

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111359
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	310578
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	92
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Marnell
Headteacher	Mr David Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Conwy Court Castlefields Runcorn Cheshire WA7 2JJ

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2008
Inspection number	310578

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Age group 4–11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school serving an area in which there is a significant level of social need. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very high. A similar proportion of pupils, about 30% have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils who attend the school are White British. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools and Artsmark awards. It has recently become the first school in the borough of Halton to be recognised as a Reading Champion School for its work in promoting literacy. The pre-school provision on site for children before they enter the Reception class was inspected separately, at the same time as the school inspection, and receives a separate report.

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 provides pupils with a satisfactory education. Due to effective leadership, standards and teaching quality are improving. Pupils are well cared for. The care and support for the most vulnerable pupils is exceptional. Pupils' personal development is good.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show very caring attitudes and are mindful of others' needs. They are polite and well mannered. Their behaviour is good overall and sometimes exemplary. They develop good awareness of different faiths and cultures through their studies in lessons, visitors to school and their charitable support for families and children in African countries. Relationships are good and playtimes are safe and enjoyable. Pupils' attendance is good. They enjoy lessons which, they declare, 'have got much better because they are more fun'. Pupils are fully aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. All of them, including Reception children, distinguish clearly between healthy and unhealthy foods and all know of the importance of exercise. Pupils are proud of their school and take their responsibilities seriously. The school council gives all pupils a voice and good improvements, in the quality of the play areas for example, have resulted. Road safety representatives organise puzzle competitions to keep everyone alert to the dangers of the roads. Pupils develop good life skills by working on community projects. For example, they recently worked with local residents to create a mosaic, as a piece of public art, in the redevelopment of the local area. Pupils also explore the world of work through the school's links with Education Business Partnerships where opportunities to apply their basic skills help pupils to prepare well for their future economic well-being.

From below average starting points, pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. With small year groups and a third of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, results in national tests do not always give the full picture, with results varying from below to well below average depending on the mix of pupils. There has been much improvement recently because of a more rigorous approach to assessment and effective support for the significant number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspection evidence shows that standards at the end of Year 2 in 2008 were broadly average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. The school's assessment data for 2008 indicated that standards at the end of Year 6 improved over the previous year in English, mathematics and science, but were still well below average. Current school assessments and inspection evidence show that there has been continued improvement with standards in Year 6 now more closely aligned to expectations for pupils in this age group. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges that standards could be raised further and is targeting writing, especially, throughout the school. Strong leadership and management from the headteacher has steered the school through a difficult period and secured the well-being of staff and pupils. Incisive analysis of the school's needs has led to effective professional development and better systems for monitoring academic performance and pupils' personal development. Learning and pastoral support for the high proportion of pupils in the school with additional needs has improved. These successful measures are beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and standards. Current stability within the teaching force and improved tracking of pupils' progress are beginning to show dividends, in that progress throughout the school is gathering pace. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers share ideas well. They plan lessons which are full of activity and which pupils enjoy, resulting in 'can do' attitudes to learning. Teachers have begun to share assessment information more fully to plan class objectives. They ensure that pupils know their targets, but do not

involve them sufficiently in assessing their own work to enable them to decide on what they need to do to improve. Although improved teaching is evident, it is relatively recent, and the full impact on standards and achievement has not yet been gauged. The curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily in literacy, and numeracy. Good opportunities are being developed for pupils to apply skills in information and communication technology (ICT). The school is extending the ways in which pupils' learning can be enriched.

Senior leaders support the headteacher well. They fully accept the challenge of their newly clarified roles and they contribute satisfactorily to the school's broadly accurate self evaluation. Given recent improvements, currently, there is satisfactory capacity to improve. The school has raised its sights and set challenging targets for future attainment. Subject leaders have clear views of strengths and areas to improve. As a team they are working to improve the curriculum. Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They are supportive of the school and understand its strengths and weaknesses. They manage finances efficiently and ensure satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is managed satisfactorily. When children start in Reception their skills in communication, language and literacy as well as in aspects of number are well below those typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress overall although standards are below expectations for their age in language and number skills when they enter Year 1. There is a strong focus on personal social and emotional development and as a result children quickly overcome the anxiety of leaving parents and carers and become confident about making choices. They behave well and are eager to please their teachers. Daily lessons on letters and sounds give children the confidence to tackle early reading and writing skills. Number skills are encouraged in variety of ways such as allowing children to measure their own height or through brightly displayed number rhymes which help children to count. A satisfactory range of activities is planned. Some are adult led and children choose others for themselves. Planning satisfactorily takes account of all areas of learning but the use of outdoor space is not well planned. Some activities lack direction and purpose because they do not feed into step-by-step planning for the next stages of children's learning and development. Children are well cared for and they feel safe and happy in school but key worker roles, where one adult has direct responsibility for the welfare of a specific group, have not been clarified. EYFS staff share recording children's day-to-day progress but do not share in the evaluation of that progress in order to plan together for the next steps for children's learning. Relationships with parents and carers are positive and the school is seeking ways to build on the positive start to give parents more opportunities to share in their children's learning and development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are involved in assessing their own work and setting their own targets for improvement, so as to raise standards, particularly in writing by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Develop the role of key workers in the EYFS and improve the planning of outdoor activities to ensure that they promote children's learning and development.

A small proportion of 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

Teachers' assessments show that when pupils enter Year 1 their abilities, overall, are below expectations for their age in language and number skills. They make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 2 but there is still work to be done to raise levels particularly in writing. Standards at the end of Year 6 over the past year show some improvement. School assessment data indicates that in 2008 the previous steep decline in attainment was halted. Inspection evidence shows that currently the improvement in standards looks set to continue with a majority of pupils working at levels expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, securing higher standards remains a key feature in the school's development plan. Achievement is satisfactory, and measures have recently been put in place to support pupils' learning. More rigorous analysis of pupils' progress in order to set more challenging targets is beginning to take effect because it has led to more effective teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from much more focused support and given their particular needs, their progress, along with that of others, is beginning to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' above average attendance is a measure of how much they enjoy school. They enjoy being active in lessons and are proud to show what they have achieved. Relationships are good. There is a good sense of 'fair play' in the playground and mutual respect and trust exists between pupils and adults. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the healthy choices of food prepared for them at lunchtimes and know the benefits of sticking to a healthy diet because, they say, for example, 'We learn about that in science.' The after-school sports club is very well attended and pupils are equally active during break-times. Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities around the school and improve their understanding of work and enterprise by working well with the Education Business Partners and being involved in local projects. A good example is pupils' work in helping to develop the Enterprise Game. This is a game aimed at teaching primary children more about business and which St Augustine's pupils were invited to demonstrate at a national education show.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Measures taken by the school to improve teachers' individual skills along with more stringent monitoring have recently begun to take effect. It is clear that progress is picking up in response to better teaching. Pupils confirm that lessons are better because teachers plan interesting activities which help them to apply their skills in a variety of ways. In a Key Stage 1 literacy lesson, for example, pupils applied their reading skills well to a set of written instructions which when followed accurately resulted in them creating dog face masks, complete with ears, tongue and whiskers. The combination of literacy and design and technology formed the ingredients of a lively, enjoyable and productive lesson. Teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards which also helps to bring lessons to life. Teachers generally take account of pupils' varying abilities but sometimes the expectation of what pupils can do is not well matched to their

capabilities. Some pupils feel they do more challenging work at times but they are not involved in assessing their own work and having a say what they should do next. This tends to slow down the progress pupils make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum adequately meets most learners' needs. There is sufficient focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT and an increasing drive to link skills across subjects to make learning more purposeful. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Pupils' learning is enriched through a satisfactory range of after-school clubs and visits as well as through good links with local schools and colleges. Provision for personal health, social education and citizenship is well established. Pupils are made aware of potential hazards such as the misuse of drugs, and there is specific teaching for older pupils about the importance of responsible and secure relationships.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Many parents fully agree that their children are well cared for in school. Pupils confirm that view and say there is always an adult for them to turn to when they need help. They feel safe in school and are adamant that there is no bullying. Liaison with the emergency services and regular visits by the community police officer ensure that pupils are given clear guidance about how to keep themselves safe outside of school. All safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. The support provided for the most vulnerable pupils is exceptional. The work of the family mentor helps children and families to overcome difficulties to ensure attendance at school. A counselling programme is available to pupils which sensitively helps them through particular difficulties and helps to secure their emotional well-being. The school is developing its procedures for supporting the more gifted and talented pupils. Academic support and guidance has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Systems for tracking progress are robust and targets are reviewed regularly to ensure that pupils are challenged. Older pupils appreciate the guidance they get from teachers' marking but overall pupils are not involved enough in assessing and judging their own progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Recent successes, as a result of good leadership of the headteacher, have generated a strong sense of teamwork. There is clear commitment from all staff and governors to raising standards and providing high quality care. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled thoughtfully but some improvements related to use of assessment, for example, need to settle in before they are fully effective. The school development plan sets out a clear direction for improvement. However, the absence of measureable planned outcomes for some priorities means that it is a satisfactory guide to checking the school's progress and evaluating its effectiveness. Recent improvements, especially the upturn in standards, have helped to raise expectations. Ambitious targets, based on the school's robust assessment, have been set. This is an inclusive school where, in keeping with its strong Christian ethos, all faiths and cultures are respected and all forms of discrimination are challenged. There are strong links with neighbourhood schools and the wider local community and the school is working hard to

enlighten pupils further about diversity in the global community. Governors discharge their responsibilities satisfactorily and work hard to maintain the school's positive profile in the locality.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2JJ

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you about your school, and all the things that you like. It was nice to meet so many polite and well mannered children. You are well behaved and play very well together in the playground. Your attendance is also good. Well done! That's important so keep it up.

You have a satisfactory school which is improving, and there are some good things too. You told me that lessons are better and more fun. I agree with you, and thanks to your teachers you are beginning to make better progress. However, the standards you reach could still be higher. All of the grown-ups in school take good care of you and that helps you all to feel safe. Your headteacher works hard to make the school better for you and he has some good ideas about how it can continue to improve.

Your parents, teachers and school governors all want you to do better. I have asked your teachers to help more of you to reach higher standards in your work by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. To help you to do that I have asked if you could check your own work more often and decide for yourselves what you need to do to improve. That means sometimes setting yourselves new targets. Finally, I have asked if children in Reception could have activities outside which really help them to learn and develop their skills.