

St Alphonsus RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106360
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	324380
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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)	155
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	Mrs Michelle O'Sullivan
Headteacher	Mrs Tina Birds
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hamilton Street off Stretford Road Old Trafford Manchester Lancashire M16 7PT
Telephone number	0161 8725239

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2009
Inspection number	324380

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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 smaller than average sized school serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. More than two-thirds of the pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, but the proportion with English as an additional language is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises Foundation Stage 1 and Foundation Stage 2 classes. The school is an Investor in People, has Healthy School status and holds the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Alphonsus Primary is a good school, in which the care, guidance and support provided for its pupils are outstanding. High levels of teamwork among both staff and pupils are the order of the day. Moreover, parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school does for their children and add, 'The staff are very approachable and do all they can for our children and for us.'

From below average standards when they begin Year 1, pupils achieve well in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Their academic progress is good and there is no significant difference in the progress of any group of pupils. The school takes the linguistic development of its pupils very seriously and, as a result of the establishment of a wide range of activities to improve their speaking, listening and reading skills, standards in English in particular are better than at the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils love their school and hold their teachers and teaching assistants in the highest regard. Their behaviour is good. They respond positively to the many opportunities they have, in class through paired work, and as members of the school council and 'service squad', to support each other. Playground leaders, too, play their part and make sure that younger pupils enjoy their breaks and lunchtimes. Pupils of all heritages get on well with each other and celebrate the cultural diversity represented in the school. They enjoy the many sports activities they have and are also keen to take part in the variety of musical events and in the annual school productions, as actors and actresses, assistant stage managers and props builders.

Pupils benefit from good and sometimes outstanding teaching, in which high expectations of what pupils can do and meeting the learning needs of each individual are paramount. Mutual respect and strong relationships between pupils and between pupils and the adults who work with them are of the essence. As pupils themselves comment, 'We are all in this together!' Pupils enjoy learning and are delighted when they and their classmates succeed.

The curriculum places an appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). It also makes a good contribution to their personal development and well-being and helps them to see the importance of citizenship, living a healthy lifestyle and keeping safe. A range of visitors to school widens pupils' experiences, but there are insufficient links made between subjects to reinforce their learning and to foster their creative skills.

Pastoral care and support are outstanding and adults do everything they can to make sure that all pupils, irrespective of their ability derive maximum benefit from all aspects of school life. Academic guidance is of a similarly high standard and ensures that any underachievement is identified and addressed rapidly.

Leadership and management are good and the school knows itself well. The headteacher has a clear vision for development and she is supported to the utmost by all staff. Governors are becoming increasingly involved in the evaluation of school performance, but do not play an active enough part in the life of the school and in the work of individual classes. Nonetheless, St Alphonsus Primary makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. It is an inclusive school and one in which the personal and academic achievement of each pupil is emphasised. It provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery with skills which are well below age-related expectations. The good quality teaching they receive enables them to achieve well in both years. The small numbers of children make an evaluation of their skill levels at the end of Reception difficult, but they generally reach below average skills by the time they enter Year 1. Children achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development, as a result of the outstanding levels of care and support they receive from all staff, within a happy and welcoming environment. Staff are rigorous in meeting children's individual needs and children's welfare is a priority. Children settle quickly into their new routines, get on well with each other and become more confident as they try out new activities.

The quality of leadership and management is good and ensures effective links with parents, which involve them actively in their offspring's learning. Planning is good and the assessment and monitoring of children's progress is accurate. There is a good balance between independent tasks and teacher-led activities as well as between indoor and outdoor learning. Children move freely between the different learning areas and particularly enjoy the outdoor learning environment, which develops their physical, investigative and mathematical skills well. Imaginative activities to foster pupils' language and communication skills are not quite of the same calibre.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more links between subjects across the curriculum to reinforce pupils' learning and enhance their creative skills.
- Ensure that governors play a more active role in the work of the school and of individual classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with below average skills for their age. They make good progress across the school and reach broadly average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Pupils' attainment is a little higher than at the time of the previous inspection and effective strategies established by the school have resulted in a marked improvement in pupils' skills in reading and writing. In 2008, more pupils reached the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in the core subjects than ever before. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils in the current Year 6 class are again on course to reach their challenging targets. A clear focus on speaking and listening is having a positive effect and pupils' communication skills are continuing to rise. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those new to learning English make the same good progress as their peers as a result of excellent support by both teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school and, because they are well aware of and celebrate cultural diversity, the school is a racially harmonious community, in which mutual respect abounds. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school council, playground leaders and the 'service squad' enjoy helping their teachers to run the

school and they support younger pupils willingly and effectively. Their cultural development is reinforced by the annual productions and by a variety of projects in relation to African and Italian music, for example, pupils are proud of the 'St Alphonsus Christmas Songs' CD they produced. They have a good awareness of how to eat healthily, how to stay safe and of why it is important to keep fit. Most pupils attend regularly and respond positively to the rewards they receive for good attendance. Punctuality is good and improving, as a result of the 'In the line at five to nine' initiative. Good achievement in both personal development and academic work demonstrates that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education and for the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are examples of outstanding practice in Key Stage 2. Teachers treat their pupils with dignity and respect and relationships are strong as a result. Planning is a major strength and teachers prepare work to meet the needs of individuals and to foster the achievement of all. In the best lessons, expectations are high, challenge is realistic and pupils are encouraged to act as a resource for each other. In an outstanding Year 4 literacy lesson on poetry, for example, more able pupils skilfully supported those who sometimes found the work difficult. Questioning was sophisticated, required pupils to think more deeply about the subject matter and to give reasons for their answers. On occasions, teacher input in lessons is too long and pupils do not begin their individual work early enough. The quality of marking is good overall, but there are excellent examples, which comprise detailed and accurate advice on how pupils can improve their standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs, aspirations and interests of most learners and makes a good contribution to their personal development and to raising their self-esteem. Citizenship and pupils' awareness of health and fitness are fostered well. Close attention is given to the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and good use is made of ICT as a teaching and learning tool. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to learn French and Italian and are making good progress in the acquisition of key vocabulary in these languages. The school recognises that there are not enough links made between subjects across the curriculum, through themed modules, for example, to reinforce pupils' skills and to encourage them to be more creative in their learning. Visitors to the school, the Indian dancers, for example, and a variety of extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' experiences and provide enjoyable learning for them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is highly inclusive and all adults go the 'extra mile' to ensure that each individual can take full advantage of everything it has to offer. As a consequence, the care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Parents and carers agree and say, 'The school always meets the individual needs of our children and they come on leaps and bounds!'

Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for those identified as vulnerable and for those at early stages of learning English is of the highest order. The impressive team

of teaching assistants is fully involved in providing valuable support for these pupils, particularly in the development of their skills in communication, language and literacy. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and fully meet current guidelines.

Academic guidance is strong. There is regular and detailed dialogue between the headteacher and class teachers to ensure that expectations of academic progress remain high and that any pupils identified as under performing are helped to get back on track rapidly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, who is fully supported by a committed and talented senior leadership team, ensures that there are high levels of teamwork amongst staff and a clear and shared vision for how the school should develop. Leaders have maintained pupils' good achievement over time and have addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection most effectively. There is also clear evidence of the positive impact of local authority support, through the 'Reading Recovery' project for example, which, along with a range of school initiatives to foster pupils' communication skills, lead to pupils making good progress in language and literacy.

Middle leaders are increasingly involved in the evaluation of school performance, through the self-evaluation record form system and curriculum coordinators have a secure understanding of performance in their areas of responsibility. Development planning is now more focused and success criteria are more specific and measurable. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and takes justified pride in its work to eliminate discrimination. Its contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory overall, but there are good links with local primary and secondary schools. Governors are fully supportive of the school and are beginning to challenge the leadership with increasing rigour. However, they do not always play an active enough part in the life of the school and of the work of individual classes.

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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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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?	1

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?	3
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	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**

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school last week. You were most friendly and polite and we enjoyed visiting the breakfast club and also the 'Good News Assembly' when your 'wake-up, shake-up' routine was a joy to watch. We would now like to tell you the good things about your school.

St Alphonsus is a good school and we know that you are very proud of it. You make good progress in your lessons because you work hard and because your teachers teach you well. All the adults in school take exceptional care of you and they want the very best for you all. You respond to their support by behaving well and by making sure that you look after the younger pupils in school. Members of the school council represent your views well and the 'Service Squad' and playground leaders do a lot to make sure that no-one is lonely at breaks and lunchtimes. You know what makes a balanced diet and how to live a healthy lifestyle; you really enjoy the many sports and games activities open to you. You also like the taking part in the many music projects and in the annual school production. We know you are looking forward to the production of 'Grease' later in the term.

Your headteacher and all the other staff work very well together to make your school what it is and they are always looking for more ideas to make St Alphonsus even better! I have asked them, therefore, to try to make more links between all your subjects so that you can learn even more and can become more creative in your work. I know some governors visit the school regularly to see how well you are doing, but I think that this could happen more often and that governors could visit individual classes to help you with your work and share their experiences with you.

Thank you again for being so kind and helpful during the inspection. Please continue working hard and looking after each other.