

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111330
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	325352
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Geoff Lawrence

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	370
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Wilcox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Johnston
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 September 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Priory Lane Macclesfield Cheshire SK10 3HJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 425 905
<b>Fax number</b>	01625 511 330

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: current standards and achievement; personal development and well-being; care, guidance and support and the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, the chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area of social and economic advantage and the percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The governors are responsible for a pre-school class that operates on the site and, as such, it was included in this inspection as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). A privately run 'Before and After-school' club also operates on the site and was subject to a separate inspection.

The governors experienced difficulty in recruiting a headteacher shortly after the previous inspection and appointed the current deputy headteacher to act as headteacher until the present headteacher was appointed in January 2008. St Albans is an Investor in People and holds the Activemark and Artsmark Awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Alban's is a good school with many outstanding features. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what it does for their children, evidenced by the extremely high number of questionnaires returned with comments praising the school. Typical views were that their children are 'progressing well academically and socially' and 'flourishing in an environment that stimulates, nurtures, and is fun'.

The first-rate support given to pupils leads to their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, being outstanding. An ethos of mutual respect exists throughout the school, which enables pupils to feel valued, an attribute that is widely acknowledged and highly prized amongst parents. Staff stretch pupils academically whilst still caring for their emotional needs. This helps to create very well balanced, mature and confident young people whose behaviour is impeccable in class and around the school site. They are active in the local community and have a very good understanding of different cultures.

Pupils speak confidently and articulately and say how much they enjoy school. As a result, their attendance is well above average. They assume responsibilities confidently and eagerly, promoting very good relationships by acting, for example, as prefects and school councillors. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and consequently they know how to stay safe and have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of a healthy diet, from an early age. They enjoy sport and there is a high rate of participation in the good range of sporting activities on offer, although they say they would like more playground activities at lunchtime.

Pupils also thrive at St Alban's because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the school and teachers provide high quality personal and academic support for them. Teachers make lessons challenging and engaging. They involve pupils in their own learning so that they clearly understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are involved in the assessment of their own work and older pupils contribute to the setting of their own targets. Planning and lesson preparation are of a high order and staff make good use of assessment information to ensure that work in class is well tailored to individual needs. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach well above average standards which represents good achievement, given that they enter Year 1 with above average levels of attainment. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to reach their challenging targets.

St Alban's is an inclusive school, which promotes equal opportunities extremely well. Pupils receive high quality care and support, irrespective of their learning needs. This is due to the rigour shown in identifying how best to help them, the planning of useful programmes to meet their needs and extremely effective links with outside agencies. For example, the extra support for pupils with English as an additional language is very effective. As a result, all groups of pupils make the same good progress.

In addition, the good curriculum extends learning beyond the classroom, motivates pupils and makes them eager to learn. This is endorsed by pupils who are eager to point out that, in their words, 'Teachers make lessons fun, and exciting. They make you laugh because they have a good sense of humour.' This comment also demonstrates the high quality relationships that exist between adults and pupils. The school has made a good start in introducing French across the school. Good evidence of this was seen in a Year 3 class where pupils were able to answer

mathematical questions in French. This was because of the good tuition they receive which has built their confidence to speak in another language.

The new headteacher leads the school extremely well. She is well supported by a very competent deputy headteacher with whom she has raised staff morale and confidence to a very high level. There are rigorous systems for checking on the school's performance so that staff have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, leaders have planned effectively to facilitate improvements such as those seen in English at the end of Year 2. The school tackled this relative weakness by introducing methods designed to strengthen pupils' sentence construction, use of vocabulary and punctuation. Consequently, standards have risen markedly and are now well above average in reading and writing. Standards in mathematics have also risen and are now approaching well above average, too. The school development plan has an appropriate and manageable number of improvement points, although many of the criteria by which the school propose to measure their success are too general and not tied closely enough to pupils' performance.

Governors are knowledgeable and fully involved in the school's self-evaluation process. This gives them an accurate view on pupils' progress and performance and enables them to provide high quality support as well as challenge for the leadership. Significant improvements since the previous inspection demonstrate that the school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Good relationships with parents help the pre-school to gather a wide range of information about the children before they start school so that they settle quickly and enjoy school. On entry, they have skills and knowledge in line with those typical for their age. A good level of dialogue exists between adults and children. Consequently, children develop good speaking and listening skills as well as building confidence and self-esteem. This is evident in the confident way that children speak and listen carefully to each other and to adults. Children clearly enjoy their time in the EYFS.

Good leadership throughout the EYFS has ensured that very effective use is made of the restricted indoor provision. This, combined with good teaching helps children to make good progress and achieve well in all areas of learning. Over time, children leave Reception with skills and knowledge above those expected for their age. However, because of limited space, there are insufficient opportunities for children to extend their learning in different contexts outdoors and the leadership of the school has, therefore, submitted plans for a new building to accommodate the EYFS classes.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Enhance the outdoor learning experiences of children in the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure the school development plan has clearly defined and measurable targets that are linked to improvements in pupils' performance.

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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?	1
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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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**

Thanks you so much for the marvellous welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently.

St Alban's is a good school with some outstanding features such as the way you develop into mature and sensible people. We know you and your families are very proud of your school. Your behaviour is excellent, you try hard in lessons and you make good progress in all your subjects because your teachers and teaching assistants teach you well. Those of you who sometimes find the work a bit hard make just as much progress as your classmates because you get so much support in class and often in small groups outside lessons. All the adults in school take extremely good care of you.

You told us your teachers find ways to make learning fun and help you to reach high standards in your work. You are right here, too. You also know what a healthy lifestyle is and how to keep yourself and others safe.

Your headteacher and all the other staff work very hard indeed to make sure that you enjoy coming to school and they know just how to make your school go from strength to strength.

Those responsible for leading and managing the school do their job well. Within all of its good work, we identified two things the school could do to help make your school even better. We have asked all the teachers in the Foundation Stage to arrange more outdoor activities for the children in those classes. We know that you have targets and that you know how to achieve them. We want the school to make sure that the targets it sets for itself are focused more clearly on helping you do even better.

Thank you once again for helping us. We enjoyed our time with you and your teachers. We hope you that you continue to work hard and enjoy school.