is about to commence, with some elements already in place. It is designed to offer pupils the opportunity to use their skills in literacy and numeracy across all areas of the curriculum.

The governing body is well informed about the work of the school, providing a good level of challenge and support. They take a keen interest in standards and achievement, regularly attending meetings with subject leaders and officers from the local authority. Recently appointed governors receive training from the diocese and local authority. The school has successfully tackled all issues for action following the last inspection.

The school has a proven track record of sustained improvement over a number of years as demonstrated in the end of Key Stage 2 results, the stable and effective leadership team and a committed, challenging yet supportive governing body.

Given this strong culture of effective teamwork, the sustained and continuing improvement, together with effective leadership of the headteacher, leadership team and governors, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides pupils with a great start to their learning. Most enter school with the level of skills well below those expected for their age. They achieve well and by the end of the Reception class the majority reach the goals expected in all areas of their learning with the exception of language and mathematical understanding. A recent rebuild of the two Reception classes to create a single Foundation Stage unit is having a beneficial effect on raising pupils' levels of achievement. The area created allows for teachers and support staff to work collaboratively, providing good quality learning experiences for the pupils. The recent introduction of structured phonics is taught effectively by all teachers and support staff so that pupils are increasingly confident as they learn to read and write. Some children choose to write words learnt during these sessions when working independently. Bright, open areas are set up for role-play whilst outside a large, green space is devoted to play. Large wheeled toys, good quality wooden frames and covered areas allow pupils the opportunity to develop their social and physical skills. It is planned for more team teaching from September in order that all pupils fully benefit from the individual strengths of Foundation Stage staff. Those pupils not reaching the expected goals by the end of the Foundation Stage still have access to a play based curriculum in Key Stage 1.

Teaching is good; children are encouraged to become independent in their learning. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Pupils are observed and assessed carefully by all adults. The information is used effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. All staff are fully prepared for the introduction of the Foundation Stage curriculum later in the year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that school development planning is more closely aligned to successful outcomes for pupils.
- Ensure that teachers' marking is more clearly linked to pupils' own targets.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	1

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?	2
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	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

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

Thank you so much for the very kind welcome you gave to me when I visited your school. My reason for visiting was to find out how well you are learning. I can tell you that I found yours to be a good school and that some parts of the work that goes on are excellent.

Here's what I found.

- The strong Catholic ethos helps everyone to get along and ensures that you welcome everyone who arrives in your school.
- The level of care, guidance and support you receive is outstanding.
- Your behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around school.
- You achieve well and reach above average standards.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- Young children get off to a good start in the Reception class.
- You have good leaders in your school who are planning for more exciting ways for you to learn.

There are a couple of things that I have asked Mr Willis and his team to improve.

- Make sure any plans to develop your school are more clearly linked to how well you all achieve.
- When your teachers mark your work they will guide you so that you are clear how you can improve to reach your next target.

You have much to be proud of in your school, I know you will all work hard to make it even better.