

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101801
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	335790
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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 of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Josef Doetsch
Headteacher	Kathleen Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	2 September 2006
School address	Portnalls Road Coulsdon Surrey CR5 3DE
Telephone number	01737 556036
Fax number	01737 558444
Email address	admin@st-aidans.croydon.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a small number of parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation such as improvement plans, past records of governors' meetings and analysed 89 questionnaires from parents, 82 from pupils and 12 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils in Years 1 and 2, particularly boys, achieve in their writing
- the extent to which higher attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6, particularly in mathematics, are catered for
- how well the curriculum caters for creative learning and aspects such as the global dimension
- the way senior leaders and governors are maintaining improvement in the light of staff changes and the long-term absence of one of the senior management team.

Information about the school

St Aidan's is a smaller than average primary school, where the majority of pupils are White British. Since the last inspection, however, a growing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups have joined the school. There has been a long-term absence at senior management level. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than normally found. The school has a number of awards reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' active lifestyles.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Aidan's is a good school. It has improved several aspects of its work to outstanding levels since it was last inspected. Pupils and parents alike are very positive about the high levels of care and support which are evident within the day-to-day life of the school. One parent's comment was typical of many, saying, 'The school has a happy atmosphere and the children enjoy going.' Pupils confirmed they like all that the school has to offer. They respond by being well behaved in class and around the school, while being active in the playground at break times.

The children's smooth start in the Reception class is built upon well as they move through the school. In nearly all areas of their learning the pupils reach above average levels. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils achieve well. They are confident communicators, and accurate and knowledgeable mathematicians and scientists. Their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are comparatively lower as they do not build upon their skills sufficiently or use them frequently enough in other subjects. The new laptops are not used sufficiently and pupils do not spend enough time using e-mail, the Internet or digital picture technology. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage 'start on the right foot' as they quickly gain early social, number and writing skills.

The curriculum for this age group is good in helping teachers nurture these early skills, although some other activities to extend their knowledge and understanding are not always sufficiently open-ended. In Years 1 and 2, a focus upon developing pupils' writing skills has paid dividends in most respects. Pupils learn about others with differing backgrounds, although opportunities to learn about those represented in countries much further away are not sufficiently well planned for. Skilful teaching of writing and number skills enables nearly all pupils to achieve well in these areas, with only a small number of boys who are sometimes more reluctant to write with enthusiasm. Current work indicates that higher attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6 now achieve well in mathematics due to the efforts of staff. The typically good teaching through the school promotes pupils' learning well, not least for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but also for those pupils with particular gifts or talents.

Leading from the front, the headteacher, aided by supportive staff and governors, has succeeded in improving the school's effectiveness. Accurate, honest self-evaluation and an open approach to solving problems have meant priorities have been tackled well and weaker areas remedied. Some recent disruption to staffing has been handled well, although at senior management level this has caused ICT improvement to be slower than expected. Despite this, aided by governors' support in being 'critical friends', the school has demonstrated by its track record that it has a good capacity for further

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improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress pupils make in ICT in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to use their skills within class-based activities, particularly in helping with written work
 - developing more enticing opportunities for pupils to use e-mail, internet and digital picture technology
 - bringing the new laptops into use as soon as possible.
- Extend the quality of the curriculum in the coming school year by:
 - ensuring pupils in the Reception class have more open-ended activities when working independently
 - planning for greater use of ICT skills in different subjects
 - plan more opportunities for pupils to learn more about those who live much further away from the school in contrasting countries.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well because they make consistently good progress through the school, aided by their willingness to work, their mature outlook and good behaviour. Their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps to lay the foundations for later progress. By the time they leave school, pupils reach above average levels in their work and in English their standards are high. Written work for most pupils is of high quality. A focus on motivating boys to write with more enthusiasm has largely worked for older pupils, although in Years 1 and 2, boys sometimes lag behind the girls a little. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson focused upon fractions and decimals, pupils' quick calculation and problem-solving skills helped them make excellent progress. In science, pupils' investigative skills develop well. Pupils' ICT skills, although in line with expected levels, do not match the high levels seen in other subjects. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates. The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness effectively. As a result, they behave well around the school and, on occasions, this is outstanding, for example as pupils readily cooperate, take turns, or rally support for their talent contest. They relate well to each other, enjoy each other's company and accept and value the differences that exist. Pupils enthusiastically support local and national good causes, especially within the local parish and further afield in other countries. Recent visits to meet the Mayor of London and attend London's 'Silence in the Square on 11th November reflect their commitment to community issues and special occasions. This, combined with their good levels of basic skills, sets them up well for their next schools. They enjoy influencing school improvements through the work of the school council and in acting as buddies to others as playtimes. Pupils are generally active, making good use

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of spaces and equipment at playtimes to make activity fun. Many like the home-made soup available and, while many pupils say they try to eat healthily, they also admit that it is hard to keep it up at times. Pupils say they feel exceptionally safe as they say there is little or no bullying and staff are quick to support them and deal with their issues. Not surprisingly, attendance is good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is typically good through the school which is a key reason why pupils' levels of attainment have been maintained from the last inspection and, in the case of writing, improved for most pupils. Teachers plan lessons well, taking into account the needs of pupils' and those who are higher attaining, particularly in writing. Lessons incorporate good levels of practical activities to involve pupils in their learning, but on occasion, some explanations are overly long so their eagerness to get down to the task is not capitalised upon effectively. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage promotes children's basic number and language skills systematically, although some other activities are over directed by the staff. In mathematics, computers are used well to test

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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pupils' knowledge; however, pupils' ICT skills are not fostered or taught in sufficient depth to reach the same high standards of other subjects.

The curriculum is well conceived in most areas and promotes pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics very well. A successful focus on writing, particularly for older pupils, has raised standards. Pupils' use of ICT skills within all subjects, but particularly in aiding those slower in writing, is not sufficiently well developed. The curriculum is broadened by the inclusion of French teaching and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Those pupils with particular gifts and talents are catered for effectively. The same is true of those with academic, sporting and artistic abilities who are spotted quickly and directed to activities to extend them further. Pupils study different faiths as well as the school's Catholic traditions, but the school is at the earlier stages of helping pupils gain an authentic understanding of cultures and traditions represented in the global community.

Pupils' high levels of confidence and maturity are due in no small part to the excellent care, guidance and support that the school works hard to ensure. Specific pupils attend a local literacy centre and those going through severe emotional difficulties can access on site professional counselling. All staff support pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable or suffering family disruption, with care and sensitivity. Liaison with parents is clear, frequent and well targeted. As one said, 'The headteacher and staff picked up my daughter's academic difficulties and enabled extra support to be provided for her.' Pupils are quick to say how much they value the school's support, and one wrote that they valued the 'love and care' shown to them in the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive to steer improvements since the last inspection is due to the concerted efforts of all staff, led by an insightful and determined headteacher. A realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, based upon first-hand evidence of teaching, pupils' progress, and views of parents and children, leads to sensible priorities for action. Senior leaders rightly worked on raising pupils' writing skills which has largely been successful, with only the most reticent writers still needing that extra push. Changes caused by some short-term absences have been handled well, although a long-term absence has caused improvements in ICT to falter and slow. Parents are highly pleased with school, and only a very few identify areas for improvement. This is not surprising as the school

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has worked hard, aided by the governing body, to seek the views of parents to excellent effect. The governors and staff promote good levels of community cohesion, particularly within the local parish, but also via links with other contrasting schools locally. Links with schools abroad, notably with a school in Paris, help broaden pupils' horizons, but do not yet extend beyond Europe. Both staff and governors ensure that pupils have equal chances to show off their talents or to access additional help when needed. They also ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is of high quality, be it in ensuring high levels of site security or rigorous checks on staff.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start to their school life. They are well settled and appear to be confident in playing, working and sharing together. They make good progress, making up quickly for lower than typical starting points in their language and number abilities, so that, by the time they start in Year 1, they reach above average levels. There is a good range of activities that are planned for the children, although these are not always open ended enough to allow them to explore them in their own original way and staff do not always intervene often enough to extend their thinking or creative skills. Class teaching of basic skills is good and inventive. The children loved seeing where 'Ted' the class mascot had been on holiday and deciding what clothes he would need for his trip to Lapland! Children spoke confidently, identified the letter sounds of words accurately and then worked in small group activities ranging from imaginatively exploring their model airport to filling in 'Ted's' passport. Outside activities cater well for

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children's physical development and help to cultivate their imaginative play. The school ensures the individual welfare of children is fostered well, with each child having a 'key worker' so that parents can be kept informed of progress. Despite only recently being appointed, the leader manages the provision well, recognising already where improvements can be made.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded in the 89 questionnaires returned indicated they were very supportive of the school's efforts to ensure high quality of education for their children. Most parents say they are very happy and that they feel the school is excellent. A small minority of parents voiced pointers for improvement. Of these, a few suggested that the school was slow to respond to their concerns. Inspectors investigated this and found that the school does an excellent job in keeping in touch with parents and the vast majority of those who responded to the Ofsted survey were very pleased in this respect.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Aidan's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 214 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	76	21	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	80	17	19	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	62	34	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	61	32	36	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	59	66	29	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	60	34	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	66	28	31	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	47	53	33	37	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	52	40	45	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	57	33	37	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	47	40	45	2	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	58	65	27	30	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	71	25	28	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Coulsdon, CR5 3DE

Many thanks for making us feel welcome when we visited your school recently. I enjoyed learning some conjuring tricks at playtime! Yours is a good school which has got even better since the last time it was inspected.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- The youngest children settle in the Reception class well and enjoy all of the activities that take place.
- You reach above the expected standards when you leave, and you achieve well in most aspects of your work. You need to work on your ICT skills now to match other subjects.
- You behave well and try hard in lessons.
- You all said you feel really safe as the school cares for you brilliantly.
- You are good at keeping active at playtimes and I know most of you try to eat healthily. Keep eating your homemade soup at playtimes.
- The range of things you do such as French, music, sports and chess clubs sound great.
- The school helps those of you who sometimes find work difficult or have a particular physical difficulty to achieve really well.
- The staff teach you well and the school is excellent at working with most parents to help you learn even better.

We have asked the school to do two things to help it improve further:

- Give those of you in Years 1 to 6 help to improve your ICT work by giving you more chances to use your skills in other subjects and to start using your new laptops as soon as possible.
- Develop the curriculum with more ICT activities, more open-ended work for Reception children, and by helping you do more studies of countries much further away from the school.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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