

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125239
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315207
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Wilson

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	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Burgess
Headteacher	Mrs M C Norris
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Beauchamp Road East Molesey KT8 2PG
Telephone number	020 8979 5893
Fax number	020 8941 4527

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2008
Inspection number	315207

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Alban's Primary School is an average sized primary school which serves a mixed residential area. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and speaking English as an additional language are average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average as is the proportion entitled to free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Alban's is a satisfactory school with some good features. A strength of the school is its strong Catholic ethos. It is a friendly, happy community which develops pupils very well personally. Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and well cared for and develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem as they grow older. Parents are very pleased with the school. Typical of the many positive comments received is, 'The school has a very warm welcoming and inclusive atmosphere and there is always a happy buzz around.'

Pupils make satisfactory progress and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 standards are average overall, although in some years they have been above average. In reading, progress is good because of the systematic way in which pupils' reading skills are developed as they move through the school. Progress in writing is satisfactory because pupils have fewer opportunities to develop their skills in different areas of the curriculum. Progress in mathematics is also satisfactory, but it is improving. This is because of the greater emphasis given over the past two years to teaching aspects of the subject which pupils have found difficult.

Teachers manage their classes well, have good relationships with their pupils and plan lessons to interest and motivate them. Although teaching has significant strengths, it is satisfactory overall. This is because tasks and the pace of learning are not consistently well matched to pupils' needs in all classes and so do not provide all groups of pupils with sufficient challenge. Pupils' work is carefully marked and targets are set for pupils. However, this guidance does not improve pupils' progress as well as it might because it is not followed up sufficiently.

Teaching and support staff work well together under the caring leadership of the headteacher. Professional development is regular and staff readily take on new ideas. The school has systems to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and, although they are leading to some improvement, their effectiveness is reduced because they are insufficiently well coordinated or tightly focussed. The school has addressed the issues raised in the previous inspection and improvements in areas such as standards in mathematics show that it has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving. Children settle well into school and make satisfactory progress in the different areas of learning. The recently appointed teacher of the Reception class, who is well supported by a teaching assistant, has established regular routines for the children. These, combined with good relationships and high expectations of behaviour, are helping to develop children's social skills well. Lessons are well planned and much of the teaching is good and well focussed on children's needs. The curriculum is satisfactory and all the areas of learning are adequately covered. There are satisfactory opportunities for independent work and more use is beginning to be made of the recently improved outside area. There are good procedures in place to ensure children's care and welfare. Arrangements to evaluate children's overall progress and set challenging targets are underdeveloped.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons.

- Improve standards in writing by developing pupils' writing skills and providing more opportunities for writing in different areas of the curriculum.
- Improve monitoring and evaluation by ensuring that is better coordinated and used more consistently to improve teaching and learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make overall satisfactory progress throughout the school and they attain average and, for some cohorts, above average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. The national test results at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were above average reflecting the above average prior attainment of the class. Most of the targets were achieved, though those in writing were not as challenging as in other areas. Pupils with learning difficulties, and those speaking English as an additional language, make good progress because of the carefully planned support that they receive which is well matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

St Alban's promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well. Relationships in the school are good and pupils are polite, considerate and respect and cooperate with each other very well. They fully embrace the Catholic values which underpin school life. Many parents commented on how pleased they were with this aspect of the school's work. One wrote, 'The whole ethos of the school seems one of kindness and looking after others and this also shows in the way the older children look after the younger ones.' Pupils' enjoyment of school is very evident in their enthusiastic participation in lessons and other activities such as assemblies. Their behaviour is good. Pupils have good knowledge of what they need to do to live a healthy lifestyle including eating well and taking exercise. They know some substances can be harmful and the effects they cause. They make a very good contribution to the school and wider community, through work as helpers, being members of the school council, contributing to charities and participating in Church services. Pupils' strong personal and social skills, coupled with their sound basic skills, enable them to be well prepared for the next stage in their education. The rates of attendance in the school are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. They prepare interesting lessons and they use good strategies to manage their classrooms so that pupils behave well and are motivated to learn. They make good use of resources such as interactive white boards, which add interest and contribute to learning. Support staff are used well to provide help to vulnerable pupils, pupils with learning difficulties and the few who are at the early stages of learning English. There is inconsistency, however, in the expectations by teachers of what pupils can achieve. The match of work to pupils' needs is not always challenging enough and time in some lessons is not used to best effect. Expectations of presentation of work are inconsistent. Pupils'

work is generally marked systematically and guidance given on how to improve in the form of notes on work and targets for pupils. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils respond to the advice or know their targets. As a result, their effectiveness is reduced.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The main strength of the curriculum is the way it contributes to pupils' personal development. The coherent and well-structured programme of personal, social and health education helps, for example, pupils to know how to live a healthy lifestyle. The many whole-school activities such as assemblies, school productions, residential trips and music lessons contribute to making school enjoyable and developing pupils' personal skills. The programme of additional support is good and meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities well. The academic curriculum is improving, for example there is now wider and better use being made of information and communication technology (ICT). Despite these strengths, the curriculum is satisfactory overall, because of inconsistencies in the match of work for some pupils and insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. Both of these weaknesses limit pupils' progress. There is a good range of extracurricular enrichment activities such as music, dance, Spanish and sporting activities. Pupils' rates of participation in these activities are satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff know pupils and their needs well and there is a high level of commitment amongst staff to caring for pupils. This good pastoral support has a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, good use is made of teaching assistants to support more vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding procedures in the school, such as first aid and arrangements for ensuring child protection, are robust. Pupils say that they feel safe and have an adult that they can talk to if they have concerns. Arrangements to keep track of pupils' academic progress systematically, as they move through the school, have only recently been established. The school works well with parents, for example by carefully planning the induction of the youngest children to school. Very good use is made of outside agencies to provide specialist support for pupils where needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has created a happy supportive ethos in the school with a shared vision of inclusion which promotes security and enjoyment amongst pupils. She is well respected by staff and parents. Relationships are good and staff feel well supported. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. It correctly identifies some areas for improvement, but the planning on how to do this needs to be sharper and better linked to the use of challenging targets in order to raise achievement. There is a cycle for monitoring the work of the school, which includes lesson observations and scrutiny of work, and which involves subject leaders as well as the headteacher. However, it is not well coordinated and not sufficiently focused on improving learning and other areas identified as needing action for improvement. Governors are committed and their general awareness of strengths and weaknesses of the school enable them to provide satisfactory level of challenge. The school manages its tight budget carefully. There are good links with outside agencies and parents and these make a valuable contribution to the work of the school.

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
---	----------------

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	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	2

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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 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

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

04 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, East Molesey, KT8 2PG

You may remember that two inspectors recently came to visit your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. You were all very polite, confident and told us what you thought very clearly. We really enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and other people who work in the school. We are writing to let you know what we found out.

Both you and your parents said how much you enjoyed school and get on well with each other. You feel safe, well looked after and work hard. We were particularly impressed with the way your school helps you to develop good personal skills, such as self-confidence, being responsible and knowing how to stay safe and healthy. A good example of this was the impressive assembly which we saw led by many of you and in which you all behaved so well.

Your headteacher and teachers have made your school a caring, attractive and happy place and you get a satisfactory education. To make it even better, we have asked them to help you do better by ensuring that the work that you are given is well matched to what you are capable of doing and to give you more opportunities to develop your skills in writing. We have also asked them to review more carefully the work that they do in order to help improve your teaching and learning further.

Thank you again for being so friendly. We enjoyed meeting you. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Wilson

Lead Inspector