

St Aidans Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105519
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	324233
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Steve Rigby

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 aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	232
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	Fr M Gannon
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret McGee
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rackhouse Road Northern Moor Manchester Lancashire M23 0BW
Telephone number	0161 9984126
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves an area in which many families experience considerable social and economic disadvantage. An unusually high number of pupils are eligible to receive free school meals. The school has a growing number of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, although a slightly lower than average number has a statement of special educational need. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and Reception class. The school achieved the nationally recognised Activemark in 2007 and Extended Schools Award in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School provides a good and improving quality of education for its pupils. Pupils thrive because of the sensitive care they receive. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and steps are taken to ensure there is no discrimination. Pupils' good personal development and well-being is reflected in the strong sense of community and inclusion that pervades the school. 'Each and every child is valued' is a typical comment of parents about the care the school takes of their children. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with the school celebrating its cultural diversity through its curriculum, particularly in art and music.

The outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has started to impact on attainment on entry into Key Stage 1 over the last two years. It has yet to have a full effect on standards across the school. Many children enter the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. A stimulating curriculum focuses on improving levels of communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that most children make outstanding progress and are reaching levels typical for their age on entry into Key Stage 1. However, in Key Stage 1 pupils' progress slows and is satisfactory. Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work sometimes fall short of what they are capable of achieving. Despite recent improvements, standards remain below average at the end of Year 2. The pace of pupils' progress then accelerates and is good through Key Stage 2, resulting in most pupils reaching average standards by the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement overall, given these pupils' low starting points.

The improved achievement since the last inspection is, in part, a consequence of the thorough manner in which pupils' progress is monitored. Challenging targets are set for pupils of all abilities and barriers to learning are challenged, including those for pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils experiencing learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and make as much progress as their peers because of the support they receive from a well qualified team of experienced teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and delivered at a good pace. Pupils participate well in question and answer sessions. They enjoy learning, and behaviour in lessons is good. However, in Key Stage 1, teaching is not always of this quality and lacks consistency. This results in pupils' progress slowing. The academic guidance a pupil receives has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils receive good feedback on their progress and advice on what to do next and this helps them to improve their work.

The curriculum is good and enriched by a range of physical activities, visits and visitors. Pupils make a positive contribution to their local community through their church, fundraising and their involvement in musical and cultural festivals. Pupils are keen to have a voice in the school taking responsibility as prefects, playground buddies, and school councillors and carry out their jobs well. However, current figures show that despite the school's best efforts, attendance, whilst satisfactory overall has declined a little in the current year. This means that too many pupils do not fully access the numerous exciting opportunities the school offers and so they miss out on some learning.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The strong management by the headteacher, supported by effective and committed senior managers and governors, have resulted in improvements in standards and achievement for all pupils, including those with

significant barriers to their learning. The enthusiasm of the staff and the ongoing parental support provides evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Under the excellent leadership of a skilful practitioner, all staff work together exceptionally well to create a stimulating and highly supportive environment in which young children thrive. This enables them to make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. Most children join the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age and increasing numbers have arrived recently who do not speak English at home. By the time they join Year 1, almost all children have skills similar to those expected nationally and significant numbers are working at levels above this. This excellent achievement is possible because, starting with home visits, staff are fully focused on adapting the provision to each individual's needs and working very closely with parents. Staff use parents' recorded observations, their own incidental observations and more formal assessments of children's achievements exceptionally well to guide their daily planning. Most importantly, staff build very well on children's skills, engaging them in conversation and asking them questions that require them to think. Both inside and outdoors, the activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves, invite experimentation and encourage children to concentrate. They become engrossed in their play so that, for example, some Reception children chose to complete their writing about pirates in preference to investigating the new outdoor equipment. Children are confident, happy, behave very well and thoroughly enjoy their learning in this outstanding setting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the drive to improve teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 1 to further raise pupils' achievement and standards.
- Take all the necessary steps to ensure pupils are punctual and attend school regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection the school has introduced new assessment and tracking systems resulting in more focused support and accurate target setting. The school is reaching challenging targets and standards are rising in all key stages. The school correctly identifies that standards by the end of Year 2 have been below average for some time. However, recent results show that the attainment of pupils on entry into Year 1 has started to rise and that a number of initiatives to support pupils with difficulties in English and mathematics are also having a positive impact in raising standards. Pupils' progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 1. This becomes highlighted by the good and accelerated progress pupils make throughout Key Stage 2. This results in broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 with a greater proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels than at Key Stage 1. Pupils who require additional learning support make good progress in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils new to learning English are supported well and make progress similar to that of their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good. This is reflected in how pupils form very strong relationships, behave well and treat one other with consideration. A particularly strong area is how pupils welcome newcomers to the school and show interest in their different cultural backgrounds. Pupils are tolerant of others and aware of their own shortcomings. For example, they choose when they need to take 'time out' of lessons to calm down. This benefits both them and their peers. As a result of involvement in the Healthy Schools programme, pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and are particularly enthusiastic about energetic physical activities. An awareness of the importance of keeping safe is shown by even the younger children. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, for example, a child working with a construction kit was wearing ear protectors. Pupils enjoy their school and most are aware of the importance it holds in supporting their future economic well-being. Since the last inspection, levels of persistent absence have reduced. Current figures show attendance is broadly average, but has declined slightly since 2008, despite the school's efforts. Pupils are enthusiastic fundraisers. They make a good contribution to the local community because the school has established numerous links with local schools and community groups within the parish.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has a good impact on learning overall, by fostering pupils' motivation and enjoyment. In the best lessons, activities move forward at a lively pace and questioning is particularly effective which helps sustain pupils' interest and concentration. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to talk, solve problems and develop their ideas in pairs. Strong relationships are in evidence in all lessons and pupils have a positive attitude to learning, as demonstrated by the care with which most pupils present their work. Marking is generally of a good quality and supports pupils' learning well. However, on occasion teachers, particularly in Key Stage 1, accept work that is below the capabilities of the pupils, such as poor presentation or very short pieces of work and this places some limits on pupils' achievement. Pupils' progress is monitored and barriers to learning quickly identified. Appropriate actions follow. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met well by a good use of classroom assistants. They are well deployed and provide support to meet pupils' academic and pastoral needs and to make sure that pupils make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that successfully promotes pupils' learning and meets the needs of all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The staff are beginning to make links between a range of subjects to bring a greater relevance to pupils' learning. There is a good use of visits and visitors who add excitement and bring learning to life, such as, the science work resulting from the 'Chemistry with Cabbage' workshop. There are a large number of extra-curricular activities, reflected in the Extended School's Award, particularly in sport. Pupils also benefit from Spanish lessons, and specialist music tuition. Information and communication technology (ICT) is developing well with pupils' improving ICT

skills being used to good effect across the curriculum. Initiatives introduced this year are having a positive effect on pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, although the impact of these is not fully reflected in current standards, particularly in Key Stage 1.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care and support for all its pupils. The emotional support pupils receive enables them to feel secure in school and, therefore, able to concentrate on their learning. The staff endeavour to involve families and outside agencies at every opportunity to support the individual needs of vulnerable pupils. Well trained support staff provide good academic and personal support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language. Parents emphasise how well their children are cared for. Comments such as this are typical: 'My child is very happy, the teachers and teaching assistants are very professional and easy to approach'. The school's health and safety arrangements and child protection policy meet current government guidelines. Overall academic guidance is good. Pupils know their targets and what is required to reach them. However, while some marking gives pupils clear guidance as how to improve, this is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by her staff, provides clear direction for the school. There is a clear focus on achieving high standards and promoting pupils' well-being. To this end, the school has invested heavily in the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage so as to ensure children have an outstanding start to their schooling. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and challenging targets are set for both pupils and teachers as a result. In Key Stage 1, where progress slows, suitable plans are in place and appropriate catch up programmes have been introduced to raise standards. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and areas for improvement identified. As a result, teaching is becoming increasingly effective. Pupils' involvement in local projects promotes a good sense of citizenship and community cohesion. Parents' workshops, 'bake and share' days and a range of other social events litter the calendar, while international days and studies of other religions successfully promote a more global dimension. Governance is good with an efficient committee structure in place, giving a secure overview of standards and achievement. Governors work alongside the school's management team in guiding the school forward and in providing the school with a good capacity to improve.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	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 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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

Inspection of St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Manchester, M23 0BW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to see how well you are doing at St Aidan's. We enjoyed seeing you at work and at play and talking to you about your school. You are well mannered and confident. You attend a good school. The provision for the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Your behaviour is good around school, particularly in lessons. It was pleasing to see how well you care for each other and get on together. Your school is a caring place and this is one of its great strengths. Adults are always willing to talk to you and support you with any problem.

The way that your work is assessed is good. Teachers track your progress and know where you are up to. Most of you were able to tell us your targets and what you need to learn next. You all make good progress during your time at school although it is slower in Key Stage 1 and this needs to be improved.

You told us of the many things you enjoy, including the school's many visitors and the clubs the school organises for you. However, some of you miss out on these activities and the interesting lessons your teachers provide for you through being absent.

We have asked your school to make things even better by:

- maintaining the drive to improve teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 1 to raise further your achievement and standards
- making sure that everyone regularly attends school and arrives on time.

I hope that you help make your school even better by encouraging everyone to attend and make sure that all of you work to the best of your abilities in your lessons.