

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102336
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	335880
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Palmer
Headteacher	Bernadette Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at information about pupils' progress, school improvement and curricular plans, policies and the 52 parental responses to the questionnaire.

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

- pupils' achievement in science at Key Stage 2
- the achievement of more able pupils in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1
- children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of the work of new leaders on pupils' achievement and standards
- how well the school promotes community cohesion.

Information about the school

Pupils come from a wide area to attend this average-sized school. The majority are from White British backgrounds and 12% come from Black African families. Fewer pupils are entitled to free school meals than is typical in a school of this size. The proportion of pupils from other ethnicities is growing steadily. The proportion that are learning English as an additional language is broadly average, although in younger classes it is far higher than average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Many of these pupils have behavioural, emotional or social problems or have moderate learning difficulties.

The school has won a number of awards in recent years, including Investors in People, Basic Skills Quality Mark and Activemark. The headteacher started in January 2008 and there have been several new appointments to the senior leadership team. The school is oversubscribed.

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

This school is improving rapidly, largely as a result of the strong and purposeful leadership of the headteacher. Aply supported by the deputy headteacher, she has embedded a clear vision for the future and set high expectations for staff and pupils. Morale is high and pupils have benefited greatly from effective teaching. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2, especially in English, and pupils achieve well. This has been accomplished by a clear focus on meeting the needs of individual pupils, through carefully organised small group work and one-to-one tuition. Parents speak very highly of the school's work with their children, particularly the way in which the teachers make learning fun. 'Every day my child comes out of school smiling and enthusiastic about something he has done that day!' wrote one parent, reflecting the views of many. Children start in Reception at levels that vary widely. Although many have skills and abilities that are in line with those typically expected for their age, an increasing number are beginning with lower levels of development in language, literacy and mathematics. The children make good progress over the year and most meet the levels expected of them by the time they transfer to Year 1. Good progress continues in Key Stage 1. Teachers clearly enjoy teaching and they transmit their enthusiasm effectively to the pupils. They motivate the pupils to do their best. Lessons cater well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are set activities which help them to take the next steps in their learning. More able pupils in both key stages make steady progress but are occasionally limited by the lack of challenge in some lessons and insufficient opportunities to carry out investigations and undertake extensive research. Pupils confirm that they enjoy school and their excellent attendance reflects this. They say they feel safe and are confident that there is always an adult to turn to in the school if they have any concerns. They know what to do if bullying occurs, although they say that this happens rarely. They understand the dangers of drugs and how to use the internet safely. Pupils are well behaved in class and around the school. Spiritual, moral and social development is good and cultural development satisfactory. Year 2 pupils produce thoughtful prayers, for example, about their wishes for Advent, and Year 6 pupils considered the feelings of recent flood survivors.

School leaders have an accurate view of performance gained through a well-organised system of monitoring. Information about the progress of individuals, groups and classes is carefully analysed to identify potential underachievement and this triggers prompt action. Helpful information is supplied to parents about how they can support their children at home and this has helped to boost standards in literacy. The school community is strong and links with the immediate locality are developing well. However,

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there are insufficient links with communities further afield to promote pupils' understanding of life in places outside their own experience. The school's good progress in raising standards thus far and its strong commitment to improvement reflect a good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of more able pupils by:
 - ensuring that they are consistently challenged by questions and activities during lessons
 - encouraging pupils to undertake more independent investigative activities where they can develop their initiative and accept greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Promote community cohesion more effectively by improving links with communities outside the immediate locality.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' achievement is good and the overwhelming majority enjoy their education. The standards gained by Year 2 pupils have fluctuated over the past few years, reflecting the wide variations in pupils' starting points. However, standards are broadly average and reflect good progress from the levels pupils had attained in Reception. The proportions that reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics have been below average, but the school has taken action to improve these by introducing guided writing and mathematics groups to accelerate the progress of more able pupils. These are beginning to work well, as seen in Year 1 where pupils keenly wrote postcards to Father Christmas, learning how to write their addresses correctly.

Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good. Black African pupils and those from other minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well. Standards have risen sharply in recent years and are above average, especially in English. The school's careful analysis of data show where the curriculum and teaching arrangements need improvement and prompt action in these areas has led to the increase in standards and in pupils' enthusiasm for reading. The strategies that proved successful are being used in writing and mathematics this year and, currently, show every sign of being effective in improving pupils' achievement. Science standards are not as high as in English and mathematics, and are broadly average. The school has recognised the need to extend pupils' investigative skills and has implemented a programme which is beginning to have a positive impact.

Pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties make good progress and current initiatives are improving this still further. Pupils at risk of falling behind are quickly identified through the school's assessment procedures and different support strategies implemented to help them catch up. Last year the school identified that pupils who were learning English as an additional language did not achieve as well as other groups. Action was taken quickly to improve teachers' and assistants' skills to meet the needs of

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these pupils, and this has led to increased progress this year.

More able pupils make satisfactory progress but are capable of much more. Too few are reaching the higher levels in the national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 in writing and mathematics and in Year 6 in mathematics and science.

Pupils treat one another very sensitively, supporting their friends in and out of lessons. They have a strong awareness of right and wrong and a good sense of fairness and consideration for others. They make a satisfactory contribution to the school and local community, keenly accept responsibilities as school councillors and perform in concerts for parents and friends. However, their contribution to communities further afield is very limited. Good levels of basic skills mean they are well prepared for their future education.

The school's efforts to gain Activemark have meant that pupils develop a good knowledge of how to keep healthy. They participate eagerly in physical education lessons and sports clubs outside school hours. School lunches are healthy and nutritious, although packed lunches often contain crisps, though pupils know they are not a healthy option.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

'It is clear that the headteacher and her team enjoy teaching and this has a great effect upon the children,' wrote one parent, who typifies the views of others. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, which enables them to manage behaviour well. Lessons therefore proceed in a calm and orderly manner. Teachers assess pupils' progress systematically and give them targets for improvement. Pupils relish these and work hard to achieve them. Support assistants are very well briefed and make a significant contribution to the progress of pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. Occasionally, teaching does not challenge more able pupils and this slows their learning. For example, these pupils sometimes lose focus during class teaching sessions because the questions directed at them are not sufficiently demanding.

Subjects are often linked to make learning relevant to pupils. Pupils in Key Stage 1, for example, wrote interesting short poems about their bodies, as part of their work in science. Visits to local places of interest such as the Hornchurch Country Park and the Globe Theatre make learning come alive for pupils and this increases their enjoyment and progress. Residential trips for older pupils are popular and provide good opportunities for pupils to learn how to live together away from home.

Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties benefit greatly from the support provided through the social communication groups which happen regularly and include pupils of all ages. Advice is gained from a range of agencies about how best to support these pupils and this contributes to their good progress in lessons. Staff go out of their way to liaise effectively with parents so that all are clear about the way forward.

Pastoral support is good. Pupils and their families are well known to staff, who are pro-active in their approach to ensuring that pupils get the best from their education. An overwhelming majority of parents agree that their children are well cared for and enjoy coming to 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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The newly formed senior leadership team provides a strong impetus for improvement. Their enthusiasm is a key factor in gaining the commitment of staff and ensuring that

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plans move forward successfully. The roles of middle managers have been extended recently to ensure that they too contribute to the school's development. They are accountable for the progress of pupils in different phases of the school and this is strengthening the focus on pupils' progress and achievement.

The school has a clear view of its performance gained through a well-organised system of observations and analysis. Plans for improvement are good and drive improvement successfully. Targets set for different cohorts provide high but achievable levels of challenge. Pupils' progress is tracked systematically and achievement analysed regularly to check the achievement of different groups. In this way, the school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. There are appropriate partnerships with the local community but links with different sorts of communities in the United Kingdom and further afield are in the early stages of development. This has been identified as an area for school improvement this year.

Governance is satisfactory and improving. Governors bring many skills with which to support the school's work, for example in finance and health and safety. They receive regular updates from the headteacher and middle managers about a range of subjects and issues. They are further developing their roles at present through attendance at training courses provided by the local authority. They have a good awareness of safeguarding procedures, which are robust and well established.

The school enjoys good partnerships with parents and positive links with agencies outside the school that contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development. Parents are supplied with a good range of information about how they can help their children at home. A significant number of parents help out in school on a regular basis and virtually all who responded to the questionnaire were pleased at the levels of information they receive and the way in which staff respond to their questions and concerns. Links with partner schools in the borough have contributed greatly to improvements in teaching and the curriculum.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Reception class. Good induction procedures help them to settle in quickly and provide a positive start to building strong relationships with parents. The children develop independence and confidence quickly because they are encouraged to choose from a range of activities indoors and outdoors.

Children make good progress in learning their letters and sounds. They showed great excitement, for example, when the teacher introduced the letter 'y', talking about Baby Bear's supper of 'yellow yogurt'. The children responded with tremendous enthusiasm to her skilful presentation and questions. They practised writing the letter in the air, on their palms, on the floor and on each other's backs before going off to do a range of activities to consolidate their new knowledge.

Additional adults in the Reception class make a significant difference to children's learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported so they can play a full part in activities. Adults model language and teach new vocabulary carefully so that children who are learning English make good progress in developing their confidence and fluency. The outdoor area is stimulating and activities are well planned. There are plans in place to build a covered area very soon to enable children to go outdoors all the year round.

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

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive, commenting that their children greatly enjoy all the school has to offer. They say that the school listens carefully to their opinions and concerns. A very small minority expressed concerns about how the school manages unacceptable behaviour but inspectors found that there are clear and effective systems in place to deal with such concerns and that pupils themselves were happy about these.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Alban'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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 210 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	71	15	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	73	13	25	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	56	22	42	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	54	22	42	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	62	18	35	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	52	24	46	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	65	18	35	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)	26	50	23	44	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	58	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	58	19	37	3	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	48	27	52	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	65	18	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	71	14	27	1	2	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 pupils' 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.



10 December 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Hornchurch RM12 5LN

Thank you so much for welcoming the inspectors to your school recently. Thank you especially to those of you who talked with us to give us your ideas and opinions about the school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw in lessons and around the school, helped us to form a clear view about how well your school works.

Your school is giving you a good education. These are the things that help to make it good:

- Children get a good start to their education in the Reception class.
- You are well behaved in lessons and around the school.
- You know how to keep safe in and out of school.
- Your attendance and punctuality are excellent.
- The teaching is good and helps you make good progress.
- Adults look after you really well.
- The people in charge are doing a good job.

You know a great deal about healthy lifestyles and many of you participate in regular sport to keep fit, however, a few of you are still bringing crisps in your packed lunches..

We have asked the teachers to do a few things to help you make even more progress. Teachers need to make sure that the work they set is not too easy for you and that it really makes you think! We have asked them to give you more chances to work on your own, to do research projects and more investigations. We have asked the people in charge to develop the school's links with communities further afield to help you understand more about what it is like to live in different sorts of places.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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